



## **Himalayan Women & Children Foundation (HWCF) USA/Nepal**

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### **Nepal Volunteer Program**

Thank you for registering your interest in becoming a volunteer at Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation LLC, (HWCF) Volunteering can be an extremely rewarding and life changing experience as it was for the founders of Himalayan Women & Children Foundation USA.

Before applying to volunteer with us, it is important to understand what it means to volunteer with underprivileged children in a developing country. Please read the guide on "Living in a developing country" as a starting point on our website. You may also watch a video on the journey of HWCF and up coming various projects at: [www.himalayansherpa.com](http://www.himalayansherpa.com) and click on the foundation. Lots of footage of the children's so will give you a good sense of where you may be heading.

### **Orphanage life**

#### **So what will I be doing in the orphanage and will my skills be of use?**

A day in the life of a volunteer at Orphanage holds many and varied tasks! In the mornings, helping the children get ready for school, joining in their morning exercise and study programs, and enjoying the morning meal with them, traditional Nepali daal baht, is always fun. In the afternoons, you are requested to help them with their homework, the reading program, joining in snack time, playing games and providing emotional support to the children. The afternoon activities are then followed by dinner at around 6.30pm (depending on the season), followed by prayers, meditation, further homework for the older children and depending on the day, some games, singing, dancing and other fun activities. You will hopefully have the opportunity to escort the children on an outing somewhere too, and there is a beautiful forest 10 minutes walk which always provides a great playground for volunteers and the children.

There are no set hours for volunteering but we do request that you be there regularly in the afternoons from 3.30pm onwards to help them with their homework in particular. Saturdays is their one full day off school and a particularly fun day, so for your own benefit as much as theirs, we also request that you spend a large part of Saturday with them. Between 10am and 3.30pm when the children are at school you are free to do whatever you like. There is always plenty to do at school or clinic, from painting, gardening, helping the carers prepare meals, to getting involved in some of the training and development programs the team are establishing. There is also the option of taking some casual classes at the children's school. We are always open to your suggestions and welcome any activities you may like to introduce also!

We suggest that you have one or two days off through the week depending on the length of your stay. The most important thing is that you jointly establish a clear routine with the management of Himalayan Orphanage (A C Sherpa) as to what your involvement will be in terms of both time and duties completed and that you stick to that routine unless it is mutually agreed to be changed. If you are in any doubt as to what you can do to help simply ask the carers as they may be too embarrassed to give direct instructions or guidance to you.

"Didi, ke ma tapaailaai sahayog garna sakchhu?" (Sister, what can I do to help?)

You can also speak to A C Sherpa or, Alison at any time if you are unsure about anything. Each volunteer brings a unique skill set and it is always a great opportunity for each new volunteer to contribute to the orphanage in a new and unique way. As a relatively young organisation we are still building the foundations so to speak, hence it is a very special time to be involved and make a real difference to the lives of many orphaned and abandoned children in Himalayan Nepal.

### **The Program**

Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation will organise for someone from Clinic & Orphanage to come and meet you at the Kathmandu airport and take you to your hotel. You will then be given an informal orientation and tour of useful things such as ATM's, money changers, supermarkets, internet cafes, shops cafe's etc to ensure you settle in easily and comfortably.

To ensure you and the children gain maximum benefit from your volunteering experience, we request you volunteer at the orphanage for a minimum of three weeks. This will enable you to form a friendship with the children and develop enough local skills and knowledge to be able to assist them.

### ***Week 1: Language and Kathmandu Sightseeing***

We highly recommend you partake in the week long orientation and sightseeing program, to give you a taste of Nepalese life and culture. Previous volunteers have found the basic language lessons great fun and very helpful in building relationships with the children, carers and people within the local community. They are run by a professional Nepali language teacher at a discounted volunteer rate. The recommended introductory course is 10 hours (2 hours per day for 5 days, costing around USD\$95 for the week of classes). You can then continue taking further classes throughout your stay if you wish.

Most of the Orphanage management team do speak English however English language skills with the children and carers are varied hence it is not a requirement of travel but it can enrich the experience for yourself and the children).

In the afternoons after the language class has finished, a half-day professional guided tour can be organised through our local partners Himalayan Sherpa Trek & Expedition LLC (HST&E). A fully qualified tour guide will explain the history of the monuments and can show you around the sights of Kathmandu. It costs approximately USD\$75 for a full day or approximately AUD\$45 for half a day, payable directly to HST&E when you arrive.

Alternatively, you can do it yourself, other volunteers or new friends with the help of a Lonely Planet Guidebook (or similar). You can get around easily to the local sights by foot, hired bicycle, rickshaw or taxi. The sorts of places we would recommend include the Temples of Boudhnath, Swoyambunath (Monkey Temple) and Echinguo Naranthan, the ancient town of Bhaktapur and Patan, and the beautiful villages of Godawari and Nagarkot. If you're travelling through un-recommended tour companies, we're not responsible for the liabilities unless you buy up to USD \$10,000 Travelex insurance through [www.himalayansherpa.com/insurance](http://www.himalayansherpa.com/insurance) and it will cover your whole trip including volunteering.

### ***Week 2: Sightseeing***

We do also recommend getting out of the Kathmandu Valley and exploring some of the other wonderful sights of Nepal. The recommended week long program is outlined below. This can be done either at the beginning of your stay (i.e. following your week long language and local sightseeing program and prior to coming to HWCF clinic or school) or at the end of your stay at volunteer program.

- 2 nights and 3 day tour to Chitwan National Park. This includes transport, jungle activities, canoe trip, elephant breeding centre, elephant safari, local village guided tour and evening dance performance, lodging and meals. Please note HWCF do not recommend the jungle walk - as with any jungle there is the risk of running into a wild animal which can potentially be very dangerous.
- 2 nights and 2 day tour of Pokhara. This includes transport, lodging, breakfasts.
- Please note the 3 days in Chitwan and the 2 days in Pokhara include three 5-6 hour blocks of travel by tourist bus between Kathmandu/Chitwan/Pokhara/Kathmandu.

The total cost for this is approximately US\$350 for the one week tour to Chitwan and Pokhara, payable directly to HST&E on advance to **Himalayan Sherpa Trek & Expedition P.O Box 95288 Seattle WA 98145**. The exact payment amount will be confirmed at the time of booking and the tours are subject to weather conditions and other factors outside the control of the tour operators.

HWCF can book the language lessons for you prior to departure, but we suggest booking the tours directly when you arrive here, with our assistance if needed. They are a very friendly bunch and part of the extended Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation family, so if you feel more comfortable you can also book with them prior to departing United States of America.

They offer very competitive local rates for our volunteers. HWCF do not charge anything to organise these programs for you and payment can be paid directly to the relevant organisations upon arrival in Nepal. Please note that both the contents of the program and cost may be varied if required and are subject to change.

### ***Accommodation and Meals at HWCF Clinic or, Orphanage***

As part of the volunteer program you will be offered a basic room and meals. Running water will be available but is likely to be cold or luke warm, depending on the time of day you like to wash. Meals will be served at the orphanage with the children, so you may eat with them or with the carers a little later. Nepalese people eat two main meals a day of daal bhat tarkari, one for breakfast and one for dinner with a lighter meal at lunch time. Daal bhat consists of a lentil soup (daal) that you pour over your rice (bhat). This is served with some sort of vegetable curry and meat a couple of times a week.

### ***Cost***

As Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation (501) c3 that appreciates your commitment to assisting the children we only ask you to pay cost price for your board and lodging (i.e. includes meals). The cost is typically **US\$3500** for a three week stay.

If you wish to contribute financially or purchase items for the children you are welcome to do so. We ask that you liaise with the management at HWCF Clinic or, Orphanage in Nepal or Himalayan Women & Children's Association prior to purchasing anything to ensure your contribution is put to use fully and in line with our policies and procedures.

### ***How do I apply for the program?***

To apply for the program please complete and submit the application form and working with children police checks available on the HWCF website under the volunteering section. A member of Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation management team will then interview you. The interview is as much for your benefit as it is to make sure we feel you are right for the program. Character reference checks may also be conducted.

### ***What do I need to do before I leave?***

Upon being accepted onto the volunteer program you will need to pay for your time at Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation, provide us with details of your comprehensive travel insurance and think about the topics below.

### **Travel insurance**

As a condition of the program you are required to take out your own comprehensive travel insurance. As a minimum this should include cover for accidents, illness, rescue operation and lost baggage. Even if you have good health insurance at home, you may not be covered while abroad, and not all domestic insurers can provide medical evacuation or medical assistance in foreign countries. Therefore, we advise all volunteers to obtain an information booklet (with appropriate contact numbers) and take it with you when you travel. Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation Clinic and Orphanage will not be held responsible for any liabilities, medical costs or related expenses that might arise including those incurred because of your failure to buy adequate travel insurance. Please do contact directly with A C Sherpa's advice and expertise for these matter.

## **Vaccinations**

It is important to speak with your doctor or a travel doctor about required vaccinations before travelling to Nepal. Many diseases and illnesses that are no longer prevalent in developed countries are widespread in Nepal hence precautions must be taken; such as Hep A&B, Rabies, Japanese B Encephalitis, Diphtheria & Tetanus, Malaria, Meningococcal Meningitis, Polio, Typhoid, Yellow fever. **Some vaccinations are required to be taken several months before travel.** The World Health Organisation recommends all travellers be immunised at least two months before travelling to Nepal.

## **Medical**

Should you need medical assistance whilst in Nepal, CIWEC clinic (Tel: 977-1-442 4111 or 443 5232) in Lazimpat, near the British Embassy, is used by many foreign residents of Kathmandu and is staffed by Westerners. A single visit costs around USD\$55. Clinic hours are from 9-12pm and 1-5pm Mon-Fri. 24 hour emergency is available after hours at a higher cost. Please see services provided at [www.ciwec-clinic.com/](http://www.ciwec-clinic.com/)

## **Health and disease prevention**

Please...

- Don't drink water from the tap and avoid taking ice cubes in your drink.
- Reputable brands of bottled water or soft drinks are generally fine. Take care with fruit juice, particularly if water has been added. (Good brands of water purification tablets can also be used).
- Only drink/use water that comes in sealed bottles or that was boiled previously.
- We suggest you clean your teeth with purified water rather than straight from the tap.
- Wash your hands frequently, as it's quite easy to contaminate your own food, or if water is not available, we suggest you use anti-bacterial hand gel, available in both USA and Nepal.
- Milk should be treated with care as it is often un-pasteurised. Boiled milk is fine if it is kept hygienically. Don't eat or drink dairy products such as yoghurt or unboiled milk.
- Don't eat anything that hasn't been cooked, fried or can be peeled unless at a good quality restaurant where they have been treated in iodine water.
- Salads and fruit should be washed with purified water or peeled where possible.
- Try to avoid insect bites by covering bare skin when insects are around, by screening windows or by using insect repellents.

If, after following this advice you do get diarrhoea, this usually lasts 1 or 2 days and is not dangerous. You should drink a lot of water (from sealed bottles!) and not eat spicy food. Diarrhoea also goes along with a loss of minerals. In order to provide enough minerals to your body you should add a mineral powder such as Jeevan Jal (or just 'Jal') to your drinking water. Jal can be obtained for a few rupees at the pharmacy, as can various diarrhoea tablets. If you are not feeling better within 3 or 4 days consult your doctor and contact Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation Clinic or, Orphanage staff.

## **Culture shock**

When entering a new environment where very little is familiar to what you are used to, you will probably be disoriented to start with. Some people call this 'culture shock'. Experts have suggested that there are four stages of culture shock:

1. Initial euphoria
2. Irritability and hostility
3. Gradual adjustment
4. Adaptation

Almost everyone experiences a culture shock to some degree. It can be frustrating and confusing.

There are positive steps you can take to minimise the impact:

1. Realise that this is normal and that you will live through it.
2. Be open-minded and ready to learn. You will come to realise that there are different ways to do things and that's okay.
3. Research your new culture. You can begin today, reading as much as you can about the Nepalese culture that you will be experiencing.
4. Look for logical reasons for behaviours in the new culture that you may find strange. With a little analysis, you may find that these different behaviours don't seem so strange after all.
5. Above all, flexibility, humility and open-mindedness will be your most valuable traits. These may have even been the key qualities that led you to volunteer in the first place, so it should not be difficult for you.

## Local customs

You should also familiarise yourself with the local customs of Nepal as they are quite different to those of westerner life and it is important not to offend local sensitivities. Below a few of these are listed:

- The dress in Nepal is quite conservative. Most Nepalese cover their shoulders, backs, chests and legs to the knees and do not wear tight or revealing clothing.
- Affection between men and women is seldom expressed and public kissing, hugging, and hand-holding are offensive to most Nepalese and a sign of low morals. It is acceptable for two men to walk hand in hand as friends however.
- Anger is best not expressed openly. It causes you and the person you're mad at loss of face and embarrassment.
- Bargaining is to be expected. Don't bargain if you're not really interested in actually purchasing those goods/services. If your price is accepted, don't try to back out or try to get an even lower price. Bargaining can be great fun if you both walk away being satisfied. Remember you may be bargaining over 20cents, which really isn't worth upsetting a local shop keeper over.
- Cows are sacred. They go and sleep where they want. Watch out for them while driving and don't intentionally injure them in any way (otherwise you could go to jail!).
- Eating is done with the right hand. Only accept as much as you can eat. It is good manners to ask for 'seconds'.
- Feet should never be pointed at anyone, drape something over them if you must stretch them out while sitting on the floor. Never step over anyone, and always move your feet to let people avoid stepping over you.
- Gifts are rarely given and seldom opened in front of the person who has given it.
- Heads are sacred and should be treated with respect. Never take a topi (hat) off a man's head, even in fun.
- Invitations often arrive at the last moment. Don't be surprised or offended, it happens to everyone. If you're busy, even a short appearance is enough.
- Jutho refers to food that is ritually polluted and therefore inedible. Any food which has come into contact, either directly or indirectly, with the mouth becomes jutho.
- Left hands are used for cleaning oneself after going to the toilet. It is never used to pass or accept things, whether food at the table or money with a shopkeeper.
- Namaste is both greeting and farewell, combined with a prayer-like gesture. It means "I see the god in you".
- Payment after a social occasion is sometimes done by the person issuing the invitation. Nepalese people don't tend to divide the bill or go 'Dutch'. It is expected that the other people will reciprocate at some later stage.
- Rice is a religious object as well as a food of status. Brahmins may not eat the rice you serve them. Don't be offended and don't try to force it on them.
- Shoes are considered filthy. Don't ask others to handle your shoes. Most Nepalese take their shoes off at the door.
- Temples should always be walked around clockwise; the same goes for Buddhist monument and gompas. Remove your shoes before going inside. Dress conservatively. Some Hindu temples forbid non-Hindu's into the main temple, so seek permission before entering.
- Time is flexible; we call it "Nepali time". A person may show up at 4pm for a 3pm appointment so you need to be flexible and not work to a tight schedule. As a foreigner though, you will be expected to be punctual!
- Take photographs only after receiving permission. Be sensitive to the fact that some people, particularly the elderly do not understand why you would want to take photos of them, and do not want to be on 'display'.
- Note: Whilst hashish and other drugs such as opium are readily available and sometimes offered to you on the streets, Nepal is very tough on drug abuse, dealing and possession of drugs. This is taken as a serious offence and seriously punished so we strongly recommend you avoid such risks.

We recommend you purchase the Nepal Lonely Planet Guide or read as much as you can online to find out more information on cultural sensitivities.

- [www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/nepal/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/nepal/)

## Flights

As a volunteer you will need to book and pay for your flight own both ways to Nepal. \$ Korean Air once week, \$\$\$\$Thai Airways has regular flights to Kathmandu. \$\$\$Cathay and \$\$\$Silk Air now operate flights a couple of times a week also. Once you have confirmed your flight details please forward them to us at Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation so we can organise your program and airport pick-up in Nepal. [www.justfare.com/](http://www.justfare.com/) specialist best fare with our sister company Himalayan Sherpa Trek & Expedition. Please do remind them to good Airfare.

## Visa (updated Sept 2008)

The following information has been taken from the Nepal Consulate website in September 2008. **We strongly recommend you double check the most up to date information at <http://www.nepalembassyusa.org/index.php> before making any decisions or applying for your Visa.**

- To apply for a tourist visa to Nepal you can either go to the Visa office between the hours of 10.00 am and 4.00 PM Wednesday, or post your application to Nepalese Consulate in DC
- All visas issued by the office must be utilized within six months from the date of issue.
- Visa applications received by Wednesday are generally processed by close of business that day. However, we urge you to allow plenty of time for unforeseen delays that may occur.
- Should you require a visa extension these can be applied for from the Department of Immigration after your arrival in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital. They also have an office in Pokhara, Nepal's second largest city. Make sure you allow sufficient time in your itinerary should you require this. Visa application forms can be downloaded from <http://www.nepalembassyusa.org/index.php> .
- They accept US Dollars and do not have credit card facilities.
- If you are applying through the post please forward them:
  1. Your current passport (with at least 6 months validity).
  2. Fully complete two (2) visa application forms.
  3. Two passport photographs attached to your forms.
  4. Return self-addressed Yellow Express Post envelope or registered envelope.
  5. Bank cheque or Money order.
- **Personal cheques will not be accepted.** Please make cheques payable to: Nepalese Consulate. If you are posting your visa please allow sufficient time for processing and to allow for delays, which may occur with US Post. This is especially important as our office is only open on Wednesday.
- **Embassy of Nepal 2131 Leroy Place, NW Washington, DC 20008**  
**Tel: 202 667 4550, Fax: 202 667 5534 Email: [info@nepalembassyusa.org](mailto:info@nepalembassyusa.org)**
- Visa applications with your passport and all other details cited above can also be left at their Reception Desk during business hours Monday to Friday (9:30 am to 5:00 pm).
- **PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE NO REFUNDS AVAILABLE ON VISAS ISSUED BY THE OFFICE.**
- We recommend you take a tourist visa to avoid complications at Nepalese customs. Volunteers may be treated with suspicion given the political climate, hence travelling as a tourist is the simplest method.
- See <http://www.nepalembassyusa.org/index.php> for more information and application requirements)

## Safety

Whilst every attempt is made to ensure your safety whilst on the program you must take responsibility for educating yourself on the problems that Nepal and her people face. Whilst the political unrest in Nepal has improved over the past 18months, riots, strikes ('bandh's), curfews, protests are still common, particularly outside of Kathmandu. You must independently assess the situation in Nepal prior to departure and should keep up-to-date with developments. You must observe any curfews and not go anywhere where riots or demonstrations could be taking place (ask if you are unsure). A good starting place for researching Nepal's travel situation is:

- [www.bcc.co.uk](http://www.bcc.co.uk) (then search Nepal)

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@himalayansherpa.com](mailto:info@himalayansherpa.com) . We look forward to welcoming you to Nepal and Himalayan Women & Children's Foundation should you wish to pursue the opportunity of becoming a volunteer with us.