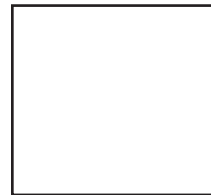


# AAAS Travels Sigma Xi Expeditions



**\*\* SPECIAL! \*\***  
**your companion is**  
**1/2 price + air**  
**(based on twin share)**



Betchart Expeditions Inc. • 17050 Montebello Road • Cupertino, CA 95014-5435 • (800) 252-4910

**FIRST CLASS**

*Join us! As we discover the  
Himalayan Wonderland of NEPAL!  
November 21–December 5, 2010*

# The Himalayan Wonderland of NEPAL

**November 21–  
December 5, 2010**

**AAAS Travels  
Sigma Xi Expeditions**



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## OVERVIEW

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**Nepal** is one of Asia's most enchanting lands. Set on the rugged flanks of the Himalayas, Nepal offers an unsurpassed wealth of ecological and cultural diversity. Two generations ago, Nepal was a kingdom isolated by dense monsoon forests from the control of India's British Raj. Today the Nepalis are a proud but hospitable people who have held tenaciously to customs and architectural traditions that have vanished elsewhere on the Asian Continent.

Highlights of this expedition include the cultural diversity of **Kathmandu Valley**, the tranquil landscapes of **Pokhara**, the traditional hill country of **Tansen**, and the wildlife of **Chitwan National Park**.

Our journey starts in the **Kathmandu Valley**, spiritual heartland of Nepal. Isolated in a mountain basin at the congenial elevation of 4100 feet, Kathmandu was long the center of trade between India and Tibet. Good farming attracted settlers, and, over centuries, distinct communities within the valley evolved customs and traditions unlike anywhere else in Asia. Hindu and Tantric Buddhist traditions intermingle in Kathmandu and this can be seen in the complex architecture, rituals, and lifestyles of the local people.

Even more singular are Kathmandu's indigenous traditions, like **Kumari**, a young girl who serves as the **Living Goddess** of the Newar people. The historical blending of Asian cultures from Mongolia, the Caucasus, and Dravidian South Asia is expressed most vividly in the faces of the Nepali people whose homeland, about the size and shape of Tennessee, encompasses more than sixty distinct local languages.

Our next destination, the town of **Pokhara**, lies along a freshwater lake called Phewa Tal. Around Pokhara, the Himalayan foothills recede so that high, icy summits like Machapuchare (the Fishtail Mountain) and the Annapurna range seem to rise directly from the lowlands. There are few places in the world where it's possible to see 20,000 feet of vertical relief out in front of you! Pokhara, weather permitting, is such a place.

The old market town of **Tansen** is built up along a mountain ridge on the far side of the dramatic Kali Gandaki River. Still today, its bazaars receive few foreign visitors. To people from the remote mountain villages of Central Nepal, Tansen is the culmination of a walking journey that may take several days. It is the place to sell mountain herbs and buy manufactured

goods, or to catch a bus to the city. For us, Tansen offers a glimpse into the life of Nepal's Middle Hills where people tend a landscape of orchards, community forests, and exquisitely terraced hillsides as they have for generations.

During our stay in Tansen, we'll visit the traditional bazaar and select from a variety of walking excursions to meet farm families, photograph the Himalayan landscapes, and look at some of the native birds. Beyond Tansen, we'll wind downward to the lowlands of **Nepal's terai region** and **Chitwan National Park**. Along the way, we will stop in **Lumbini**, birthplace of Lord Buddha. The most highly revered sites are set in a tranquil grove of sal trees surrounded by grasslands and small farms.

Our next stop is Chitwan National Park, a pocket of grassland and riverine forest on the terai, the broad alluvial plain that extends southward from the foot of the Himalaya. Chitwan—"heart of the jungle"—is habitat for endangered mammals, including elephant, Bengal tiger and one-horned rhinoceros.

During our visit to Chitwan, we'll stay in a rustic but well-appointed lodge modeled after the facilities in African game parks. Activities in Chitwan include a jeep safari and a misty-morning elephant ride through the forest and grasslands, both good ways to safely view wildlife in a place where the fauna includes tigers, rhinoceros and sloth bears.

We'll also have a chance to see migratory waterfowl and resident birds, and perhaps garial crocodile along the banks of the river that passes near our lodge. March is a very good time to visit Chitwan because



## OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

the grass is short in this season (so you can see the mammals), most of the winter birds are still around, and the resident bird species are starting to get excited about the onset of mating season. Those with binoculars and a little patience can see babblers, barbets and bulbuls, yellow-naped woodpeckers, paradise flycatchers, shelducks, storks, and numerous other memorable bird species.

Chitwan is the homeland of the Tharu, one of Nepal's indigenous ethnic groups. Here we may have the chance to visit a Tharu village and learn something about their cultural traditions.

Nepal offers an unsurpassed combination of hospitality, cultural diversity, mountain landscapes and subtropical wildlife. We hope that you will be able to join us!

Sincerely,

*Margaret*

Margaret M. Betchart  
President

Betchart Expeditions

For AAAS Travels & Sigma Xi Expeditions



## ITINERARY

### Days 1/3 – Los Angeles to Bangkok & Kathmandu, Nepal

Expedition members depart Los Angeles and fly to Bangkok with a direct connection to Nepal. Cross the International Date Line en route. As you approach Nepal, see vistas of the foothills of the Himalayas and then the great snowy chain of the Himalayas themselves. Land in the Kathmandu Valley and begin to get acquainted with the charm and intrigue of this fabled Himalayan Kingdom. *Vajra Hotel (4 nights)*.

### Day 4 Cultural Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley.

This morning we'll visit the town of Patan, one of the original Newari settlements of the Kathmandu Valley. The wonderful Patan Museum, installed in an old palace, provides a beautiful and informative introduction to the classical culture of the Kathmandu Valley which evolved over centuries of trade with its Indian and Tibetan neighbors. We will also explore Patan's adjacent Durbar Square and traditional Newari neighborhoods in the company of Sangita Thapa, a local cultural expert. After lunch at the Patan Museum, we will return to the hotel before



a late afternoon visit to Pashpatinath, an important Hindu temple complex along the upper reaches of the Bagmati River in Kathmandu. Dinner tonight may feature classical Indian tabla music.

### Day 5 Ancient Town of Bhaktapur, City of Devotees.

In the morning, we'll visit Bhaktapur, a Newari market town that appears little changed since medieval times. Recent meticulous restoration of centuries-old temples—a style unique to the Kathmandu Valley—makes Bhaktapur a center for traditional religious architecture and handicrafts including pottery, wood-carving and paper making. Lunch in Bhaktapur. In the afternoon we'll visit Hanuman Doka in Kathmandu's ancient city center and the residence of Kumari, where a young girl is sequestered as a "living goddess" whose power once legitimized the authority of the king. Dinner at a traditional Newari restaurant, preceded by an informal presentation on the traditional and contemporary culture of Kathmandu. After dinner explore the Thamel district of Kathmandu—a good place for shopping and street life.

### Day 6 Kathmandu Valley's Rural Landscapes.

Morning excursion to Taudaha Tal and Dakshinkali Temple. Taudaha Tal is a small lake in the countryside, now protected, and a good place to see birds including redshank, teal, kingfisher, and black-crowned night herons. At the lakeshore is a friendly Newari village suitable for a morning stroll. Dakshinkali, in a wooded ravine, is a site of great spiritual significance to residents of Kathmandu Valley. It is also a place for ritual sacrifice during certain times of year. The temple is located well





outside the city where the Bagmati River drains out of Chobar Gorge, and is surrounded by pleasant forests of oak and laurel. Picnic lunch at Chobar Gorge. Afternoon tea at Hatiban Resort, a pine forest with a beautiful view overlooking the city and the high mountains of Langtang National Park.

### Days 7/8 Pokhara

After breakfast we'll depart for Pokhara. The journey westward is very scenic, descending from the rim of the Kathmandu Valley, then along the Trisuli, a river which flows down from the high Himalaya. Weather permitting, we may have views of the high peaks, including the spectacular

Annapurna Range. Traditional Nepali lunch on a hilltop overlooking the river, then arrive Pokhara in the late afternoon. Enjoy a stroll along the lakeshore.

Pokhara means "lake," and our hotel, *Fishtail Lodge (2 nights)*, is situated along its shoreline. The hotel is not named for anything swimming in the water though; it is named for Machapuchare, or Fishtail Mountain whose 22,950 feet high twin summits overlook the town

The next day we will visit several interesting sites in the Pokhara Valley, including the International Mountaineering Museum and an expatriate community of Tibetans who fled the Chinese invasion of their homeland 50 years ago. If the weather is fine, we might venture up Sarankot Hill for a spectacular view of the encircling mountains. Pokhara has been an important site for conservation in Nepal, both as a center for trekking and as headquarters for the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. Afternoon visit to a Tibetan refugee camp to learn about the distinctive culture of Tibetan people.

### Days 9/10 Tansen

Late morning departure for the old district capital of Tansen, set in the hill country west of Pokhara. Picnic lunch in a valley with an opportunity to walk among villages and farmland. Highlights of today's four hour scenic journey include views of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Ranges and a crossing of the glacier-tinted Kali Gandaki River. *Hotel Shreenagar (2 nights)*.

The next morning, we will visit Tansen's traditional bazaar and the United Mission Hospital, one of several missionary-founded hospitals that are active in the hill region of Nepal. In the afternoon we will walk in the surrounding hill country where local families tend

orchards, graze buffalo and farm ancient cultivation terraces. Possible evening cultural performance by local musicians.

### Day 11 Chitwan National Park, via Lumbini, birthplace of Lord Buddha

After breakfast, descend from Tansen, then pass through scenic foothill landscapes to the terai, an expansive region of farmland and forest that spreads from the foot of the mountains south to India. This region of the Nepal terai is renowned as the birthplace 2,700 years ago of Siddhartha Gautama, whose doctrine of suffering and impermanence is the foundation of the Buddhist religion. Lunch in Lumbini, followed by a visit to the complex that was built 2000 years ago where Lord Buddha is thought to have been born. Afternoon exploration and we may have an opportunity to view ongoing archaeological and restoration work. Then follow Nepal's East-West Highway toward Chitwan National Park. *Chitwan National Park Lodge (3 nights)*.

### Days 12/13 Chitwan National Park

We have a full schedule of national park activities planned for today and tomorrow. Most of these involve wildlife viewing and exposure to the distinctive ecology of this forest and grassland region, the inner-terai. Wild mammals commonly encountered in Chitwan include Asian one-horned rhinoceros, gaur (Asian bison), several species of deer, two species of monkey, sloth bear and gharial crocodile. Bengal Tiger are present as well, but less-often seen. Chitwan is a fabulous place to see birds, and the area around our lodge abounds in species you very likely have never seen before. We will explore Chitwan's backcountry by jeep and on elephant-back, and have an opportunity to float down a placid stretch of river that flows near our lodge. There will also be opportunities for bird walks and cultural activities focused on the Tharu, the indigenous people of this region.

### Day 14 Return to Kathmandu

We will trace the Narayani River and its tributary, the Trisuli, through narrow gorge country before climbing back up to the Kathmandu Valley. Farewell dinner tonight at Banchghar, a traditional Newari restaurant. *Vajra Hotel*.



### Day 15 Kathmandu to Bangkok & Los Angeles

Transfer to Tribhuvan Airport for departure from Nepal for Bangkok and the USA, arriving the same day. B

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# COSTS & CONDITIONS

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**Trip Fee:** \$3,495 per person for 15 days (plus air fare of \$1,380 + tax per person from Los Angeles to Kathmandu, Nepal, round trip). Limited to 24 participating participants.

**Questions:** Please call **Betchart Expeditions Inc.**, phone (408) 252-4910 or (800) 252-4910. Fax (408) 252-1444. Email: Info@betchartexpeditions.com

**Expedition Fee Includes:** Land transport; airport transfers; accommodations twin share; all meals in Nepal; tips to local drivers and guides; entrance fees; baggage handling where available; leadership, administration.

**Expedition Fee Does Not Include:** International air fare (quoted separately); optional Everest flightseeing; visa; baggage handling in remote locations; gratuities to expedition leaders; personal items such as laundry, phone calls, alcoholic beverages, sodas, snacks, personal insurance; foreign airport departure taxes.

**What to Expect:** This expedition is planned for travelers who would enjoy exploring the cultural and natural heritage of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. We will explore the Kathmandu Valley at 4,100 feet, Nepalese foothills up to 6,000 feet, and the lowland terai beneath the majestic backdrop of the Himalayas (there are walks, but no trekking or high elevation activity). Leading this expedition will be excellent local guides. The group will travel 7 to 8 hours by coach on two days and 3 to 4 hours on two or three other days. On traveling days, we will take time for both planned and spontaneous stops to walk, photograph, and meet the local people. Several half-day walks will be at a leisurely pace suitable for cultural discovery, bird watching, and natural history study; binoculars are suggested. Food will include a varied Nepali, Indian, and international menu.

Weather is delightful, with midday temperatures in the 70s to lower 80s and generally clear skies. Nights can be cold (40's to 50's). Elevations will range from a few hundred feet to about 6,000 feet in the foothills. Most time will be spent at 5,000 feet or less. This expedition will be a tremendous experience for travelers with an appetite for adventure who would enjoy a chance to explore culturally and biologically rich areas in the Himalayas of Nepal. Please be flexible concerning time schedules, hotels, food, bumpy roads, and mechanical breakdowns. With this in mind, we will have a great adventure of discovery. (No smoking in vehicles, during lectures, or meals, please.)

**Air Fare & Airline Ticketing:** Air fare quoted is based on a special fare with Thai Airways. All air bookings will be handled by Betchart Expeditions Inc. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

**Accommodations:** Are in first class hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara and in an excellent national park lodge. Accommodations are twin-share with private bath. In remote Tansen, we stay in a modest (but best available) hotel which allows us the opportunity to explore this culturally interesting location. Single accommodations are available for a supplement of \$795. If you do not have a roommate, or we cannot provide one, you must pay the single supplement.

**Reservations, Deposits & Payments:** To reserve a place on this expedition, please mail a deposit check for \$500 per person with the completed reservation form to: **Nepal Expedition, Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**. Balance of land fee is due 60 days before departure.

**Cancellations & Refunds:** The initial deposit is refundable up to 60 days before departure less a handling fee of \$100 per person. There is no refund after the 60-day period unless your place is resold, then only the \$100 per person handling fee is withheld. There are no refunds for unused meals or other expedition features.

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## RESPONSIBILITY

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*Betchart Expeditions Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society, act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels, and exercise every care possible. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, terrorism, quarantine, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or reserve the right to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance.*

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Illustrations by Narca Moore-Craig.

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## RESERVATIONS

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#1152

**Yes!** I/we want to join the **Himalayan Wonderland of Nepal Expedition, November 21–December 5, 2010**, offered by **AAAS Travels & Sigma Xi Expeditions**. Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ space(s). As a deposit, I/we enclose a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (\$500 per person) payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Work (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: AAAS    Sigma Xi    ACS    Planetary Society

Accommodations Preference:

Twin     Single     Twin Share with friend *or*  assign roommate

Nonsmoker     Smoker

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Mail To:**    **Nepal Expedition 2010**  
**Betchart Expeditions Inc.**  
**17050 Montebello Road**  
**Cupertino, CA 95014-5435**

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