

# Annapurna Expedition, Nepal

A lightweight bikepacking adventure around the Annapurna Circuit featuring all of the best singletrack and side trips along the way.



## Trip Highlights:

- 12 days of adventure riding among the biggest mountains in the world
- Crossing suspension bridges and topping out at Thorong La Pass, 5420m
- Riding some of the best trails in Nepal including the infamous Lubra Magic
- A 3-day descent through the deepest river canyon on earth!
  
- Discovering Buddhist and Hindu cultures and visiting sacred religious sites
- Enjoying delicious warm meals in comfortable tea house accommodations
- Endlessly spotting beautiful waterfalls and soaking in natural hot spring
- Rolling into tropical Pokhara and celebrating your legendary achievement!



This document includes further details intended to help you better prepare for your trip. For the full itinerary and list of inclusions, please visit the trip page of our website, [here](#).



## General Information

### Riding:

We will be riding a mix of fun singletrack trails and technical double track roads. Roughly a 50/50 split. Roads are mostly in the lower sections of the circuit and they are very scenic and generally quite entertaining. There's plenty of things to look at, keeping your mind occupied while grinding uphill. Downhill road sections are fast, fun, and playful. Because the circuit is so diverse with elevation changes and climate zones, the trails that we ride are also very diverse. Lower down you can expect fairly mellow trails with good dirt and a mix of rocks and roots. At higher elevations the trails tend to be a bit more steep and technical with loose, rocky dirt, and plenty of exposure. There are also several long and steep hike-a-bike sections on the way up to Tilicho Lake and Thorong La Pass.

The circuit starts at an elevation of 800m and gradually climbs to 5416m, before descending back down to 800m on the other side. One of the keys to acclimatization is to ascend slowly. Each day's ride will be approximately 5-6 hours on the bike at a casual to moderate pace, with an hour-long break for lunch on most days.

Exact distances, elevations, and more riding information can be found on our regular trip page, [here](#).

Always exercise caution and ride within your limits!

### Food:

Nepalese food is delicious, fresh, and healthy. An essential must-try dish is the Nepali Dal Bhat, but don't forget about the Momo's and Yak Burgers too! There are plenty of western options available as well as some incredible Indian and Asian flavors.

Your trip price includes 3 **regular** meals per day. Breakfast options in the tea houses typically consist of eggs of any style, toast with jam, ham or sausage, porridge, pancakes, french toast, ect., served along with local fruit juice and black tea or basic milk coffee. Lunch is usually some type of stir fry rice or noodle dish or pasta with egg, chicken, and/or veggies. Dal Bhat is always a healthy and filling lunch option as well. At dinner time you can choose from a number of different items on the tea-house menus - anything from pizza and pasta to Indian curries, spring rolls, chicken or beef sizzlers, and much more.

Several other food and beverage options exist at your own expense, such as:

- Personal snacks or drinks. Items such as Snickers bars, coconut cookies, and other sweet or salty snacks, as well as small bottles of soda, Red Bull, juice cans etc., can all be purchased at several spots throughout each day
- Post-ride snacks and drinks upon arrival at the teahouse. You may want to have some salty snacks and cold drinks at the end of a hard day. We say go ahead and indulge, but keep in mind these items are not included in the regular trip cost.
- After dinner treats - Some tea houses offer up delicious dessert options if you're looking to satisfy your sweet tooth.
- Fancy espresso coffees and fresh bakery items are available in a few special locations along the circuit and definitely make a nice treat for yourself, but keep in mind that these items are also not included in your trip price.
- Your meals in Pokhara at the end of the trip are also not included. The reasoning behind this is that people like to celebrate and party at the end of the trip, rightfully so, and the meal costs just add up way too quickly.



## Weather:

With such drastic elevation change on this trip you need to be prepared for all types of weather conditions. We will be visiting during the dry season which is generally sunny and dry, however, we do still need to be prepared for rain, or even some snow, at any time.

The lower elevation cities of Kathmandu and Pokhara will be warm and tropical at that time of year, anywhere from 20 to 30+ degrees celsius. The first few days on the circuit will be a similar temperature and sometimes quite humid while riding through the tropical jungle regions. Mornings and evenings will obviously be a bit cooler, but still very pleasant.

Upon reaching Manang at an elevation of 3500m the climate changes significantly. It is much more of an arid and dry, desert-like climate. Overnight temps can be cold, sometimes as low as 0 degrees celsius. If the sun is out during the day it will be perfect riding temps around 15 degrees.

Going to very high elevations from Manang can be quite a bit colder. Overnight temps at Tilicho Base Camp and Thorong Phedi will likely be around negative 5 to negative 10 degrees. When the sun is out during the daytime it should be a pleasant riding temperature around 5 to 10 degrees.

Temperatures warm up quickly once we're over the pass, descending down the other side towards Muktinath. The Lower Mustang Valley is dry with warm sunshine and cool air. It can be quite windy in this area especially in the afternoons.

Descending further into pine forests with fresh air and perfect temps, we'll eventually end up back in a hot and humid jungle climate, before reaching the tropical paradise of Pokhara.

## Elevation:

Our itinerary is designed with a safe rate of elevation gain and appropriate acclimatization methods in mind. Dealing with the altitude and recognizing the S/Sx of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) will be discussed in detail on our first night's pre-trip meeting. Your guides have a wealth of knowledge and experience dealing with high elevations and AMS, so rest assured, you're in good hands!

Keeping well hydrated is one of the best things you can do for acclimatization, so be sure to drink plenty of water before and during your trip! It's also important to put in plenty of riding and training time before your trip.

You will need to get a prescription for an altitude related medication called DIAMOX which you may choose to take to help with acclimatization. More info on this below in the medications section.

## Laundry:

Laundry services during our time on the circuit are available in Manang only. There will be some opportunities to wash small items by hand. Laundry service is also available in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

## Accommodations:

In Kathmandu and Pokhara we'll be staying in typical 3 star hotels. They are clean and comfortable but don't expect luxury. These hotels have hot showers, good wifi, comfy beds, air conditioning and several other features to make you feel at home.

In the mountains we'll be staying in traditional Nepali Tea Houses. These are basic guest houses set up to service the needs of all the trekkers and mountaineers in the area. The teahouses are clean and comfortable but you might also find them to be a bit rustic. They have hot water, wifi, and electricity, but, as with all of Nepal, sometimes things don't work perfectly, so be prepared to go with the flow. The two nights that we spend at high elevation base camps, Tilicho and Thorong Phedi will be more rustic yet. Running water is usually frozen in the mornings, plus limited electricity and spotty wifi. But don't worry, the fire in the common room will keep you warm in the evenings while playing cards or meeting people from all over the world!

There are bed sheets and extra blankets available in all of the tea houses, however, we recommend bringing your own lightweight, packable, and warm sleeping bag for the nights spent at higher elevations. There is no heating in any of the tea house rooms, aside from the woodstove fire in the main dining room.

All rooms are double occupancy so you will be sharing a room with someone of your same sex. If you are attending the trip as a couple, you will be guaranteed a private room at no additional cost. Private room upgrades are available in Kathmandu and Pokhara only - inquire for details.

## Currency & Spending Money:

Most major hotels and some restaurants in Kathmandu and Pokhara will accept credit cards, however, everywhere on the circuit will require cash in the form of the Nepalese Rupee (NPR). It is easy to exchange USD or CAD for Nepalese Rupees in Kathmandu. There are also several ATM's available.

The exchange rate is basically 100:1 for Canadian dollars. An item for sale in Nepal for 1700NPR is \$17 CAD. A pretty easy conversion!

There are no ATM's along the circuit so you'll need to bring along whatever you think you will spend. We recommend that you bring at least \$200 CAD (20,000 NPR) upon departure from KTM. This is completely dependent on how much beer you think you will drink! ;) To give you an idea - a large bottle of beer is \$5-\$6, a fancy coffee is \$2-\$3, pastries and desserts \$2-\$5, laundry service \$6-\$8, chocolate bars and sodas \$1-\$2. There are more ATM's in Pokhara at the end of the trip.

## Tipping:

Gratuities for your guides can be made in USD, CAD, or any leftover NPR at the end of your trip. Our team works very hard to ensure you have the best possible time on your trip and we're here for you every step of the way. If at the end of your trip, you feel that your guides have done an outstanding job, a gratuity of 10% of the trip price is common.

## Tourist Visa and Permits:

Upon arriving in Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport you will proceed through the immigration desks to fill out forms and pay for your tourist visa. Sometimes the wait time here is at least a half an hour up to an hour or more unfortunately!

You will need to purchase a 15 day visa for \$30 USD, or a 30 day tourist visa for \$50 USD, depending on how long your trip will be. If you are in the country for only 16 days, you still need to purchase the 30 day visa. There is no way around this. You can only make this payment in cash but they will accept USD or CAD.

In the days leading up to your trip you will receive a separate email with detailed instructions for navigating your way through the arrivals process.

I will also need you to send me a photocopy or picture of your passport in order to obtain all of our necessary permits in advance.

## Bikepacking Setup:

Because we are eating and sleeping in tea houses along the way, there's no need to carry any food or camping gear aside from a small sleeping bag. On top of that, your guides are always carrying all the necessary bike tools, first-aid kits, and communications.

All that you need to carry are your personal items and clothing. See below for a detailed list of what to pack with you on the circuit.

Some people don't like to attach bikepacking bags to their bikes so they manage to carry everything in a 30-40L backpack. Some people like to use the bags in order to take some weight off their backs. Others are just over-packers and have no choice but to use both the bikepacking bags and a big backpack. Ultimately, the set-up you choose to use is a personal decision, and it is an important one. We always make sure to discuss this in more detail with all of our clients, well before the start of the trip.

You are responsible for providing your own backpacks and/or bikepacking bags. We recommend experimenting with your kit and getting your set-up all dialed in at home, before your trip, however, if you don't want to invest in the purchase of new bikepacking bags, we do have a limited selection of [Revelate Designs](#) bags available for rent, which are already located in Nepal.

## Drinking Water:

Do not drink untreated tap water in Nepal. You are responsible for purchasing and/or treating your own drinking water for the duration of the trip. This is purely for environmental and logistical reasons and we understand that this may be unconventional to most normal mountain bike trips. There is a big problem with single use plastic bottles in the Himalayas and that is not something we want to contribute to. You can feel free to purchase bottles of water in the cities of Kathmandu and Pokhara, however, while you're on the circuit, we insist that you use either a packable water filtration system such as one's available from [Aquamira](#) or [Life Straw](#), or simply use [Aquatabs](#) to treat all of your water. Aquatabs are our preferred method due to ease of use and weight savings.

## Pre-Trip Planning

### Trip Insurance:

We partner with Global Rescue, the world's leading medical and security evacuation organization, to offer you the highest level of security and medical emergency evacuation support. Their policies include helicopter evacuation, local medical treatment, and home-country evacuation transportation, as well as trip cancellation coverage.

Though we recommend purchasing your policy with Global Rescue, you can also purchase your own private insurance through the broker of your choice. Emergency medical insurance coverage is mandatory. [Click here](#) to book your policy with Global Rescue.

### Vaccinations & Travel Medications:

If you don't have much experience traveling to developing countries, you may want to make an appointment to visit a travel doctor at least 4 weeks before your trip. The travel doctor will advise you as to what you need in the way of medications and vaccinations.

Some common vaccinations for travel are: measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot. Hepatitis A, and Typhoid vaccinations are also likely required.

You will likely get prescriptions for Dukhorol and/or other travelers diarrhea medications such as Azithromycin or Ciprofloxacin. Over the counter meds such as Immodium and Pepto Bismol can also be helpful for less serious bouts of diarrhea or stomach problems. You may also get a prescription for an altitude medication called Diamox (Acetazolamide).

DIAMOX is a high altitude medication used to treat and prevent AMS (acute mountain sickness). The doctor should be able to describe to you how it works much better than I can, but here's the definition from Wikipedia:

*In the treatment of mountain sickness, acetazolamide forces the kidneys to excrete bicarbonate, the conjugate base of carbonic acid. By increasing the amount of bicarbonate excreted in the urine, the blood becomes more acidic.[12] As the body equates acidity of the blood to its CO2 concentration, artificially acidifying the blood fools the body into thinking it has an excess of CO2, and it excretes this imaginary excess CO2 by deeper and faster breathing, which in turn increases the amount Acetazolamide is not an immediate cure for acute mountain sickness; rather, it speeds up part of the acclimatization process which in turn helps to relieve symptoms.[19] Acetazolamide is still effective if started early in the course of mountain sickness. As prevention it is started one day before travel to altitude and continued for the first 2 days at altitude.*

### Travel Prep:

Try to be packed, organized, and prepared for your trip a few days before you leave. That way you're not too busy or stressed out before embarking on your big days of travel to Nepal. Rest, hydration, and eating well are key ingredients to acclimatization and ensuring that you arrive healthy and ready to ride.

## What to Bring

### Your Bike & Travel Bag:

Any modern trail bike will work perfectly for this trip. Check your bike thoroughly before your trip to ensure it is in perfect, working condition. Consider getting a full tune up at your local bike shop if needed. Ensure that all internal bearings, suspension, drivetrain, dropper post, and brakes are in good shape. We recommend installing brand new sets of brake pads before your trip and having your brakes fully bled so that they're in perfect shape. If you're running tubeless tires, make sure your tubeless sealant is topped up and fresh.

You'll need to pack your bike in a travel bag or box for air travel. Your travel bag or box will be delivered to our hotel in Pokhara along with any other regular luggage. It will be waiting for you there at the end of the trip.

### Spare Parts and Tools:

- Chain "quick-links" specific to your drivetrain (10, 11, 12 speed)
- Derailleur hanger specific to your make and model of bike
- 2-3 spare spokes (spokes come very specific lengths, check with your local shop)
- 2 spare tubes, tire levers, and a good patch kit
- Your favorite small multitool
- Any other parts or tools that you feel are very unique to your bike

Prior to the trip we will be collecting information about your bikes including make, model, wheel size, drivetrain type and model, brake type and model, dropper post model, and whether or not you're running tubeless tires. This will help to ensure that your guides are ready for any potential repairs out there.

Your guides always carry a comprehensive trailside repair kit including: tire pumps, shock pumps, tire plugs, spare tubes, patch kits, multi-tools, quick links, and several other small parts and tools for emergency repairs

### Clothing and Gear:

This is a list of what you'll want to pack while bikepacking on the circuit. You can bring extra clothing or items which will stay with your main luggage and be transported from Kathmandu to Pokhara.

- Helmet
- Sunglasses
- Backpack and bikepacking bags
- 1-2 pairs of regular riding gloves
- 1 pair of cold weather gloves





- 2 sets of hand and toe warmers (recommended, for early mornings at high elevations)
- Knee pads (optional)
- Arm and/or leg warmers (optional)
- 2 buffs or bandana/thin toque (1 for head warmth under helmet, 1 for mouth cover from dust)
- 1-2 pairs of riding shorts and 2-3 chamois
- 2-3 riding shirts/jerseys (light short sleeve for hot weather and thicker long sleeve for cool temps)
- 2-3 pairs of riding socks for different temps
- 1 pair of warm ski socks for evenings/overnight
- 1 pair of riding shoes
- 1 pair of lightweight flip flops or sandals to wear around the teahouses (don't carry regular shoes)
- 1 warm merino baselayer top (for evenings/sleeping and for mornings at high elevation)
- 1 warm merino pants/long johns (for evenings/sleeping and for mornings at high elevation)
- 1 pair of thin but durable pants (for evenings and for mornings riding at high elevation)
- 1 regular top/t-shirt for evenings
- 2 pairs of regular underwear
- 1 warm puffy jacket (one that packs down small, but is nice and warm)
- 1 thin but waterproof rain shell
- 1 lightweight warm sleeping bag (rated to -7 or so should be good)
- Headlamp with fresh batteries
- Water bladder and/or water bottle(s) with filter or aquatabs
- Small personal and packable towel for showers
- Personal toiletries and toilet paper (you can purchase these items everywhere along the route)
- Phone charger
- Small power bank (optional but recommended)
- Sunscreen with strong SPF level
- Prescription travel and altitude medications listed above
- Over the counter medications such as extra strength ibuprofen for altitude headaches, and Imodium or Pepto-Bismol for stomach and diarrhea relief
- Small personal first aid kit (I will have a larger one)

