

“Everest, Elephants – Enchanting Nepal”

Deluxe Small Group to the Roof of the World

“The higher we soar, the smaller we appear to those who cannot fly.”

April 2 - 9, 2020

Namaste! Join us on our epic AFS journey to the Top of the World for some of the most astonishing scenery imaginable in a land above the clouds! Nepal is a stunning mountain kingdom that straddles the mighty Himalayas, boasting the world’s highest snow peaks and deepest lush valleys. See some of the greenest nature reserves, laced with crystal rivers and exotic culture. This is a land of monasteries, holy temples, Sherpas, yaks, yetis, wild ellies and Bengal tigers. This trip is Travel Nirvana.

*Sacred sites and mountain highs - Immerse yourself in a fascinating tapestry of Hindi, Buddhist and tribal cultures as we mingle with monks and visit the Children’s Village in Old Kathmandu. Experience sensory overload with the bustling energy of Durbar Square along with 5th Century temples and monasteries which lend the best Instagramable photos. The absolute highlight is when a helicopter whisks us up to Everest for a **Champagne Breakfast Above the Clouds**. Breathtaking panoramas await as we’re surrounded by the snowcapped jewels that are the Himalayas.*

Jungle adventure - We then fly south to the Royal Chitwan National Park, a World Heritage Site, for a 3-day glorious recess to play. Our jungle resort is the astonishing new Taj Meghauri Serai resort, where you will be pampered beyond belief. With just 16 luxury rooms, the Taj is sought after by the most high-end tour operators, but we’ve been able to secure our spot here and the exclusive safari lodge will be ours! The Taj is where “Chilling is Thrilling” with gourmet meals, elegant spa treatments and dozens of cool amenities. Enjoy your Jeep Safaris in search of tigers, one horned rhinos, canoes through jungle waterways and so much more! You will play with the resident ellies who are as coddled as you will be – perhaps more. Experience a total ethical interaction with these happy, pampered pachyderms who love their baths and jungle walks. And for an adrenaline rush, we enjoy Whitewater Rafting down the thrilling Trisuli River.

This is a small group and we split into two mini groups. You may find cheap Nepal tours but beware here. We want to WOW you with AHA! moments found nowhere else with the best guides and this level of luxury. April is the perfect time to go - before monsoon season and with great mountain visibility. Our past groups just loved Nepal but we have raised the bar even higher with this time. It truly is beyond your wildest dreams. Join me and make this once in a lifetime vacay a reality!

Testimonial:

“I want to thank you, Suzy, for putting this incredible trip together. Our hotels were absolutely first class and it was jam-packed with so much culture, history and fun activities! This Nepal Adventure exceeded my expectations!” - Carole Daniel

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Full details coming by email in TripTrips

April 2 Thurs – Welcome to Kathmandu Nepal

B. (meals)

Touch down in the storied city of Kathmandu and get our first glimpse of the snowcapped Himalayas! This legendary former Royal Capital of the Kingdom of Nepal is located deep in Kathmandu Valley, a place that served as the crossroads for the ancient civilizations of Asia. A vibrant city bursting with color and culture, Kathmandu is the center of Nepal's history, art and economy. This is home to an inexhaustible number of palaces, golden pagodas, temples and monuments which pay homage to countless deities. It's also a buzzing capital where daily life unfolds out in the open for great photo ops.

Our home for the next two nights is the Shambala Kathmandu. Located near embassy row, it is a modern Tibetan style boutique hotel with views of the mountains and plenty of shops and restaurants nearby.

International flights arrive in the morning, so we should be to the hotel by late morning. Check-in is officially 2pm. We have the day to relax in the hotel or explore. In the evening, we will meet our escort who will be our guide for our trip

Overnight: Shambala Kathmandu - 2 Nights. Tibetan themed boutique hotel on Embassy Rd with spa and gorgeous rooftop pool.

April 3 – Friday – Full day Kathmandu Tour

B D

For best manageability, we split our group two small groups of 14 each traveling side by side.

Much of the day is spent exploring the incomparable Kathmandu in a half day tour. We start with fabulous Kathmandu Durbar Square, one of three royal palace squares in the valley. Here, we will visit the Hanuman Dhoka Palace Complex where the Shah (Gurkha) Dynasty and later the Rana maharajas resided. The 16th century complex still plays a major role in Nepalese royal activities. This is where important ceremonies take place such as the coronations for Nepalese monarchs.

The complex includes the King Tribhuvan Memorial Museum (dedicated to the monarch who opened Nepal to the outside world) and the Mahendra Museum (dedicated to Tribhuvan's son). We have the opportunity to visit the palace's State rooms and the one of Nepal's best known curiosities - the Kumari Chowk. Kumari Chowk is home to a living goddess called Raj Kumari. This young girl is believed to be the human incarnation of the demon-slaying Hindu mother goddess, Durga. Raj Kumari is chosen from girls as young as 5 years old through an ancient and mystical selection process and serves until she reaches puberty. Worshipped during religious festivals, she makes some public appearances for a fee paid to her guards but photographing her is prohibited.

Later, we enjoy peace, prayers and indescribable panoramic views as we visit the Swayambhunath Stupa. Known as the "Monkey Temple, Swayambhunath is the oldest of its kind in Nepal and sits high on a hill above Kathmandu. Legend has it that the glory of Kathmandu Valley had its beginnings at this spot. This is considered one of the country's holiest spots, drawing Buddhists and Hindus alike.

In the afternoon, we'll pay a visit to the respected SOS Children's Village in Old Kathmandu. The complex houses and schools both orphans and children whom their parents cannot afford to raise. After the devastating earthquake of 2015, one million of 27 million Nepalese children were left orphaned. You will be amazed at the spirit and smiles of these children. If you are inclined, it is always nice to bring small things like crayons or even candy to give to the children.

www.sosnepal.org.np

(Note, visit based on conditions of director that week. Other orphanage may be substituted.)

This evening, we enjoy our official Welcome Dinner at the Shambala to get to know our new family of travel lovers.

Overnight: Shambala Kathmandu 2 Nights

April 4 – Saturday - Into Thin Air on Top of the World

B

It's an early morning for us as we set out for the fabled Mt. Everest and a meal of a lifetime! Helicopters with experienced pilots will whisk us high into the Himalayas to Kongde Ri where we have a luxurious hot breakfast, compete with champagne, at the Top of the World. Served up by sherpas at almost 14,000 feet, our breathtaking views are the stunning snowcapped peaks of Mount Everest and the rest of the Himalayas. It's about a 4-hour journey. Photograph Everest glowing her first light of sun in the shadows on holy mountains.

Heading back to Kathmandu, we stop in Lalitpur to explore Patan Durbar Square. Like its counterpart in Kathmandu, is an enchanting mélange of palace buildings, artistic courtyards and graceful pagoda temples. Listed as a World Heritage Site, the former royal palace complex is the center of Patan's religious and social life. One remarkable monument here is a 17th century temple dedicated to the Hindu God Krishna – Krishna Mandir built entirely of stone with rare stone carvings on its walls depicting the epic wars from Ramayana and Mahabharata.

The rest of the afternoon is free to rest or explore Kathmandu. Perhaps go shopping in the Thamel district for some cool prayer flags and wheels, carvings and paintings.

Overnight at hotel Shambala

April 5 – Sunday - Fly Kathmandu to Chitwan National Park B

After breakfast, we take a short flight from Kathmandu to Bharatpur where we trade the mountains for the lush jungles of Chitwan. Almost the entire region is covered with flowering trees called Chitwan Sal and riverine forests. A UNESCO Site, Chitwan National Park is Nepal's first and most famous National Park. Once a popular hunting area, it is now committed to conservation and home to an astounding array of exotic animals. Chitwan is a heaven for wildlife enthusiasts. It is renowned for tigers, one-horned rhinoceros, crocodiles, a host of other wildlife, more than 450 species of birds and over 45 species of amphibians and reptiles.

We will be staying in the mind-blowing new resort, the Taj Meghauili Serai. Tucked away along the scenic banks of the Rapti River, this extraordinary jungle retreat will pamper you to no end. While the Taj can arrange a host of excursions for your free time, you may not want to leave. The main guest areas offer uninhibited views of the river, while a spacious lounge boasts a warm fireplace and as well as a bar. A sparkling swimming offers a refreshing respite in between activities. There are viewing decks overlooking the river which are made for the guests to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature. You'll want to park yourself here for sunset which is something you do not want to miss.

Your afternoon and evening are yours to enjoy these wonderous surroundings. Your guide will direct you or google "things to do Kathmandu" and you'll find countless fun activities.

Overnight at Hotel Taj Meghauili Serai, Chitwan (3 nights)

April 6 – Monday – Chitwan Jungle Safari

B

We start the morning with a Jeep safari through Chitwan's landscape, passing through the towering, dense canopied Sal forests, lush grasslands and ox bow lakes. Our guides are trained naturalists and experienced trackers from the local community. We'll be on the lookout for the elusive tiger or the majestic migrant bird species like Great Hornbill, Ruddy Shelduck, Pied Kingfisher and Red Headed Trogon. There's one-horned Rhinoceros who are the stars of Chitwan and can usually spotted in open woods and grasslands. The Gharial crocodiles are highly endangered and the park authorities run a breeding center for these unusual looking creatures that can be visited while out on a safari drive.

We'll return to the lodge for a break and then in the afternoon to get up close and personal with the most pampered

elephants you have ever seen. These pachyderms live on the Taj property and live a life of luxury after being rescued. You'll get to know these gentle giants by bathing, feeding and humanely riding, if you choose. Enjoy a walk into the jungle with them. They love the attention! You'll learn just what great memories they really have. If you come back in a few years, they'll recognize you!

Your evening is your own to take advantage of the amenities at the Taj.

Overnight at Hotel Taj Meghauri Serai, Chitwan (3 nights)

April 7 – Tuesday – Free Day in Chitwan **B**

You have a whole day to enjoy this special place. The hotel can help arrange a number of activities including a walking safari with a naturalist or perhaps a canoe trip down the picturesque Rapti river enjoying beautiful views of the Himalayan foothills and spot innumerable rhinoceroses, gharials and birdlife They can even arrange a visit to a local Tharu village to see the authentic way of life of the locals. Or you could choose to just relax and enjoy this gorgeous property. The hotel can arrange spa treatments in your room.

Overnight at Hotel Taj Meghauri Serai, Chitwan

April 8 – Wednesday – Whitewater rafting & Katmandu **B D**

We make our way back to Katmandu overland to take in some of the stunning scenery and a little adventure - White water rafting! No experience necessary, these are just class 2 and 3 rapids along the scenic Trisuli River. The river runs from Kathmandu towards Chitwan and this 3 hour adventure gives you a river's edge view of terraced rice fields and dramatic granite gorges. Exhilarating and downright fun, there is no better way to see the gorge.

We'll also stop by the sacred temple known as the "Goddess of the Wishes," Manakamana temple. Home to the Hindu Goddess Bhagwati, the temple is located high on the mountain, so we'll take a Cable Car to visit. In addition to being a beautifully ornate temple on its own, the views are spectacular.

We'll be back in Kathmandu in late afternoon. Tonight, we'll enjoy their famous local Newari dishes with our AFS Farewell Dinner.

Overnight: Shambala

April 9 – Thursday Head home **B**

It's time to say farewell. We'll check out of the hotel after breakfast and make our way to the airport for our flights back to the U.S.

***End of our Tour**