



Information on Volunteering in Nepal

[Introduction from the Chairman](#)

I thank you for your interest in Pahar Trust Nepal. I believe that skilled professionals can add a significant amount to our work in Nepal.

Whatever your reasons for volunteering, the giving of your skills, time and energy is a worthwhile contribution to those who may be less privileged and plays a role in helping them to improve their own communities and opportunities.

It can also be one of the most rewarding experiences you will have, especially in Nepal where you will see the warmth and friendliness of local communities and experience the richness of their culture.

I have been involved with the Pahar Trust in a voluntary capacity since its inception in 1993 as both a Trustee and Chairman. The work is both demanding and rewarding however it has allowed me to develop a rational perspective upon life that affects so many other aspects of day-to-day living. We have so much to offer when volunteering however we also have so much to learn from the experience. It can be what so many people describe as 'life changing.' If you elect to volunteer with us I am sure you will find that Nepal is there to change you.

I went to Nepal with the intention of helping others but what I gave was nothing compared to what I took away from the experience. Exciting, unique, eye catching, surreal ... words cannot describe it.

Jenny Dinwoodie

"If you are reading this as part of a consideration of whether or not to volunteer with PTN, I urge you to cast aside any reservations you have and go for it. ... Part of myself will continue to reside in Nepal, with the wonderful people I have met and the extraordinary landscapes I visited."

Rebecca Thomas

History of the Pahar Trust Nepal - achievements to date

The Pahar Trust was established by two ex-servicemen of the Brigade of Gurkhas, Mr Tom Langridge MBE and Mr Chandra Bahadur Gurung, who both served as Warrant Officers in the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. Both men wanted to help improve the poor standards of education found in Nepal's mountain region.

The first school, in the village of Pokhari Thok, was completed in 1991 and the Charity was formally founded in 1993. Since then the Trust has built more than 80 schools, renovated another 41 and completed over 35 non-schooling building projects such as libraries, hostels and health-posts. Details can be found on the Trust's website of progress on current building projects. The Trust is also involved in improving education standards in Nepal and runs a sponsored student programme which helps over 100 pupils.

Travel and Visas

A current passport is required, valid for a period of at least six months from your date of entry into Nepal (and longer if necessary, depending on the length of your visit). You can obtain a Nepal Tourist Visa before travelling through the Nepali Embassy which will save queues in Kathmandu when you arrive.

You will need to organize your own international flights to and from Nepal. International flights all arrive at Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport.

There are several domestic airports within Nepal, such as one at Pokhara, so flights can be used as a method of travel within Nepal. Alternatively, the tourist bus between Pokhara and Kathmandu takes about 7-hours and is an economical way to travel. Buses all leave at 7 am from Kantipath bus bark near Thamel. Prices vary from approximately 800-2500 rupees.

Travel to more remote villages can take a lot longer and will be completed with a mixture of bus on the larger roads, followed by Jeep on dirt tracks and possibly on foot for the latter stages if the track is not passable by vehicle.

During monsoon many smaller roads and tracks can become impassable to due flooding and landslides.

Physical Fitness

Please take time to assess whether you are physically fit enough for the volunteering role that you are looking to undertake. If the volunteering that you plan is to be working on a construction site at altitude then there will be a different level of fitness required compared to if you are mainly office based.

What to Bring

This will depend on what you will be doing in Nepal. You can find generic kit lists online. Here are some basic items:

- Rucksack - soft-bodied (waterproof can be a bonus!), without wheels
- Day rucksack
- Sleeping bag/liner/inflatable mat

CLOTHING

- Walking shoes/boots
- Trainers, sandals for evenings
- Light weight fleece for the evenings
- Lightweight long-sleeved shirt
- T-shirts
- Trousers – lightweight; avoid jeans
- Swimwear
- Wide-brimmed hat
- Casual clothes for evenings
- Lightweight waterproof jacket and trousers

GENERAL EQUIPMENT

- LED head torch plus spare batteries
- Sunglasses
- Dry bags for keeping clothes and docs dry / plastic bags for rubbish
- Adaptor for any electrical items

TOILETRIES

Usual items, plus:

- Towel
- Tissue/toilet paper
- Insect repellent containing DEET
- Sun screen and after sun

FIRST AID KIT

A suggested list of what to bring will be provided nearer the time of travel.

Vaccines and health

Please check with your GP or local travel clinic to make sure you have the correct, up to date vaccinations.

Pokhara has a well-equipped hospital, health clinics and pharmacies where you would be able to find any medicine you require.

Where will I be working?

Our office is in Pokhara, a large tourist town on the edge of the beautiful Phewa Lake; it is approximately 7 hours west of Kathmandu by bus.

Our completed schools and ongoing construction projects are in more remote villages in mountainous regions in the East and West of Nepal. Where you are based will depend on what work you will be doing.

Example Volunteer Roles

- Teaching English or other skills
- Working with teacher trainers
- Professional development for teachers - ideas to enhance practice
- Building/construction - e.g. schools, public toilets, walls
- Sustainable agriculture/horticulture
- Promoting healthcare
- Developing web sites
- Producing marketing materials
- Carrying out financial audits and advising on efficiency
- Supporting women's empowerment
- Other skills that you can offer

Accommodation/Village Life

If you are working at the office in Pokhara you will have a wide range of hotels and hostels to choose from in the town. It is a 10-minute ride in a taxi from the tourist centre of Pokhara to our office.

If you are volunteering at a school you will be living in the local village which is very unlikely to have any tourist accommodation. You will be staying with a local family and the accommodation will be basic.

Staying within the community is a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in, and learn about, the Nepali life style, language and culture. So, you will also gain lots of cultural exposure, which is likely to be one of the most special and memorable parts of your volunteering experience.

Toilets are likely to be squat style with a bucket to flush and washing facilities could well be at the village tap.

Free time/activities

Nepal is a paradise if you like the great outdoors. You will be in the foothills of the largest mountain range in the world so the trekking and climbing opportunities are limitless.

There is also the chance to go paragliding, rafting and mountain biking, amongst many other adventurous activities.

Weather

The monsoon season, roughly June to September, brings prolonged heavy rains and humid conditions. In Pokhara summer temperatures can reach low 30 degrees. In the villages where we

work in the hills, temperatures will be slightly lower during the summer and snow would not be uncommon in the winter.

Length of Stay

Applications are welcome at any time of the year. The monsoon in June to September puts a stop to most of our construction, so this may not be the best time to volunteer if you are looking to contribute towards construction projects. Also, October is a month of festivals in Nepal and most work stops during this period.

A volunteering program tends to be more effective and more can be achieved if the volunteer is able to commit more than a month of their time.

A tourist visa allows you to stay in Nepal for 150 days in a calendar year; approximately 5 months. If you want to stay longer you can arrive in August and then can stay up to 10 months, as you will be in Nepal during 2 calendar years.

If you are looking to embark on a more formally organised volunteering program for a short-term placement, please take a look at the trip Charity Challenge runs to Nepal which supports the Pahar Trust Nepal and helps in construction of a school ongoing at that time.
<https://www.charitychallenge.com/challenge/197/Nepal-Community-Challenge>

Food/drink

If you are staying in Pokhara you will be able to eat whatever you fancy at one of the many restaurants in town. There is an abundance of western food such as pizza as well as more traditional Nepali food.

If you are staying in a village you will be served 2 meals of dal bhat tarkari a day (lentil soup, rice and curried vegetables) and normally snacks and tea between meals.

Language/Culture

There will generally be people who are able to speak English to you, including in the villages - it is a nice gesture if you can attempt some phrases in Nepali in return.

Information about cultural considerations will be shared prior to any volunteer placement.

Communication

We recommend you make sure you have a charged mobile phone with you where possible and purchase a local SIM card. We will provide a 24-hour contact in Nepal in case of emergency. The emergency number to contact the police in Nepal is 100.

Local SIM cards can be purchased at the airport and in most large towns. The 2 mobile networks are Ncell and Nepal Telecom (Namaste). Ncell tends to have better coverage.

Money

The Nepali Rupee (NPR) is the local currency. Nepali Rupees are only available in Nepal. ATMs are widely available for the withdrawal of funds. There are also many licensed currency exchange offices in Pokhara and Kathmandu. British Pounds Sterling (GBP) and US Dollars can be exchanged at reasonable rates. It is good to keep a supply of small-denomination notes available for day to day purchases.

An idea of daily budgeting expenses can be obtained from websites such as <http://www.budgetyourtrip.com/nepal>.

Safety

As with any country going through the start of the democratic process there is uncertainty regarding the stability of politics in Nepal. The constitution, when it was finally released, was not well received in all communities. Nepal is subject to protests and “bandahs” (strikes) but these are not directed at tourists. You will generally be able to travel around Nepal during a strike as a tourist. Tourists are treated very respectfully in Nepal.

Please check on the UK Foreign Office travel advice website for up to date safety advice.

Geophysical aspects

As you will have seen in the news Nepal suffered 2 devastating earthquakes in 2015. Nepal lies on an active fault line meaning more earthquakes will happen in the future with no warning. The monsoon rains and mountainous topography combine to cause flooding, avalanches and landslides during June to September each year.

Volunteering information

Volunteering with PTN is suitable for a wide range of people including those taking a gap year or career break, who are retired or who are looking to start a career in the development field.

We would particularly welcome applications from people with the following qualifications and experience: architecture, construction, engineering, surveying, teaching and management.

To volunteer with PTN we require you to be over 18. If you are going to be working in schools or in any other role with children, a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be required, for which you will be liable to pay the fee. Your stay in Nepal will be self-funded, as the PTN will not be able to provide any funding or financial contribution towards any aspect of your trip.

Things to think about

Can you live without modern facilities you probably take for granted such as hot water and electricity?

Are you flexible? Developing countries, and Nepal in particular are not as obsessed with time keeping as those in the Western world. Often, schedules will run behind or be ignored; and things may not happen at the planned time. Equally, opportunities may well arise that are too good to ignore - be prepared to go with the flow; these unplanned experiences could well become the ones you remember the most!

If you do not feel PTN's volunteering opportunities will work for you, please consider doing something else to help supports PTN's work in Nepal for example a fundraising event or spread the word of our work to friends, family and colleagues so more people can find out about what we do.

Next Steps

If you decide you would like to discuss the possibility of volunteering in Nepal, please complete an Expression of Interest form, available from Alan Sweetman alan@pahar-trust.org to progress this.



Namaste!

If you have suggestions for additional content to include in future editions of this information sheet to help inform potential volunteers, please email details to alan@pahar-trust.org