



The Mountain Volunteer Nepal

Homestay and Program Information



About Your Home stay

Thank you for choosing The Mountain Volunteer for your home stay visit and volunteer headquarters in Nepal. We hope the following information will help make your stay more pleasant and productive.

A word about the people who live in this house. - You are a guest in someone's home. While we've tried hard to create a bed and breakfast ambiance for you this is not in fact a B & B or "guest house" but a real home. Everyone here is dedicated to your well-being and success as a volunteer but please don't treat them as servants or as hotel staff. Also, ask first before using the kitchen or other things, especially during load shedding (see power below) we need to be careful about using power.

It takes a lot of staff to arrange your placement, cook and clean, help you find your way about the city and support your success here. Our mission is charitable and we are committed to making it possible for you to make a contribution to the people of Nepal. That's why we have this program and make our home available to you.



Kathmandu in General - Kathmandu is a city of approximately 4,000,000 people. The city is divided into many sections such as the area where you live, Maharajgunj. It's busy, noisy, often dirty and polluted and it's home to many different Nepali's coming from many different cultures. There are both Hindu and Buddhist sites to see, a sampling of nearly every kind of food you can imagine from typical Nepali to Indian, Chinese and even some pretty darn good pizza and Italian foods. The tourist hub is called Thamel. It's a bit of an amusement park and not at all representative of real life in Nepal, but worth a visit at least. Other sites such as "Monkey Temple" or Swayambhu as it is correctly called and Durbar Square afford a much more realistic view of life here. Just walking about your own neighborhood is another good way to learn about Nepal as well. Our staff at The Mountain Volunteer can help you find the real Nepal, tell you where the locals shop and how to get from our home to nearly anywhere you need to go in the city. Just ask and we are happy to help

Power- The power is frequently off in Kathmandu as the city is not able to meet its electrical needs. There is normally a schedule for this so you can try to plan your day accordingly. We have limited back up power and emergency lights as well as candles to help get through the times when the power is off. Please don't use any house lighting that is not absolutely necessary during load shedding (the term the power company uses) as the battery back-up will not power much nor last long. We've all learned to live with this near daily problem and we are sure you can adjust to it as well. Try to keep a sense of humor as well as perspective about it all. Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia and after all you came here due to the poverty. Load shedding is a real part of Nepali life. Also, please keep in mind that when the power is on it is very costly to use. Try to use the tube lights instead of the other lighting in the house. Thanks for your help in conserving.

Load Shedding Time. During load shedding, or power outages, we have a very limited amount of electricity available via a power inverter. Please do not use any electrical appliances during load shedding that are not absolutely necessary. We can only supply about 3 hours of the most basic lights and wireless internet at this time and often load shedding will be for more than 3 hours. Your help in conserving during load shedding will help us make our limited power supply last a lot longer.

Water - Kathmandu does not have enough water to meet its needs. While our home will generally have an adequate supply of water please consider this a precious recourse and use it wisely. Do NOT drink water from the



tap ! There is a ceramic and silver filter system in the kitchen and this should be the only water you drink. Coffee and tea are made with boiled water and that is perfectly safe to drink.

Showers - We use a solar system to heat water for showers. As you might expect if there is little sun, there is also little hot water. Late afternoon or early evening is the best time to try for a hot shower and please remember others may also want hot water so be considerate and leave a little for the next volunteer. During the winter we also have a “bucket shower” that uses a heater placed in a bucket of water. Please ask staff about how to use this.

Heating and Cooling - Homes in Nepal do not have heat or heating systems. In the winter it can be quite chilly here. We have installed a couple of small space heaters to take some of the chill off but you should not expect the sort of whole house heating you are accustomed to in the west. Layer up in sweaters, toss a blanket around your shoulders and understand that this too is the reality of life in Nepal and part of the experience of living here. In the summer months, particularly in the rainy season, the weather can be hot and muggy. We have fans in all the guest rooms to make things more comfortable for you.

Use of the internet - There are computers in the office on the ground floor that are for our volunteers to use. Please be courteous of others who may be waiting to check e-mail. Do not download or install any programs on these computers and do not go web surfing to “questionable” web sites as the children may be the next to use the computer after you and we are not anxious to teach them things they are better off not knowing. There is also a wireless system installed so you can use your laptop in your room. This is not a secured wireless network.

Going outside - You are living in Maharajgunj, one block from Bhat Bhatteni Super Store. Most anything you want can be found at Bhat Bhatteni. The area is generally safe for you to walk around at anytime of the day or night, however some common sense is needed. As a foreigner you will draw some attention and it is assumed you have money. Don't be flashy, be slow to make new friends, but not shy to say hello. Lock the house gate when you come in and try to always travel outside using the “buddy system” especially at night. After 10 pm things close here. The house also closes and if you need to be outside later than that please arrange this advance as someone will have to stay up in order to let you in. Please take the phone number to the house with you and keep it on you at all times. We greatly prefer that you let someone know when you are leaving the house, where you are going and when you intend to be back. Having this information makes it possible for us to come and find you if needed.



Services in the area - In addition to Bhat Bhatteni there are many shops, restaurants and street vendors in this area. The local restaurants are for the most part safe to eat in but we suggest you do not eat uncooked food and always ask for bottled water which will likely be called mineral water by the locals. There are several phone places nearby where you can make a reasonably priced call to friends and family back home. Ask someone at the house which one affords the best rates. Taxis are readily available in front of Bhat Bhatteni. Negotiations for taxi fares could be a booklet of its own. In brief the key things to know are this; the taxis have meters and you should ask the driver to use the meter. Ask by saying “meter ho?” If the reply is negative you may feel free to ask another taxi. If you are unable to find any driver who will agree to the use of the meter try to negotiate a fixed price you can live with. The people at the house or The Mountain Volunteer Staff can give you some help with this.

Bargaining - Keep in mind always when negotiating prices that the taxis as well as the shopkeepers need to make a living too. Consider if it's really worthwhile to “beat them up” over a few rupees or not. Also stop and think for a moment what the real cost of things is. A taxi may take you to Thamel from here for 200 rupees or less. As of the time of this brochure that amounts to about \$2.50 US. How much lower do you really expect someone to go and is getting them down 50 rupees (less than a dollar) consistent with your goal of helping the people of Nepal?

Laundry - We have a Nepali washing machine on the roof (bucket and spigot) . You should not expect the residents of this home to do your laundry for you. You can ask if someone will and if they agree please pay them well as they will not ask you for a fixed price and would consider it impolite to refuse your request or demand payment. Remember, this is their home and you are a guest. Their customs require them to attempt to meet your every request so please don't take advantage of Nepali hospitality. There are places nearby that will do laundry for you at a reasonable cost.



Getting along - You are living in a home with others and sometimes you may find yourself annoyed with them. Relax, take a deep breath and remember why you are here. Try your best to play nice in the sandbox and overlook the habits of others that seem to be blatant violations of your rights. Everyone who comes here comes to help others so you may assume all share the love of mankind and have good hearts or they would not be here. Practice some humility, learn to compromise. Compromise is at the core of Nepali life and you are here to experience Nepal so compromise should be your mantra. Trust that your fellow volunteers, the staff and your hosts here at the house are good people and learn to go with the flow. Everything here will happen in “Nepal time” which you should understand works differently than the world you have come from. Enjoy Nepal for what it is and don't try to make it what it is not.

Your Room - You will be sharing a room with others that you may, or may not know. A bit of common sense about taking care of your personal belongings and picking up after yourself will go a long way toward making your stay pleasant. Each bed had drawers for storing your personal things in and each bed has a Nepali style blanket. Those blankets are very thick and tend to get mistaken by newcomers for mattress pad. However, if you sleep on it, you'll compact the cotton batting and then it's not going to keep you very warm when you need it, so sleep under and not on the blanket please. If you are cold you can ask for another blanket. We will also try during the winter months to run a heater in your room for 15-20 minutes before bed to take the chill off. As with many things in Nepal, bottled gas for the heater is in short supply and difficult to get so we are unable to run the heater all the time, as much as we too might enjoy it.

Final Word - Remember to ask first, tell us when you leave the house and always take our phone numbers with you and I am sure your stay will be a good one. From all of us at The Mountain Volunteer Nepal and The Mountain Fund USA, welcome to Nepal and welcome to our home !