



Oncology Childrens Foundation Tibet Cycling Challenge

Trip Dossier

Welcome to RAW Challenges..... If you're looking for a challenging adventure that includes mountain biking, Buddhist culture, remote villages and even a visit to Everest Base Camp, then finishes with the longest downhill bike ride anywhere, then look no further. This trip is tailor-made for you and what's more you'll be helping raise much needed and appreciated funds for the Oncology Childrens Foundation.



Itinerary

Day 1 Check in at airport for international flights in the evening - 18th September 2010

Day 2 Arrive Kathmandu - 19th September

This is arrival day and what better place to start our adventure than in the exotic back alleys and colourful maze that is the Thamel district of Kathmandu. There's plenty to do as our hotel is located in the heart of the city. Step out of the hotel and you are in an area of traditional shops and markets but only a five minutes walk away is the Thamel area of western style shops and restaurants, the tourist's Mecca of Nepal.

Ten minutes further walking brings you to the cultural riches of the atmospheric Durbar Square. Drop by the home of the Kumari, a living Goddess and further afield visit the Buddhist temple of Swayambhunath (the 'monkey temple'), an icon of Nepal. You will have plenty of time to explore this legendary city of Hindu shrines, Buddhist stupas, and bustling bazaars. Your RAW leader will meet with you in the evening to go over the details of the journey ahead.

Day 3 Kathmandu - 20th September

Leisure and visa processing day

Day 4 Kathmandu - 21st September

Today you will go on a guided tour in the morning with a local guide to show you some of the city's most well known attractions. Dependant on traffic you may visit Swayambhunath, Durbar Square, Boudhanath, home to Nepal's Tibetan community & Pashupatinath - the holiest of the country's Hindu shrines and the site for cremations and many resident Sadhus.

Day 5 Fly Kathmandu to Lhasa - 22nd September

We fly to Lhasa on one of the World's most spectacular flights. This gives an incredible view over the Himalayas and it will give you an insight into what lies ahead! We transfer from Gonggar airport by bus to our hotel in Lhasa. You are likely to feel the effects of altitude right away so we will be taking things nice and slow with a Tibetan dinner and a briefing.

Days 6-8 Lhasa - 23rd to 25th September

We take a couple days in Lhasa to acclimatize to the altitude so that when we jump on our bikes we'll be ready to ride. This will give us plenty of time to visit the amazing Potala Palace- the traditional seat of the Dalai Lama - and explore the many other spiritually significant city sights such as the Jokhang temple, Sera, Ganden, and Drepung monasteries. We stay in the Tibetan quarter which is the home of the Jokhang Temple, the most important shrine to all Tibetans. Pilgrims arrive in Lhasa daily from all corners of Tibet and make the traditional circuit of the Jokhang. Watching them making their prostrations, often having involved considerable journeys is a humbling experience. This circuit, the Barkhor, has become an attraction in itself and it is an experience just to wander along with monks and nomads, to get lost amongst the stalls and discover the many smaller nunneries and shrines. You really feel like you have stepped back into the Tibet of legend here.

You'll have plenty of free time to soak up the unique ambience of Tibet's capital and its friendly people. On our last day in Lhasa we'll cycle around Lhasa and get our legs ready for the cycling days ahead.



Day 9 Lhasa to Khamba La (camp before) - 26th September Kms Cycled: 85kms

Day 10 Khambu La to Nagartze (camp before) - 27th September Kms Cycled: 56kms

Day 11 Nagartze to Ralung Gompa - 28th September Kms Cycled: 62kms

Day 12 Ralung Gompa to Gyantze - 29th September Kms Cycled: 62kms

Off at last! We wave goodbye to Lhasa as we hit the road for some pretty hard riding to find our legs. The first section of our journey will take us to Gyantse where, after camping under the stars, we will enjoy the comforts of hot showers and hotel beds. Highlights will include riding the Khamba La Pass (4794m) to view the spectacular Yamdrok Tso, one of Tibet's sacred lakes, and another big climb over the Karo La (5039m), our second big pass, before descending into Gyantse. This leg takes us on a combination of paved and dirt roads. There are some challenging climbs, made difficult by the altitude and some nice descents but the majority of the cycling is fairly flat. You will still be acclimatising so the daily distances aren't huge so as to allow you to work yourself into the ride.

Gyantse is a historically important town that was, until recently, the third largest city in Tibet. The fort dates back to the 15th Century when it was the base of a powerful local warlord. The British Raj adventurer Sir Francis Younghusband and his troops occupied the fort for a month during his invasion of Tibet in 1904. The most famous and beautiful of Gyantse's numerous monasteries is the spectacularly large and complex stupa that is known as the Kumbum.

Day 13 Gyantze to Shigatze - 30th September - Kms Cycled: 95kms

We are on the road again for a big ride through some beautiful rural scenery on generally flat, sealed roads. Our goal today is Shigatse, Tibet's second biggest town. This is the home of the Panchen Lama, a spiritual figure who is revered throughout Tibet. His traditional seat is Tashilhunpo Monastery and you'll catch the sun glittering on its gold-tipped spires as we get close to town. Shigatse is capital of the province of Tsang and the chief attraction is the Tashilhunpo monastic complex, the ruined fortress which dominates the city's skyline and the local market. A high wall runs around the outside of Tashilhunpo Monastery and this wall marks an important circumambulation route. Join local Pilgrims as they make their Kora!

Day 14 Shigatze to camp before Tso La - 01st October - Kms Cycled: 98kms

Day 15 Camp after Lhatse - 02nd October - Kms Cycled: 63kms

This section will take us from Shigatse into Pelbar (New Tigri -Shegar). This is tough, though rewarding, riding over the passes of Tsuo La (4520m) and Gyatso La (5220m), camping in the Tibetan countryside along the way. The scenery is mind-blowing as we get our first views of Everest, Lhotse and Cho Oyu. Expect wild Tibetan settlements, isolated monasteries and meetings with nomadic herders as we ride to the Shegar pass.

Day 16 Lhatse to Pelbar (New Tingri) - 03rd October - Kms Cycled: 59kms

Day 17 Pelbar (New Tingri) to Tashi Dzong - 04th October - Kms Cycled: 78kms

Day 18 Tashi Dzong to Gompa - 05th October - Kms Cycled: 45kms

Day 19 Gompa to Everest Base Camp to Nam La - 06th October - Kms Cycled: 37kms

From Shegar we begin our side trip away from the Friendship highway towards Rongbuk Monastery and Mount Everest. Our campsites will be a welcome sight at the end of these days and the culinary magic of our Nepali and Tibetan cooks will be most appreciated. You'll be surprised by the variety of food they can produce on a camp stove!

We turn off the Friendship Highway and head south on rough dirt roads over the mighty Pang La pass (5150m) with its unparalleled panoramic views of the Himalayan giants from Makalu to Shishapangma. The climb up here will take approx. 3 hours. If the weather is kind this is the view that most will remember, a first clear view of Everest (known as Qomolangma to Tibetan people), the world's highest mountain! From this spot you can really sense the power of this mountain as it rises above a string of snow-capped peaks, all impressive in their own right. This leg will be the highlight for many as we pedal to Everest Base Camp (5040m). A thrilling steep descent follows with 6 kms of fun downhill riding before rejoining the dirt road. Along the way we'll see ruins of buildings lost to the past and the last few Tibetan villages before setting up camp at Rongbuk monastery. You'll have ample opportunity to take in the experience of observing Everest with a whole day to ride the last few km to base camp where you can view the mountain up as close as you are allowed to get without a climbing permit!

Day 20 Nam La to Tingri - 07th October - Kms Cycled: 55/68kms

We'll head back to the Friendship Highway and travel across country to Old Tingri where we will put up our feet with the Himalayas as our backdrop. We Cycle over Nam La Pass (5250m)

Day 21 Tingri to the bottom of Lalung - 08th October - Kms Cycled: 57kms

Day 22 Lalung to Nyalam - 09th October - Kms Cycled: 80kms

This leg is one of the most thrilling but difficult of the whole trip! First, we ride out of Old Tingri into a dry moonscape passing ruins of destroyed princedoms and towns that seem to be slowly turning to the dust of their surroundings. This land is truly awe-inspiring and it gets ever more dramatic as we ascend the climax to the trip the mighty double bill of the Lalung pass and Thang La, to be confronted with another awe-inspiring view of the Himalayas. Even though we are now all well acclimatised it is still hard work climbing this double pass. It's a fairly long ascent to the first summit, the Lalung La (4990m) but we then drop down and then have to regain that altitude on the climb to the summit of the main pass - the Thang La (5050m). At this height it is possible we may have snow or clear conditions and a photo-stop is a must at the summit prayer flags. From here we are surrounded by the world's biggest mountains, one on one side Shishapangma, the only 8000 metre peak which stands completely in Tibet, whilst on the other side the north faces of Cho Oyu, Menlungste and Gauri Shankar! Looking down the other side of the pass we are staring at what's often claimed to be the largest downhill in the world and it will take us two days to descend from our current elevation of 5050 metres to 900 metres at our end destination in Nepal. That's over 4000 metres of downhill bliss! The ride downhill from the pass is still quite hard work as the initially steep descent eases and our old friend the headwind is probably against us. We de-

scend to the village of Nyalam, where we overnight. The altitude here is 3750 metres, our lowest point since leaving Lhasa.

Day 23 The Last Resort, Nepal border - 10th October - Kms Cycled: 55kms

The next morning we ready ourselves for the drop down off the Tibetan plateau. Nepal beckons beyond, and cycling down through these mountains we begin a huge drop in altitude to Zhangmu, a thrilling downhill ride that taken us from the dry rarefied air of Tibet down to the lush green rainforests of Nepal all in a matter of hours. The road is at first steep and rocky with lots of switchbacks and our brakes will be tested! The road drops into a steep, narrow gorge as Nepal comes into view and it's thrilling to see the forest greenery and waterfalls after the aridity of Tibet. After saying good bye to our Tibetan crew and clearing the border at Zhangmu we aim ride on for a further 15km to our home for the night at 'the Last Resort'.

Please note that local conditions and border restrictions may necessitate changes on the day to this itinerary and the cycling route or overnight stop may be changed if needed.

Day 24 Bus to Kathmandu - 11th October

After a lesiurely start to the day and the chance to bungee jump into the nearby ravine, we will pack up our bikes and bus back to Kathmandu (avoiding heavy traffic). Free night for dinner.

Day 25 Transfer to Airport - 12th October

Today is departure day. You'll be transferred to the airport approximately 3 hours before flight departure time in the early afternoon.

Day 25 - Arrive back in Australia - 13th October 2010

Joining Point

The hotel is 7 km from Kathmandu International Airport. The hotel is ideally located close to the Thamel traveller's district and near the city centre, with twin-share rooms, private bathrooms, hot water and television and 24 hour reception.

Samsara Resort Hotel

Thamel, Kathmandu

Tel: 977-1-4417711, 4416466



Finishing Point

Samsara Resort Hotel

Thamel, Kathmandu

Tel: 977-1-4417711, 4416466

Group Size

Maximum of 20 travellers per group

Meal Inclusions

Most meals included - see itinerary.

Accommodation

The accommodation on this trip is varied to say the least. We provide tents for all passengers and the sleeping arrangements are for twin-share so if you are a single traveller you will be paired up with someone of the same sex. This ensures that whether you are travelling solo or with friends, everyone is paying the same rate. We also provide one foam mat for each participant. Should you want to bring your own super-deluxe self-inflating, ultra-light, ergonomically designed mattress... you're most welcome! For those non-camping nights, we will be staying in a mixture of hotels and guesthouses. We choose hotels (where possible) that are comfortable, centrally located places which are adequate in every way, with twin-share facilities and private bathrooms. Guesthouses are more basic with shared washing and toilet facilities.

Transport

We will have a support vehicle (or two) for the whole duration of the cycling component. There is an international flight from Kathmandu to Lhasa on day 2, and we may use public transport to get around Lhasa.

Physical Rating

5 out of 5. Be prepared for some serious physical activity. A good level of cycling and general fitness is a pre-requisite for this trip and you should have prepared with several months of regular cycling and cardio-vascular activity. You will be cycling at altitude throughout the trip and you do not want to cope with a lack of fitness compounding this. There are several high passes to cross of over 4-5000m in height and strong headwinds are a constant companion on some stretches of this trip. Tibet is dry and dusty so be prepared for challenging riding conditions throughout, though most of the Friendship highway is now sealed.

Culture Shock Rating

4.5 out of 5. Tibet is quite rough and ready once you are out of the capital, this is an integral part of it's charm but be prepared for squat toilets, basic accommodation and lack of comfortable facilities in the guesthouses in small towns. We camp for approximately half the trip and use hotels and guesthouses where a reasonable standard is available. Most Tibetans will have a very limited understanding of English and patience is required when dealing with hotels or shops, do not expect a high standard of service or you'll be disappointed! Most Tibetans are curious and well intentioned, you will attract interest from local people wherever you go, particularly when camping in small villages. You'll be the object of attention. Please be aware that petty theft can be a problem and you should follow your leader's advice and keep a close eye on your possessions.

Important Notes

1. Bikes

The mountain bikes that we provide are 'Giant ATX830' (size 19.5") and 'Fuji Outland' (sizes 15"-22") brands with aluminum frames. The 'Giant' are 24 speed whereas the 'Fuji' are 27 speed. All bikes have front suspension. They do not have carrying back racks but do have one water bottle cage. There are no bar ends, toe clips or straps on pedals. Bikes are less than 3 years old. We will have a bike mechanic who can assist with any repairs needed.

The hire of the bikes for the trip costs **USD\$ 250** - Please make sure that you let us know your height in cm's so that we can properly size you to the correct frame size.



2. Bringing your own bike

Not a problem but any extra charges for taking it on the International flights are your responsibility. It is best to pack your bike in a bike box available from any bike shop. We can then carry the box in the truck. Please note that while every effort is made to maintain all the bikes in good condition on each trip, we cannot guarantee that some small damage such as scratching will not occur as a result of the loading and unloading of bikes into and out of the support vehicle.

Any excess baggage allowance charges will be payable by you. Airlines can be very unpredictable, however Thai Airways don't charge if total weight is below 35kg. For your flight from Kathmandu to Lhasa, the luggage allowance is 20kg. China Air has recently increased their excess charges from USD\$ 13.- per kg. If you are taking your bike try and estimate your total weight above 20kg in order to estimate your surcharge. See Notes below on this flight and the excess charges.

Please note - If you are bringing your own bike and it has disc brakes, hydraulics, rear suspension, oil units or special pumps for adjusting the suspension pressure, please make sure that you bring the necessary spares and parts with you.

Hiring Bikes

If you have hired a bike then your bike will be given to you in Kathmandu and you will be expected to check in your bike as part of your luggage from Kathmandu to Lhasa.

Excess luggage charges-Lhasa flight

We have built in excess luggage charges of approx \$60 USD per person as part of your fare for this trip to cover the weight of the bike. But please note that you will be responsible for any additional weight and consequent charges in excess of your regular luggage allowance and the \$60USD included excess should you have not followed our advice and packed light with your own personal luggage.

You can send bulky, non-valuable items, packed in big bags, with the HMB crew via truck overland to Lhasa, if you won't need them until the day before the ride begins. But the safest option is always to pack conservatively to begin with - Tibet is an unpredictable place and changes to road conditions and borders happen frequently.

Visas

China visa

All nationalities require a visa for China. Current visa regulations from Nepal require that travellers wishing to enter Tibet from Kathmandu need to apply for their Chinese visa (as a group) at the Chinese Embassy in Nepal. **Please do not obtain a Chinese visa before you travel.** Your tour leader will arrange your visa once you arrive in Kathmandu after your group meeting on day 1. The cost is \$115 USD all nationalities and \$ 198 USD for US citizens.

As you will be entering Tibet as a group, it is not possible for anyone to leave the group and remain in Tibet individually. Everybody must enter and leave Tibet with the group.

Please provide RAW Challenges with your passport details at time of booking. Please make sure that this is for the passport that you will be travelling on. If you have to renew your passport please bring your old passport with you as well.

Nepal visa

As from July 15th 2008 a **double entry** visa can be obtained upon arrival at Kathmandu airport at a cost of US\$40 in cash. Please bring with you two passport photos.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips.

We strongly recommend that you take out insurance the moment you register for a trip as you are then covered should you not be able to go in the event of illness or accident. Please send these details (name of insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number) to RAW Challenges prior to departure.

We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank

for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

Our preferred insurance company is CoverMore as they provide an excellent service. You can apply on line directly by clicking on this link:

<https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231> to apply

Health

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

Please let us know of any medical conditions on the registration form and if you are currently taking prescription medicine as it is important that our leader is aware of your circumstances.

We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

There are no specific health requirements for entry into China or Nepal. However, you should consult your doctor or travel clinic for up-to-date information and prescriptions for vaccinations and anti-malarial requirements. We would suggest that you are up to date with immunisation protection against typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis. As some vaccinations require a course over weeks or months, contact your doctor as early as possible prior to departure. Generally, six to eight weeks' notice is adequate. For altitude you may want to talk to your Travel doctor about Diamox which helps with acclimatisation - though if you are allergic to sulfur based drugs then you should avoid this. Expect some tingling in your fingers and toes as a side effect for normal usage. Some Doctors may also suggest a Rabies shot for Tibet, though this is an expensive vaccination and most travellers do not have it.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements (such as a spare pair of prescription glasses). Please be aware that for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets/antibiotics etc. Your first aid kit should include:

- *headache tablets*
- *diarrhoea treatment (both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic)*
- *band-aids*
- *antiseptic for cuts & scrapes*
- *lip balm*
- *insect repellent*
- *high factor sunscreen.*

Given the physical nature of this challenge we strongly advise bringing some sachets of an oral rehydration solution (available at chemists) as this aids recovery following activity and dehydration and also helps replace lost body salts should you suffer from 'gastro'. Just add a sachet to your water bottle each day. Please scroll down to the Special Safety Notes below for information on dehydration.

If you are 65 years or older a completed Medical Certificate is required. Please fax this through to 03 9597 0797 prior to departure.

Physical Preparation

In order to physically prepare yourself to cycle long hours in the saddle for up to 7 hours on successive days it is vital that you undertake a proper fitness program. Getting yourself fit is all part of the Challenge and one that you'll benefit from long after your trip is over. It is really worth putting in the effort before you go to condition the body (backside, neck, shoulders & leg muscles) as it means you'll enjoy the event rather than it being a struggle.

For a fitness program & advice click here: <http://rawchallenges.com/guide-to-cycling.php>

Build up your base endurance by long and frequent bike rides which will ensure that you are in peak condition for the challenge. You can also mix this up by taking other forms of regular exercise which you currently do such as yoga, spinning classes, walking and swimming.

Money Exchange

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate as of June 2009 \$1 AUD = 5.5 RMB

. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following website: <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>

The local currency in Tibet is the Reminibi (RMB) or Chinese Yuan (CNY) and is the only currency that can be used within the country. You are recommended to bring a mixture of cash (AUD and USD) which can be easily exchanged to local currency). Credit cards - only accepted in major cities - can be used to advance cash but attract a high fee. ATM's are widely available in Lhasa or Kathmandu, but few and far inbetween those cities.

When changing money try and get a mix of denominations (your leader will advise you on this). Keep smaller notes with you when on the cycle ride as it can be difficult to change larger notes once out of the city.

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping.

Any tip that you wish to give to your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated. We recommend approx. \$70 USD to go into a kitty to be distributed to the local team at the end of the trip. Usually we do this on the last night at the celebration dinner.

Departure Tax & Fuel Surcharge

Your departure tax and fuel surcharge needs to be paid with the final trip balance 6 weeks before departure and will be shown on your invoice.

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional USD\$400, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (e.g. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) which necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

Keeping In Touch - communication while on the road

Internet cafes are commonplace throughout the regions we visit.

If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency we recommend that they refer to our Emergency contact below. We don't recommend that family and friends try to contact you through hotels, as they are subject to change and the reception staff may not speak English.

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, please call RAW Challenges Melbourne Office. Tel: +61 3 9787 4366. Outside of office hours please call 0413 703 632

Your Fellow Cyclists

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience.

Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Group Leader

All RAW Challenges group trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. They will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends.

While not being guides in the traditional sense you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the countries visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also use local guides where we think more specific knowledge will add to the enjoyment of the places we are visiting - we think it's the best of both worlds.

Responsible Travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects.

When we are cycling children will ask you for pens, money etc. It is always hard to resist giving them small gift. However we ask you not to do this as it encourages a culture of begging and often parents will take their children out of school and get their children to prey on tourists. Ask your leader what is the best way to give.

A Couple Of Rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for RAW travellers. RAW's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. **Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.**

What To Take

Our best advice is to pack as lightly as possible (try to stay under 15kg). Use a backpack or overnight bag with a shoulder strap or smaller bag with wheels. A suitcase is not recommended for this style of trip. When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia. During the day you will need to carry a day pack to carry camera, sunscreen, favourite snacks, jacket etc.

Any excess baggage allowance charges will be payable by you. Airlines can be very unpredictable, however Thai Airways don't charge if total weight is below 35kg.

For your flight from Kathmandu to Lhasa, *the luggage allowance is 20kg*. China Air has recently increased their excess charges from USD\$ 3.- to USD\$ 13.- per kg. If you are taking your bike try and estimate your total weight above 20kg in order to estimate your surcharge. **Your bike will be given to you in Kathmandu and you will be expected to check in your bike as part of your luggage from Kathmandu to Lhasa. This is why it is essential to pack lightly and leave any items you may not need in Kathmandu until your return.**

Here is a general gear list you will need when cycling, with specifications for winter months. Try to keep the weight and bulk to a minimum by bringing clothes made from lightweight material. Don't pack too much clothing; one or two changes will be all you need. However, as the weather conditions in the Himalayas are often unpredictable, be prepared for all eventualities, be it rain, unseasonable cold or heat.

Recommended Checklist

Travel Documents:

- Passport (with photocopies)
- Copy of travel insurance
- Airline ticket
- USD cash
- Credit card

** Tip: use a money belt for security (put documents inside a plastic bag)

Personal Items

- First Aid kit (see the health section)
- High factor sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Toiletries (biodegradable)
- Watch or alarm clock
- Ear plugs (in case room mate snores!)
- Plastic bags for wet or dirty clothing
- Wet wipes or antiseptic hand gel
- Diamox (optional)

Clothing

- 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying fabric) / long sleeved T-shirt
- 2 pairs Cycling shorts (padded)
- 1 pair of comfortable shoes for cycling
- pair of sport sandals
- socks (for cycling)
- 1 pair of knee length shorts
- 1 pair lightweight long trousers
- Lightweight waterproof top
- Warm fleece/ski jacket
- Thermal top & bottoms
- Bike tights or track suit bottoms
- Small towel and swim wear
- Beanie hat
- Clothes to relax in
- Sleeping bag (3 season)
- Roll mat (optional as two provided)
- Bandana (for a dust-mask)

Cycling Equipment

- Helmet - (compulsory)
- 1 water bottle (min. 750 ml capacity recommended) or 'Camel Bak' hydration pack
- Handlebar bag / small day pack for carrying items when cycling
- Cycling gloves and **warm gloves**

Optional:

- Multi-tool (allen keys) for minor adjustments to your bike
- Your own saddle or gel seat cover
- Your own SPD pedals
- Mini bicycle pump
- Favourite snacks for cycling energy boost e.g. 'PowerBars', sports gel (a concentrated carbohydrate that delivers immediate energy when you feel tired or flat), dried fruit or nuts

Other Suggestions:

- Camera and spare battery and memory card.
- Adapter for recharging digital camera (Tibet uses the standard European non-grounded socket, with 2 parallel round prongs, Nepal uses 2 or 3 round prongs)

- Spare batteries
- Reading / writing material
- Penknife (put in main luggage at airport)
- Torch
- Small calculator (when out bargaining!)
- Photos of family or postcards of Australia (great way to have fun with locals you meet)
- Phrase book, map and Lonely Planet guide
- Small padlock for securing your luggage during flights

Local Dress

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia. We will be spending a lot of time in the more conservative rural regions of Tibet. Please remember that as visitors to someone else's home it is our responsibility to fit with the local customs by wearing appropriate clothing (irrespective of what other travellers are wearing). Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Asian climate.

As a general guideline shoulders and knees should be covered at all times. The wearing of shorts and halter tops away from the beach or swimming pools are not allowed as they will restrict your entry into buildings of a religious nature and family homes.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure.

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling.

Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your group leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your RAW itinerary, and RAW makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time.

Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

A thorough cycling safety briefing will be given prior to setting off about the bikes (changing gears, brakes etc), Tibet road rules, cycling on the right hand side of the road, cycling in a group and general hazards to look out for.



Special Safety Notes

Dehydration

Dehydration is the biggest risk when undertaking a physical challenge such as trekking over undulating terrain. It is so important to be aware of your fluid intake especially at altitude and to constantly drink water throughout the day (even when you do not feel thirsty). Symptoms of mild dehydration include:

- *flushed face*
- *extreme thirst, more than normal or unable to drink*
- *dry, warm skin*
- *cannot pass urine or reduced amounts, dark, yellow*
- *dizziness made worse when you are standing*
- *weakness*
- *cramping in the arms and legs*
- *sleepy or irritable*
- *headaches*
- *dry mouth, dry tongue; with thick saliva*

The simplest way of monitoring your fluid intake is by checking the colour of your urine. If it is clear or slightly yellow you are well hydrated but once it is a dark yellow you are in the danger zone and need to increase your fluid intake immediately. Ensure that you bring some Gastrolyte sachets as these help your recovery after trekking with the replacement of electrolytes. Gastrolyte is also the recommended treatment for dehydration caused by diarrhoea ('gastro').

Altitude Sickness

Altitude sickness has the potential to affect all trekkers from 2500m and higher. Wherever possible ascend slowly and give your body plenty of time to adjust to the smaller quantities of oxygen in the air.

It is important to be aware of the normal altitude symptoms that you may encounter:

- *Periods of sleeplessness*
- *Occasional loss of appetite*
- *Vivid, wild dreams at around 2500-3800m in altitude*
- *Unexpected momentary shortness of breath, day and night*
- *Periodic breathing that wakes you occasionally*
- *Your nose becomes bunged up*
- *Dry cough develops*
- *Mild headache*

If you are feeling nauseous and dizzy be sure to let the main leader know and the person you are walking with so that we can monitor your condition. We are crossing some high passes which will be a challenge for you to ride, hopefully you will have acclimatised well by this stage of trip but if you are struggling you should make use of the support vehicle and always inform the leader and your travelling companions if you feel unwell. More details will be given to you at the briefing on the first evening.



RAW Challenges Newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of travellers stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip.

We would also love to receive any photos after the event as we are starting to build up a travellers album for each of our destinations on our website. We need resolution of around 1MB. Please could you send a CD to: RAW Challenges Photo album, 2/24 Bay Road, Sandringham, VIC 3191.

HAVE AN AMAZING ADVENTURE!

The information in this trip dossier has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and RAW Challenges.