

KUMAON VILLAGE WALK



Leti 360 degree Himalayan Retreat



HIGHLIGHTS

- This is a rare opportunity to discover the compellingly beautiful and remote region of the Indian Himalaya staying in a Himalayan retreat and Village Houses that combine an honest and sustainable approach with sophisticated simplicity and style.
- After taking the train from Delhi you start your holiday by going on a three day Village Walk to facilitate an authentic 'underfoot' experience and provide a 'snapshot' of rural life in the Himalayan region of Kumaon.
- The Village Walk traverses the terraced foothills with overnight 'homestays' in three remote villages. As an honoured guest, the villagers will be keen to share their way of life with you enabling a true encounter of rural life as it is.
- Three Village Houses have been renovated to make them cosy and comfortable yet maintain their simple charm and experience. They are clean and comfortable although designed not to detract from the authenticity of the experience.
- After the Village Walk you stay in the Himalayan Retreat at 360° Leti with a 360 degree view of the mountainous landscapes and snow capped peaks.



KUMAON VILLAGE WALK

Total number of days	11 days
Grade	Gentle
Accommodation	2 nights hotel, 3 nights Himalayan Retreat, 3 nights in Shakti Village Houses and 2 nights on train
2011 price ex Delhi	Two to three people: £2,299 per person Four to six people: £2,199 per person <i>Reduced rates of £1,599 for children aged between 3 to 12 years and £1,899 for children aged between 12 to 16 years (applicable for groups of three or more people)</i>
Minimum group size	2
Dates	Private departures from October 1 st to May 31 st <i>This itinerary is flexible and can be tailored to your requirements.</i>



THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- All internal transport and transfers.
- Twin share rooms in all accommodation.
- Village Houses will always be private i.e just for your party
- Bed and breakfast in Delhi, all meals elsewhere.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, TMC guide, porters and cook.
- Return train from Delhi to Kathgodam (A/C sleeper class)

THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:

Single room supplement at Shakti £625 (£441 for children aged between 3 and 12 years)

Please note that if you are a single person booking on one of our trips you do not have to pay the single room supplement, this is only payable if you specifically request to have a room or tent to yourself. You will not have to pay this for this option if you happen to end up with a single room or tent due to odd numbers on the trip.

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Delhi (from £400).
- Travel insurance.
- India visa up to 6 month (£30).
- Lunch and evening meals in Delhi.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.



- Tips.
- Other items not listed in “What is included”.

YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd (“The Mountain Company”) are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.



For further information about our financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection please see Appendix 2.

PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Participants should be aware trekking, mountaineering and travelling in a developing country are activities that involve a risk of personal injury or death. As a condition of booking you must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement.

Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions, unpredictable weather and last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. Lack of acclimatisation to high altitudes could also be a risk factor. Our itineraries allow optimum time for acclimatising although it is possible that some individuals might be slow acclimatisers.

The majority of our trips visit remote areas where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring



hospitalisation, it has to be accepted by you, evacuation could take up to several days and may impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the most usual means of evacuation, however they are not always available or they may be hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.

INTRODUCTION

A Village Walk in the Kumaon Himalaya followed by three nights at a Himalayan retreat in a stunning mountain wilderness.

The concept of the Village Walks is to facilitate an authentic 'underfoot' experience and provide a 'snapshot' of rural life in the Himalayan mountains of Uttarakhand state in North India. You traverse the terraced foothills with overnight 'home stays' in various villages. As an honoured guest, the locals are keen to share their way of life so you can encounter life as it is. Accommodation is basic, although clean and comfortable, does not detract from the authenticity of the experience. Any shortcomings are more than compensated for by the genuine warmth of your hosts.

After the Village Walk you spend three nights at the Himalayan Retreat at 360° Leti. Innovative language of architecture that combines age-old local building techniques with contemporary design and structural technologies, set in a stunning mountain wilderness at 2,200m, 360° Leti is a place where you can take time to reflect, and allow the space, peace and astonishingly beautiful landscape to work their magic around you.

DETAILED ITINERARY

It is our intention to keep to the day by day itinerary detailed below, although there might be some flexibility due to local conditions or other factors beyond our control. If this is the case the trek leader will do everything possible to work out the changes to the itinerary in order to minimise your inconvenience.

Day 1. Arrive Delhi and join the tour at the hotel.

A driver will be sent to collect you on your arrival at Delhi airport and to bring you back to the hotel. Please provide travel plans on booking and we will arrange the pick up and transfer.

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: RoIandh1 / Email: info@themountaincompany.co.uk / www.themountaincompany.co.uk

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



Day 2. Sightseeing in Delhi, overnight train to Kathgodam.

Today we explore Delhi with a good local guide, the day is flexible depending on what you would like to see but the most popular places generally are the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Qutub Minar and the Mughal gardens.

This evening you will be collected from your hotel in Delhi and taken to Sarai Rohilla Railway station in time to board your train. This is an overnight train arriving in Kathgodam at 5.40am (7 ¾ hours).

Depart: Delhi Sarai Rohilla on Ranikhet Express (A/C sleeper class) 21h55.

Day 3. Arrive Kathgodam, drive to Almora then walk to Deora Village.

On arrival in Kathgodam (the last station on the line), please wait in your compartment as our guide will come and collect you from there. You will then be driven to the Almora region (three hours away) from where the Village Walks will begin.

Setting off from the road head on the Kasar Devi Ridge (1862m/6108ft), where on a clear day, a grand sweep of the Great Himalayan Range is visible, you will begin by walking down through the pretty village of Maath, scenically positioned on a ridge. The walk continues downhill through terraced fields and into a chir (pine) forest, where you will stop for a drink.

Continuing on from the forest, the path turns a little dry and rocky before you pass the village of Bimtola and climb for twenty minutes to your lunch point. Lunch will be served in the grounds of a temple, around two hours after you set off from the Kasar Devi ridge.

After lunch, you will walk down through the colourful Naini Valley passing two temples dating from the 10th and 12th centuries. One of these temples is dedicated to Lord Shiva (you can tell by the many 'lingams' visible in the temple) and the other is dedicated to Lord Ram. Your private guide will elaborate further on the history of these temples. Continue walking through the fields and gently climb uphill to the village of Deora.

Overnight: Deora Village House – Twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Altitude: 1495m (4904ft) Distance: 8.6 km Time: 5 hours



Day 4. Walk to Jwalabanj Village.

Setting off from Deora, you will reach the village of Chirala after approximately thirty minutes of walking, where you can visit the local school. If he is around, you can also visit the house of an interesting ex army officer.

Continue walking through a pine forest, descending into the Shivalaya valley as the forest peters out. The scenic valley has a stream running down one side and one can often see children playing in the stream and adults working the fields.

Walk along the valley before turning left and climbing up towards the village of Alai. Follow a water canal for twenty minutes before stopping for a drink and the opportunity to dip your feet in a natural rock pool.

Continuing along the path, passing a 'ghatt' (water powered flour mill) and terraced fields through the village of Palyu, before climbing for twenty minutes to the road head at Kachula Pool.

From Ka-chula Pool you have the option of taking our car (which will be waiting for you) to Dhaulchina, around twenty minutes away, before walking gradually uphill for thirty minutes to the lunch spot. For those who are feeling more energetic, the walk from Ka-chula Pool to the lunch spot (without taking the car) takes around an hour and a half with two fairly steep uphill stretches.

After lunch, continue walking gradually uphill through stunning rhododendron forest for around one and a half hours until you reach the village of Jwalabanj.

Overnight: Jwalabanj Village House – Twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Altitude: 2147m (7042ft) Distance: 14.8 – 17.1 km Time: 6-7 hours

Day 5. Walk to Kana Village.

Provided the weather is clear, we will wake you up early and walk you up to the road head for a very short drive to our mountain viewing point. Watching the sunrise over the Great Himalaya Range is well worth getting out of bed for!

Return to the house for breakfast, before starting your walk with a short ten minutes climb. You will walk down through ancient oak forest, passing the village of Kandhar, where you will have to clamber down some slightly steep terraced fields.



Once you have reached the bottom of the valley, you will follow the stream through the oak forest, getting to see a kingfisher diving into the stream if you are lucky.

An hour or so after you have left the house, you will emerge onto a proper road which leads to the 8th century temple complex at Jageshwar, a hindu pilgrimage sight. Explore the temple complex before continuing along the road and back through terraced fields.

The final part of the walk takes you through a thick mixed forest to the village of Kana where lunch will be waiting for you at the village house. This last part of the walk is uphill most of the way.

As you will only have walked for around two and half to three hours today, we have arranged for you to take an afternoon walk to the village of Jhankarshein which has an interesting temple. The three hour return journey takes you through an interesting mix of pine, oak and rhodendron forest dotted with berry trees and a peach orchard. The temple is dedicated to a local deity, Golu Devta and is a popular local pilgrimage sight.

If you feel that you have walked enough by the time you have reached Kana at lunchtime, your itinerary is completely private and flexible and if you wanted to, you could spend your afternoon sitting outside reading a good book and admiring the scenery.

Overnight: Kana Village House – Twin Room (Fully Inclusive)

Altitude: 1892m (6206ft) Distance: 12 km Time: 6 - 7 hours

Day 6. Drive to road head and walk to 360° Leti.

This morning you will walk for ten minutes to the road head where you will be met and driven for five hours to Leti. On arrival at the road head in Leti you will walk to the resort, which usually takes around an hour along a dramatic mountain trail. Whilst the pathway to 360° Leti is being widened and extended, we are using a different route on some days, taking around two to three hours.

The walk is still beautiful but is much steeper than the relatively flat path that is being worked on. Please note that some days (if we can get past the workman), we



can use the short route and that by the end of April we expect the work to be done and the short route permanently walkable.

Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that the work will be finished then as it is government contractors doing the work. An innovative language of architecture that combines age-old local building techniques with contemporary design and structural technologies, set in a stunning mountain wilderness at 8,000 feet, 360° Leti is a place where you can take time to reflect, and allow the space, peace and astonishingly beautiful landscape to work their magic around you.

With only four private guest pavilions and a main lounge-dining area, 360° Leti provides an exclusive mountain experience – the first and only place of its kind in the Himalaya.

Indoors, there's gourmet cooking and fine wine, as well as beds adorned with pashmina blankets and fluffy duvets. Outdoors there are mountain walks (with private guides), delicious picnics, fabulous views, just chilling out in planter's chairs – and, if you wish, yoga and meditation sessions by arrangement.

Overnight: 360° Leti - Double/Twin cottage (Fully Inclusive)

Altitude: 2230m (7314ft)

Day 7 and 8. Staying at your Himalayan Retreat at 360° Leti with various optional activities.

We believe that the real experience at 360° Leti should be one of total relaxation as it is one of those rare places that one can totally escape from the modern world. Many clients find that despite many carefully laid plans and intentions, that they simply read, relax and enjoy some of the most spectacular scenery that you will ever see when staying with us.

For those who want to be more active, there are six fantastic walks, cooking demonstrations as well as yoga and massage available, as detailed below:

Suggested walks from 360° Leti

Waterfall walk (via Gogina). This is the most spectacular walk in the area. Start walking up the valley away from Leti towards the snow capped peaks and glaciers that you can see from the resort. This walk is particularly fantastic as though long, it

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: Rolandh1 / Email: info@themountaincompany.co.uk / www.themountaincompany.co.uk

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



is very easy walking (mostly on the flat) and the mountain scenery that is a constant presence as you pass through un-spoilt Himalayan villages, is spectacular.

After you have reached the pretty village of Gogina (around 3 hours from Leti) you will continue on foot for another hour to beautiful waterfall where you can go for a swim before enjoying a picnic lunch. After lunch, walk back to the camp the way that you came. (Approximately 8 hour round trip)

Shiva Shrine Walk. A walk of 1-2hrs from the campsite will bring you to a shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. There are magnificent views of the Ramganga Valley, Heeramani Glacier and Nanda Kot from this shrine. You would be walking a relatively level path surrounded by Oak forests, passing through streams and a traditional flourmill.

Enroute you will come across the local people taking supplies to and from the furthest villages of Gogina and Namik, giving you an insight into the tough lifestyle in the mountains. Enjoy some drinks and cookies or a picnic lunch at this beautiful location and walk back to the camp. (Approximately 3 hour round trip)

Ramganga River Walk. Walk downhill from the campsite, passing through the jungle, a few village houses and a traditional flourmill by the stream. Enjoy your picnic lunch by the roaring river and take a short siesta before you walk uphill to reach the campsite.

This walk is a wonderful option for seeing the powerful Ramganga river, however, the walk back up the hill is steep so we advise this option for the more agile and fit visitors to 360° Leti. (Approximately 8 hour round trip)

Valley View Walk. Walk downhill for approximately an hour down to a small plateau below the resort in the middle of the valley. The plateau is right in the middle of the Ramganga river valley and affords expansive views of both the Great Himalaya Range and the valley itself and surrounding foothills. After a break for drinks and cookies, walk back up the hills for around an hour or so to the resort. (Approximately 2 ½ hour round trip)

Satghar walk. Walk downhill from the campsite through the jungle to the top of the village of Capri where you will stop by a shrine dedicated to Gola (forest dwelling gods) which has expansive views of the Ramganga valley. Continue up the side of



the Ramganga valley for around forty minutes until you come to another shrine in the forest. Continue on for forty five minutes until you join the main path between Leti and Gogina villages just below the village of Satghar (meaning seven houses). Continue on the road for a further half an hour until you get back to the camp. (Approximately 2 ½ hour round trip).

Khadaa Dhunga Walk (literally means “standing rock”. A steep walk up from the campsite, through a narrow path or “pag dandi” brings you to a flat piece of pastureland. One can see this land from the campsite, and it offers a fabulous sense of achievement to reach this area. The views of the mountain peaks from here are majestic and include

Nanda Devi (7816m or 25,623ft), the highest mountain solely within India. Please note however that this walk is very challenging and most people turn back before reaching the end of this walk and thus do not see Nanda Devi, though they do see some other impressive peaks. Either leave early in the morning and come back for lunch or enjoy a picnic lunch, looking at the snow peaked mountains. It is also possible to do this walk very early in the morning, in order to appreciate the sunrise from this spot

Cooking demonstrations

Guests may like to partake in informal cooking demonstrations with Yeshe, our chef. Yeshe is a Tibetan, and has a mountaineering and trekking background. To the knowledge he acquired from his time as a trekking chef, he has since added superb regional Indian food, including Parsi, Keralan, North Indian and Kumaoni.

He has also been trained in western cuisine by a chef from London, has had exposure to the famous Australian chef, Christine Manfield. He loves to share his enthusiasm and knowledge with others – perhaps you would like to learn some traditional Tibetan/Nepali or Kumaoni savouries, or some of his gourmet continental fusions, or even his bakery delicacies. The guests are welcome to be in the kitchen at any time and learn from the ever-smiling Yeshe.

Yoga and Massage

At the time of booking, we can arrange to have Yifat Ishai come up to the camp to lead yoga sessions and massage you. This will be at additional cost, though we will



just charge Yifat's fee of USD75 or RS3000 a day, plus her food and travel expenses.

Day 9. Walk to road head, drive to Kathmandu and overnight train to Delhi.

After breakfast, you will walk to the road head, where your vehicle will be waiting to drive you back to Kathgodam station where you take the overnight train arriving in Delhi at 4.50am (7 ³/₄ hours).

Depart: Kathgodam on Ranikhet Express (A/C sleeper class) 20h40

Day 10. Arrive to Delhi and transfer to hotel.

On arrival in Sarai Rohilla (the last station on the line), please wait in your compartment as our guide will come and collect you from there. You will then be transferred back to where you are staying.

Day 11. Transfer to airport for flight back home.



ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience.

We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group (www.ippg.net) who we support as a Camp 1 sponsor- we abide by their 5 guidelines for porter protection.

We also work with other organisations such as Climate Care (www.climatecare.org), Tourism Concern (www.tourismconcern.org.uk), Friends of Conservation (www.foc-uk.com) and Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (www.keepnepal.org).

We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound.

The Mountain Company has joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Know Before You Go campaign. The aim is to make sure travellers are properly prepared before travelling overseas. The best way to get the FCO latest advice is to visit their website at: www.fco.gov.uk/travel.





PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ACCOMMODATION

The three Village Houses have been renovated to make them cosy and comfortable yet to keep their simple charm and the experience of living in a Himalayan village house. Each house has three bedrooms which have wooden beds with comfortable mattresses and linen, a bedside table, local chettai matted floor and some hooks on which to hang your clothes.

The bathrooms are outside (not en-suite) with western toilets and the adjoining shower rooms have slate tiles and showers are taken (in local tradition) using brass buckets and mugs filled with hot water that our staff have boiled for you. There are small living/dining rooms for the few weeks of the year when it is too cold to have dinner outside and partially covered outdoor eating areas where you can enjoy your dinner under the stars with a fire to keep you warm.

These houses should not be seen as more than a very local and authentic alternative to camping (with the added bonus that one may feel more protected from climatic conditions with a roof over your head!) It is also important to remember that the local people are hosting you as their guest and to therefore respect this in one's behaviour and comments.

Himalayan Retreat at 360° Leti

The accommodation at 360° Leti consists of four large en-suite cottages which can be configured to have twin or double beds. The beds have the most comfortable mattresses and linen available in India and are complemented by a writing table and plenty of storage space for your clothes. All the furniture is custom made from Burma teak and each room has a wood burning stove to keep you nice and warm.

The bathrooms have brass and Burma teak fittings with an overhead shower and outdoor garden. Each cottage has its own private sit-out with two sun loungers. There is a communal indoor living/dining area and several outdoor dining options.



CLIMATE

The post monsoon months of October and November offer lush scenery and clear views with warm sunny days and nights that are getting increasingly colder. In December and January it becomes very cold at night, however the days are still warm and sunny and offer the clearest views of the mountains.

From February, both the days and nights start to get warmer and between March and May, the rhododendrons come into bloom. Please note that some years in late April and May, that if it does not rain, it can become dusty with poor visibility due to both the dust and the controlled forest fires which are purposefully started due to the lack of rain.

The Kumaon region is largely dry between early October and late June, though the odd rain storm can hit at any time.

GUIDING

All of our guides come from one of our three regions, Kumaon, Sikkim or Ladakh and have an intimate knowledge and passion for the Himalaya. They all speak English extremely well (generally as a first language). They will accompany you for your entire experience with Shakti from start to finish.

Please note however, that on some occasions if 360 Leti is fully booked, we will only have two or three guides there and you may be taken on walks by the hostess or one of the other staff members.

FOOD SERVICE

On the village walks, the food is prepared by the Shakti team and closely supervised by our chef in Almora. Breakfasts are western orientated with fresh juice, fruit, muesli, yoghurt and porridge with a choice of both Western and Indian egg dishes and breads.



Lunches tend to be cold and are western orientated whilst dinners are very much and Indian affair. Each walk will be accompanied by a guide and an assistant guide/cook who will serve and look after you.

At 360° Leti, the food is prepared by our resident chef and his team. Breakfasts are again western orientated with fresh juice, fruit, muesli, yoghurt, granola and porridge with a choice of both western and Indian egg dishes and breads. Lunches tend to be cold and are western orientated with lots of salads made freshly from our organic vegetable patch.

Afternoon tea consists of western style cakes or baked items and dinner is predominantly Indian except for the deserts which are usually western. At Leti you will be looked after a staff of ten plus your guide (a staff to guest ratio of 1.5:1) including an English hostess.

At Shakti we only use purified bottled water or our Leti spring water for drinking, ice etc and all food is prepared according to strict western standards of hygiene. Please communicate any allergies or specific food requirements at the time of booking.

DRINKS

On the village walks we serve purified bottled water, freshly squeezed orange juice at breakfast, tea (herbal, English style, Darjeeling and Masala Chai), coffee (freshly ground coffee in a French press), Nimbupani (a freshly made Indian soft drink consisting of lemon, sugar, water and mint) and rhododendron juice.

At 360° Leti we stock purified bottled water, our own spring water*, freshly squeezed orange juice at breakfast, tea (herbal, English style, Darjeeling and Masala Chai), coffee (freshly ground coffee in a French press or espresso), Nimbupani (a freshly made Indian soft drink consisting of lemon, sugar, water and mint), rhododendron juice and a variety of canned soft drinks (Coca-cola, Diet Coke, Sprite, Tonic water and soda water). If you would like us to stock anything else for you, please do let us know at the time of booking.

Please note that the water that comes from the natural mountain spring at Leti has been certified to drink by the Vivek Ananda Institute for Agricultural Research in



Almora. We then filter it again, just to be sure. Though we do have bought purified bottled water for those who are nervous of the spring water, we do believe that our spring water is far superior.

COMMUNICATIONS

On the village walks, there is no internet access other than through a personal blackberry or smartphone. Reception for both mobile and data services however is patchy on most networks. Your guide will however have a 'bsnl' (a local network) mobile phone that should work for phone calls at most points on the walk should you wish to use it for emergencies. There are cyber cafes in Almora and some of the lodges have internet access, though it is not that reliable.

At 360° Leti there is no internet access and no mobile data service, so blackberrys and smartphones will not work. The only local network that has coverage at the camp is 'bsnl' and though some international networks will work here, many do not. You are very welcome to use our staff phones for emergency or very important calls.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Minimising our negative impact on the culturally and ecologically sensitive areas where we work is a central tenet of Shakti's philosophy and, as well as making a direct contribution ourselves, we encourage our guests to adhere to our written Code of Conduct. We believe that, in this way, we can all support each other in securing the future of these sublime regions and their inhabitants.

Some of the ways in which Shakti contributes to the local people and the environment are:

Employment

We have hired most of our staff locally and trained them in various fields of hospitality. Also, we have tried to bring the local cultures to visitors as they exist, thereby generating direct income to the villagers without compromising on their lifestyle and way of life. This means they don't need to resort to high volume, high impact tourism that degrades their environment and way of life.



Buildings & Infrastructure: According to the location, we either commission new buildings that leave only the lightest footprint on their setting or we breathe new life into existing, traditional village houses.

Electricity Generation

On the village walks, we use the mains supply of electricity but our usage is very small as we use solar lanterns, candles and hurricane lamps for most of our light and wood for cooking.

At 360° Leti, we use sustainable sources (principally solar) to provide 100 percent of our electricity supply, excepting a small generator run battery that we use to charge up laptops and mobile phones.

Rainwater harvesting

We have set up a rain water harvesting project in Almora next to our office – this is being replicated with various villagers in the areas we operate. Since we work with the villagers on these projects, they are then able to learn and have taken the initiative to develop more projects.

Village Development Fund

In order to respect local customs, we ask any guests who may wish to offer gifts or money, to do so through this fund. 100% of guest contributions received in this way will go to the intended recipients, channelled through this more socially acceptable channel. The implementation of these projects is supported by our tie-up with The Leap – a voluntary organisation based in the UK, which sends volunteers for 6 or 10 week placements, to work with us on our community and environmental missions.

Support of local cultures and skills

We have helped support a local dance group of traditional Kumaoni dancers. We include a performance in all our trips which has helped to sustain this skill, as well as train younger members. We incorporated local building techniques and styles for our mountain camp, 360° Leti. The “dry-stack stone wall” is the traditional method of construction in the area - we have revived these skilled techniques practiced by a few specialist families in the area, by incorporating them into the construction of our camp.



Controlled social impact

Each of our operations is on a very small scale – and while that limits the number of guests we can receive, we prefer it that way, so we don't impose ourselves too much on our surroundings.

CODES OF CONDUCT IN THE HIMALAYAS

Shakti practices the ethics of responsible, eco-friendly and sustainable tourism to ensure minimum human interference with the natural surroundings and maximum community participation. We believe this ethos is a fitting tribute to this immeasurable gesture of nature called the Himalayas.

Therefore, we encourage you to carefully read and adhere to these guidelines, so we can all contribute in maintaining the pristine condition of this area, securing the future of this wilderness and its inhabitants.

Litter: Simple – Just don't!

Every effort is taken to stress the importance of picking up litter. Shakti staff are committed to ensuring all campsites are left spotless of waste. All litter is carried with us along the walks, and deposited in safe methods at the end of the trip. By enforcing these rules, we set an example to other visitors and also to the locals of the area. You will be of great help just by showing diligence to such a request, and bringing the Shakti staff's attention to any litter.

Deforestation

The eradication of trees and forests has a monumental effect on the ecosystem and local populations. We will only ever use dead/broken wood for any fires that we may have.

Fire Risk

We insist that our clients are extremely cautious and vigilant about any kinds of unprotected or potentially dangerous fires, since these areas are especially susceptible to forest fires. A few such examples would be lighting of candles in the village houses, careless dispersal of lit/unlit matches, cigarettes etc.



Natural Environment

We take every effort to educate our clients about their natural surroundings, encouraging them to value the un-spoilt nature. This helps to install a respect for such lands. We also take every opportunity to encourage the local people to also adhere to these guidelines.

Local Cultures

The culture of these regions has been fostered and protected for generations. We take steps to inform and educate our clients about their cultural surroundings, encouraging them to be more of an unobtrusive observer and a participant in its course. These efforts are aimed to ensure a level of respect and appreciation for the local people.

Extending the point further, we strongly recommend that our clients do not indulge the local inhabitants by being generous in the monetary fashion, or by donating any goods of any kind. This practice will contribute to an increase in crime in the local region and ultimately play a major role in the deterioration of the social system. We may also take this opportunity to stress the point that Shakti contributes to the local economy by providing employment opportunities and encouraging clients to donate items like clothing and educational material for local children. We have set up a village development fund, which will in turn be used for specific projects in the local areas.

Water

Water is in short supply in the Almora region and we would appreciate your help in only using what is necessary and conserving water where possible.

HEALTH, FITNESS AND SAFETY

This is a village walk, not a village trek and has been designed for those who do not necessarily have high fitness levels. The walks generally involve around five to six hours of walking a day, though these can be lengthened or shortened according to your needs. As every walk is private and will be just your party, you can very much decide on this as you go along. The walks are graded in trekking terms as an 'easy' trek and no mountaineering or climbing experience is necessary.



Since the real magic of 360° Leti is to simply relax (in one of the few places where you can really get away from it all) and take in the stunning surroundings, there is little walking involved unless you choose to go on one of our five fabulous day walks, which can be arranged in conjunction with your guide and the hostess. Please note that to get to and from the camp, that a walk is involved, as described in the Access section above.

There is an excellent private hospital in Almora and world class hospitals in Delhi. If you are staying at 360° Leti, there is also a hospital at Bageshwar, two hours drive away. We do have an evacuation procedure from both the village walks and 360° Leti for both an evacuation by helicopter and vehicle.

Please note however that helicopters fly at night and are extremely weather dependent and often cannot fly in the mountains due to the weather.

All our guides and many of our staff are NOLS first aid trained and carry first aid kits at all time. We do have medical equipment at the camp including oxygen, stretchers and mountaineering equipment (should someone need to be rescued) and an extensive first aid kit.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of suggested clothing and equipment for the Himalaya Retreat and Village Walk has been included in Appendix I below.

If you do not have the clothing and equipment contained in this list then a good option might be to rent from the UK. Trek Hire is a company that rents out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The link to their website is <http://www.trekhireuk.com/>

Alternatively if you are going to buy then please contact the office for the Cotswold Outdoor promo code that entitles you, as a client of The Mountain Company, to a 15% discount in their stores and online.



VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens from the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand require an entry visa, it is your responsibility to obtain the entry visa. The Indian High Commission in London has updated the procedure for obtaining tourist visas. The decision on whether to grant a visa has been retained by the High Commission; however the application and collection process has been outsourced to VFS Global.

All applications have to be made online at <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/> You still have to apply online if you are submitting your application by post or using a visa agency. Walk-in applicants also need to fill out the online form before visiting VFS's office.

It should take 2 to 3 days to process your visa from submission although many people have experienced delays so please allow longer than this. Postal applications might take up to 15 days plus postage time. We suggest you carefully read the VFS website taking particular care in calculating the fee payable and also the rules for acceptable passport photos in order to avoid further delays.

VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Nepal. A dental check-up is a good idea as there will be no dental facilities while on the trek.

We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.

FLIGHTS

We recommend Max Travel (ATOL bonded license# 4705) for booking international flights and other travel arrangements. Please take a look at their website at <http://www.maxtravel.co.uk/> or give them a call on 020 7095 0920.

There are a number of good online agents that we also recommend, they are:



Kayak: *an excellent flight cost comparison website* <http://www.kayak.co.uk/>

Traveljungle: *another good flight cost comparison website*
<http://www.traveljungle.co.uk/>

Cheap Tickets: this site quotes airfares in USD\$ & often is very competitive when translated back to GBP£ <http://www.cheaptickets.com/>

Southall Travel: very competitive prices for India, Pakistan and Nepal both online and telephone support <http://www.southalltravel.co.uk/>

INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

To get an online quote for your personal travel and trekking insurance (UK residents only), take a look at Snowcard's website at
http://www.snowcard.co.uk/pages/d_select1.asp?referrer_id=MC



Please note that The Mountain Company do not act as an agent of Snowcard Insurance and any policy bought via this web link is effected directly with Snowcard Insurance Services Limited.



CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

For those of you who are visiting India for the first time we have provided some cultural information to help ensure your behaviour is acceptable to your hosts in India:

- Both men and women should dress conservatively wearing full length trousers and a shirt.
- There are many hot springs, rivers and lakes where it is pleasant to take a dip, it is fine for men to go bare-chested while bathing but should not go nude. Women should try and be as modest as possible in these situations.
- Indians consider the left hand to be unclean, therefore do not eat food with your left hand and make sure you give or receive food only with your right hand
- Shoes are considered degrading so keep them on the ground and remove them before putting your feet on anything and on entering a temple you should remove your shoes.
- You will pass Buddhist mani walls, chortens, and stupas along the trek and to follow local traditions you should pass them on your right.
- When visiting a monastery or gompa it is customary to give a donation for its upkeep

SUGGESTED READING

Please take a look at The Mountain Company's bookstore for a wide selection of books and maps to Nepal, the link is at: <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/themountainco-21>

- The Nanda Devi Affair – Bill Aitken
- Footloose in the Himalaya – Bill Aitken
- The Great Game – Peter Hopkirk
- Tiger for Breakfast – Michael Peissel



- Young Husband: The last great Imperial Adventure – Patrick French
- Nanda Devi: Exploration & Ascent – Eric Shipton and H Tilman
- The Six Mountain Travel Books: - Eric Shipton
- Nanda Devi
- Blank on the Map
- Upon that Mountain
- Mountains of Tartary
- Mt. Everest Reconnaissance Expedition 195
- Land of Tempest
- Kim – Rudyard Kipling
- Jim Corbett of Kumaon – Jim Corbett
- Man-Eaters of Kumaon – Jim Corbett
- Jim Corbett of India: Life and Legend of a Messiah - Anand S. Khat
- Himalaya – Michael Palin
- Footprint Indian Himalaya Handbook - Robert Bradnock
- Lonely Planet's Trekking in the Indian Himalaya (out of print and hard to find)
- Eco tourism and Environment handbook - a practical guide for the Tourism
- Industry.



APPENDIX 1

SUGGESTED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

We recommend you to travel with a soft material bag and a small day-pack. Please bear in mind the porters will be carrying your luggage so please ensure they are of good quality, have strong straps and secure zips.

In terms of clothes, it is all about layers as you could experience temperatures (in celsius) that range from almost zero to thirty degrees. Though the weather will usually be less extreme than this, you will find yourself adding and removing layers a fair amount during a day, especially if you are walking. As such lots of layers are essential and we would recommend packing a range of clothes from t-shirts, long sleeve t-shirts, jumpers, shorts and trousers.

- 1x head torch (plus spare batteries)
- 1 x normal hand held torch (plus spare batteries)
- Penknife – either Swiss Army or Leatherman, though the guide will have one.
- Spare plastic bags (for packing your clothes, to help protect from dampness/rain in both your rucksack and daypack)
- One pair ankle length boots/or walking shoes with a good grip profile. We recommend 'goretex' as it is light and breathable, though leather is better in wet and snowy weather; this is very rarely a factor on a Shakti experience. Please ensure you have 'broken' the boots in, new ones could cause aggravation.
- You may like to bring a pair of rubber slippers/flip flops to pad around in and Ugg boots or a similar type of shoe are particularly recommended.
- Good quality socks with cushions and climate control (several pairs)
- A good rain/windproof jacket with a hood
- Good quality fleece pullovers-100% polyester



- Vests/T-shirts for the day.
- Swimming suit/shorts (you may like to cool off in the streams on the walks and there is a waterfall on one of the walks from the camp)
- Lightweight trousers (the combat style are the most practical, especially the ones that unzip to make shorts) for walking
- Shorts
- Trousers for the evening.
- Light gloves
- Fleece hat with ear flaps and sun hat.
- Sun glasses with UV protection
- Suncream with high SPF
- Shower gel/shampoo
- Insect Repellent
- Oral rehydration salts
- Blister plasters

We recommend you to carry in your day pack

- Bearing in mind that you will not be able to access your main bag whilst you are out walking, we recommend the following items be carried in your day pack:
- 1 x 25/30litre day pack with air-comfort system/back support.
- Water proof jacket
- Extra fleece/warm layer
- Sun hat
- Sun glasses
- Suncream with high SPF

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: Rolandh1 / Email: info@themountaincompany.co.uk / www.themountaincompany.co.uk

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



- Camera with enough spare film and batteries
- Binoculars
- Notebook and pen
- Lipsalve
- Lightweight scarf which can double up as a headscarf.



APPENDIX 2

INTERNATIONAL PASSENGER PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd ("The Mountain Company") are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.

There is no requirement for Financial Protection of day trips, and none is provided. This insurance is only valid for packages booked that DO NOT include flights.

Consumer aware: Your booking is insured by IPP Ltd and its panel of insurers. This insurance is only valid for passengers who book and pay directly with/to The Mountain Company. If you have booked and/ or paid direct to a Travel Agent for a holiday with The Mountain Company please request proof of how the booking is secured as this will not be covered by IPP Ltd in this instance. For further information please go to www.ipplondon.co.uk

This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Insurers who are members of the Association of British Insurers & Lloyds Syndicates.

Claim procedures: download claim form from www.ipplondon.co.uk, any occurrence which may give rise to a claim should be advised within 14 days to: International Passenger Protection Limited, Claims Office, IPP House, 22-26 Station Road, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0PR, United Kingdom. Telephone: +44 (0) 208 7763752. Fax: +44 (0) 208 7763751.

In order to deal promptly with any claims hereunder it is essential that you retain all bills, receipts and other documents relating to your travel arrangements. Claims forms must be submitted to IPP within six months of date of insolvency they cannot consider or pay claims received after this date.