

# INDIA & NEPAL



Your Volunteer  
Program Guide

# Volunteering in India & Nepal



## Why do you want to volunteer?

To start it's important to examine your motivations for volunteering and to understand what you want to gain from the experience. Here are some questions to help you understand your own motivations.

Why do you want to volunteer at this point in your life?

What do you hope to gain? New skills? A new perspective or attitude?

How does volunteering fit in with your future plans in life?

How will this experience enable you to do what you would like to do five years from now?

Ask yourself, is your desire to volunteer in Nepal or India related to:

To help others who are less advantaged than yourself?

To develop a lifelong relationship with a country and population that has always intrigued or inspired you?

To explore another culture in an unconventional manner?

To further your career by gaining hands-on work experience?

To contribute to positive social change?

## What makes a good volunteer in India or Nepal?

Nepal and India have a different work culture to the one you are most likely familiar with. It stems from their culture and belief systems as well as the vastly different physical landscapes they are working within.

To have a satisfying and rewarding experience as a volunteer in Nepal or India, you must be able to let go of many of your ideas about the way things *should* happen. Imposing your own ideas about the workplace won't win you any friends or respect, but if you can see your experience as an opportunity to try a different way of thinking and to learn new ways of being in the world then you will be accepted and appreciated.

Time sensitivity is also important. Recognise that in India and Nepal much of what happens is based around agricultural timings so generally the pace of life is much slower with a different attitude towards work. Also, you need to realize that you may not complete a given project. The expectation that you will accomplish some task and be able to point to a finished product will have to wait until you return home.. Instead this is an opportunity to view yourself as one of many who have contributed and played a part in a bigger picture. Communities evolve at their own pace- one that can't be rushed.

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Ask yourself how you feel about:

- A workplace with a high emphasis on social relationships where there are many cups of tea and chatting before you get to work.
- A less organised workplace where supplies ordered may not arrive and meeting scheduled may be postponed a few times.
- A workplace where personal and professional boundaries are blurred and part of your work might be giving the Directors son English lessons.
- A workplace with a fixed hierarchy and method that might not be open to your newly designed training package.
- A workplace where you may not see the tangible result of your work. You may not be able to point to something and say I did that.

Successful volunteers in India and Nepal develop flexibility in their approach. Their respect and sensitivity to other cultures allow them to reflect on why things are done differently here, to tolerate ambiguity and to observe prevailing practices.

They accept that it is important to listen to people and serve them in the way they request rather than impose their own views and methods. They are open to other opinions and possibilities and know how to laugh. They are patient and resourceful.

There are many ways to contribute to another country as well as to your own personal growth. Volunteering is one unique opportunity to do so but it is not the only way. Before you make a commitment to volunteering in another country, such as Nepal or India, be sure that it is the right choice for you.

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## Costs for India and Nepal

PROGRAM COST	AUD
1 week	950
2 weeks	1100
3 weeks	1250
1 month	1500
6 weeks	1750
2 months	2000
10 weeks	2250
3 months	2500
14 weeks	2750

Costs are dependent on each individual package please check your specific requirements.

## What can you offer?

Of course, to be of help you need something that organisations value, whether it is specific skills, qualifications, insight, or an ability to work hard as part of a team. If you do not have a resume or CV that outlines your experience and background, make a list of your skills and qualifications. This list will not only help you select the right organisation, but will also help you better present yourself as an applicant.

Ask yourself: What am I good at that can be of help to others?

Maybe you can teach your native tongue, the English language. Maybe you know how to install solar panels or computer software. Maybe you can teach sewing or first aid. Make a list of all your skills, achievements and qualifications. Then ask yourself how these skills might be helpful in a developing country given their needs, resources, and the local cultural environment.

## Your Budget

Living costs in Nepal and India compared with those in your home country are inexpensive. Your greatest expenses will be your air fares, travel insurance, visa's and taxes. When planning your budget you need to take into account how long you will stay in the country and what you will do aside from volunteering. If you plan to visit other places in the country or go trekking you will incur extra costs. The Program Costs are indicated *left*.

Ekno Experience can also provide quotes for additional sightseeing trips for you. When looking at our cost for a placement you will also notice that it is more economical to stay for a longer amount of time.

## Why do I pay? Where does the money go?

For some of us the notion of paying to volunteer is a strange one. We may think that we are saving the organization wages by offering to work for free. In the west this may be true. Organisations might thank their volunteers with awards and special occasions. And yet in the developing world organisations ask volunteers to feed and accommodate themselves while they work and make donations to keep their programs going. The reasons for this are economic, ethical and cultural.

We need to be realistic about the abilities of developing countries. Australia ranks number two (2) on the UN Human Development Index. This measures three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life, being educated and having a decent standard of living. India ranks one hundred thirty-two on the index and Nepal comes in at one hundred and forty-four.

From an economic point of view, organizations in India and Nepal simply do not have the funds to accommodate volunteers. Particularly in the standard of accommodation we are comfortable in and familiar with. We are incensed when executives earn big salaries and are given perks such as fancy meals. Imagine how the people of developing nations would feel seeing resources put into the pockets of volunteers who have chosen to be here.

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On ethical grounds there are also difficulties with diverting funds to care for volunteers. The donors who give money to these organizations want them spent on the needs of people and infrastructure to genuinely improve lives. It's hard to justify spending them on visitors to the region volunteering when they could be spent on essentials such as schools and hospitals. Would you feel comfortable as a volunteer taking money donated for essential services?

Culturally, throughout the region Indians, Tibetans and Nepalis believe in the karmic value of giving. They help each other and depend on each other in a way it's difficult to imagine without experience. Within communities there is an expectation that everyone will give and receive help at some time. While there is no shame in asking for help there is also little fuss made over the person who gives help. Soon enough in the karmic scheme of things the positions will be reversed.

As a volunteer you will be very much appreciated by the individuals you work with but you will most likely not be made a fuss over. Instead you enter a relationship where the people you help would do the same for you if the positions were reversed. This is in fact a much deeper and more genuine experience.

The money you pay covers a range of costs including a donation to the organization, your food and accommodation, some travel, your language lessons and orientation by one of our staff. It also helps Ekno Experience to cover the costs associated with developing and maintaining our local relationships and making them available to other volunteers in the future.

## Plane Reservations and Fare

When you are ready to purchase your airline ticket, buy a return ticket as a return ticket is typically much cheaper than two one way tickets and you may be required to show your return portion should you want to extend your visa. Be sure the return date of your ticket can be changed with little or no penalty in case your travel plans change or you have to travel for medical care. Avoid dirt cheap tickets with lots of restrictions.

Finally, buy your ticket from a reputable agency and from an airline that has an office or at least a representative in Kathmandu or Delhi. Therefore, if you have any questions or need to make any changes, you will know who to call, and there is some guarantee that you will reach a helpful person.

## Travel Insurance

It is compulsory for all volunteers to have travel insurance. We will ask you for a copy of your insurance before departure.



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## Choosing the Right Project for You

By now you've already spent quite a bit of time thinking about your side of the partnership but what about the job you'll be doing and the organization you'll be working with? How do you choose the right job or project to work on?

Ekno Experience has tried to simplify this process for you by offering a variety of placements that offer you many interesting and exciting ways to contribute. From community schools and children's homes to health clinics, HIV support groups and organisations that advocate environmental and women's issues, we have something to suit you.

Start by looking at the timeframe you have for volunteering.

## When to Go?

We divide our experiences into Short Term (three weeks or less) or Long Term (Usually between one and three months – or longer!) because we find that people are usually looking for different experiences. Either a taste of something new and different or an opportunity to really evaluate and make changes in their lives.

As you begin to plan your trip, take note of the time of year you are planning to go. Does it coincide with one of the two tourist seasons (early March to July and September to early December). If so, how might this impact your trip and experience? It may be harder for you to confirm your flight reservations for one thing. Prices may also be more expensive. However, during the tourist season you will have greater opportunities to meet other travelers or volunteers with similar interests to you. The two tourist seasons also represent the best times to trek in Nepal and India with spectacular views of the great Himalaya mountain range. It is important to keep in mind the dates of national and local festivals as well. In both India and Nepal the main festival season falls between October and November. Most organisations are not open during national holidays, and sometimes they are not open between two different holidays if the holidays fall close to each other. Festival dates change from year to year. Both Nepal and India rely on lunar calendars to determine the exact date of festivals each year. Given your needs and interests, you may want to avoid highly festive seasons, or you may want to intentionally travel during these times so you can partake in the fun. You can always leave the cities and towns during long festivals, as many longer term visitors do, and take advantage of the slow work days to go on a short trek into the mountainside.

We are happy to answer any questions that you may have pertaining to the best dates to travel to Nepal and India as well as which dates suit particular volunteering placements

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## Which Country?

Once you've decided on the timeframe you have, consider how important the destination is. If you are on a short term trip you want to combine with other activities see how they will fit. If you want to study Buddhism, learn about Tibetan culture or cook Indian Cuisine it makes sense to stay in India. If your heart is set on immersing yourself in Nepali culture or joining a course at Kopan Monastery then Nepal might be a better choice. As a volunteer position will only be part of your lifestyle over the time period these activities are important to consider.

It maybe that volunteering is your sole reason to travel which leaves the door open to consider both countries.

## The Job Itself

Now it's time to pull all these pieces of information together and consider the job you'd like to apply for. Keep in mind your skills and what you want to get from the experience then look through the options that attract you on our website.

Hours and conditions around jobs can vary so make sure you look into each position carefully. We recommend that volunteers work part time each weekday and take weekends off also local festivals, statutory holidays etc. This gives you opportunities to participate in cultural and social events and feel relaxed and refreshed by your experience.

When you think you've found what's right for you fill out the application at the back of this book and submit it to us. If you can't find something that suits you then please contact us. We have local knowledge and contacts that can make use of your skills so we can almost always find a way for you to volunteer.

## Why use an Agency like Ekno Experience?

If you've lived in India or Nepal before you might already know the answer to this question! The culture in this part of the world is to take life very much as it comes. There is very limited planning due to the high number of variables and the unreliability of services and infrastructure.

On any given day the electricity or water or bus service may not work. Staff members may have religious, social or family responsibilities. A relation might go into labor or a cousin turn up unexpectedly from Tibet having spent the last twenty days walking to get there.

No matter what kind of volunteer you are things might not go the way you thought they would. That's where an agency comes in.

Volunteers who try to organise their own experience often spend a huge amount of time waiting around and trying to speak to the right person. Once they do, there will often be difficulties in communicating and understanding exactly what is required. There is very limited support for volunteers who are expected to deal with cultural difference, and a new language on their own. Volunteers are also expected to find their own food and accommodation and deal with any health or registration issues independently. It's not that the organizations and people here don't want to assist you, it's more that their capacity is limited and their resources overstretched.

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Ekno Experience will work with the placement organization directly to ensure no matter what obstacles come up you are looked after. We also organise an orientation program, language support lessons and introduce you to members of the local community who will make you feel at home.

Having set up your project, we will have already negotiated your hours and working conditions so you won't have to sort these out on your own. If you want to make changes to your arrangements once here we can help you with that too.

We'll organise suitable accommodation for you and show you some great places to eat. We'll give you advice on staying healthy and processing your experience as it unfolds.

## The Application Process

There are four simple steps to the application process:

**Step One Complete the Application Form:** Fill out the application form on the last page. Upon receipt of the form we will assess your suitability for the program within two working days and get back to you.

**Step Two We Contact You:** Successful applicants will then receive a letter of acceptance and destination specific information including the volunteer code of conduct to sign off on.

**Step Three Decision Point:** Once you have read through the letter of acceptance and we have answered any questions or concerns that you might have, it is time to sign off on the volunteer code of conduct and pay your AUD350 application fee to secure your place on the program. Please note that we will refund your application fee if you decide not to go (refer to our Terms of Service for details on the refund policy).

**Step Four Confirmation:** Once the application fee is paid, we will advise our volunteer partner. We will also send you the link to our program guide which covers topics such as country information, travel links, visa application process, fundraising ideas and much more!

**Communication and Support:** Throughout the application process, we are committed to working with you to answer any of your questions or concerns. During your placement we are also available as a form of support to you as a volunteer and will regularly contact you while in country to discuss how the program is going.

# Application Form



Please take your time to fill out this application form.  
To be filled out in conjunction with terms and conditions.  
Compulsory fields are marked with \*.

## YOUR GENERAL DETAILS

Family Name\*: Title: Given Names\*:

Date of Birth\*:

Gender:

- Male  
 Female

Nationality\*:



## YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Address\* (Postal):

Suburb: Postcode:

Country\*:

Telephone (Home):

Telephone (Business):

Email Address:

Alternate Email Address:

**EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE** – please also attach a current CV

Highest qualification\*

If you have obtained or are pursuing a degree, please indicate your area(s) of study.

Other relevant qualifications and skills

Work experience (Please be specific.)

# Application Form Continued



Travel experience (Please be specific)

Please state any health condition that you have, including allergies or disabilities (it is important for us to be aware of any condition so we can be prepared when placing you)\*

Have you previously volunteered in organization in Nepal/India? If so, please state the location and dates in which you volunteered.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

How long would you like to volunteer for?\*

When would you like to go to Nepal/India?\*

Which volunteer project are you interested in?\*

Do you require any further information? Please state.

How did you locate our website?\*

I have read and agree to your legal terms of service\* I agree /I don't agree Signature:

Date:

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**experience**  
discover the difference

# Terms and Conditions

**Please read this legal information carefully before sending us your application form.**

By receiving this document, you signify you have read and accepted these terms of use. If you do not agree to these terms of use, do not fill in the application form. The materials in the website [www.eknoexperience.com](http://www.eknoexperience.com) are provided "as is" and without warranties of any kind either expressed or implied. To the fullest extent permissible and subject and pursuant to applicable law, Ekno Experience disclaims all warranties, express or implied, including, but not limited to, implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose.

Ekno Experience does not warrant or make any representations regarding the correctness, accuracy, reliability, or otherwise of the materials in this site or the results of their use.

International travel is inherently risky. By becoming a volunteer, you acknowledge and accept these risks and those associated with living and working in developing countries. As a volunteer you must appreciate and understand that some of these activities may be outside of your personal insurance cover. Ekno Experience is not liable (to the maximum extent of the law) for any loss or harm you may suffer, including but not limited to loss caused by: delay; bodily injury or death; emotional upset; damage to or loss of property; war or terrorism.

Ekno Experience reserves the right to use feedback from volunteers for website material. Ekno Experience is not liable for any errors or mistakes made by partner organizations. All disputes are governed by the law of Australia.

#### **EMAIL COMMUNICATION**

Emails from Ekno Experience staff contain information intended solely for the addressee, which is confidential or private in nature. If you are not the intended recipient, you may not peruse, use, disseminate, distribute or copy this message or any file attached to this message. Any such unauthorised use, is prohibited and may be unlawful. If you have received an email from Ekno Experience in error, please notify the sender immediately by e-mail and thereafter delete the original message from your machine. Furthermore, the information contained in the email, and any attachments thereto, is for information purposes only and may contain the personal views and opinions of the author, which are not necessarily the views and opinions of Ekno Experience and therefore does not accept liability for any claims, loss or damages of whatsoever nature, arising as a result of the reliance on such information by anyone. Whilst all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the accuracy and integrity of information transmitted electronically and to preserve the confidentiality thereof, Ekno Experience accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever if information or data is, for whatsoever reason, incorrect, corrupted or does not reach its intended destination.

#### **REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

Ekno Experience requires certain information from volunteers throughout the process leading up to program arrival. This may include details about the volunteer's skills and experience, a police clearance, legal waiver, etc. If this information is not submitted or reveals a volunteer's lack of suitability for the program, Ekno Experience reserves the right to halt the placement process until satisfactory changes are made. If the necessary changes cannot be made, this may result in loss of placement.

#### **REFUND POLICY**

##### ***Application Fee/Deposit***

The application fee/deposit is refundable until two calendar months before the 1st of the month you are due to arrive in Nepal/India.

This is because Ekno Experience needs to make financial commitments on your behalf prior to the program start date. The two calendar months notification is taken from the month you stated on your original application form. If you postpone your trip the refund is only valid until two calendar months prior to the 1st of the month you originally intended to volunteer. For example a volunteer with 15 July 2008 as their original start date would need to submit their refund form by the last day of April 2008 to be eligible for a refund.

Unfortunately for this reason we can make no exceptions. All refunds will be made less the costs incurred in processing the refund such as bank charges.

All requests for application fee/deposit refunds must be faxed, posted, or scanned as an e-mail attachment to the Ekno Experience with your signature at the bottom. Phone calls and e-mails are not acceptable. You will be notified of Ekno Experience receiving your application for a refund of the application fee/deposit fee within two working days. Should you not be emailed in regards to your request, the assumption should be made that the request form was not received. Ekno Experience is not responsible for fax or mail that is not received. Once your refund has been processed you will receive confirmation of the refund being issued.

Ekno Experience reserves the right to revise the application fee. All application fee revisions will be announced at least seven days in advance via the website. Please note that the application fee may not be the same as when you applied.

#### **PROGRAM FEES**

Program fees paid to our partners or paid to Ekno Experience directly are not refundable. Program fees paid through Ekno Experience by means of bank or wire transfer will need to have the transaction costs covered by the payee. We reserve the right to revise the program fee. All program fee revisions will be announced at least seven days in advance via the website. Program fees are due 60 days prior to the arrival date of volunteers. Failure to make payment by this time may result in loss of placement.

#### **INSURANCE**

It is compulsory for all volunteers to have travel insurance and a copy of the insurance is required prior to departure.

#### **PRIVACY POLICY**

If you wish to subscribe to our newsletter(s), we will use your name and email address to send the newsletter to you. If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let us know by email. Information on Ekno Experience's application forms and extra details forms online is collected solely for internal use within Ekno Experience and its partner organizations. Your e-mail and other details will be passed onto other volunteers who are in the same group as you, so that you can make contact before you meet; if you would prefer that this did not happen, please let us know.

We gather certain statistical information about visitors to our website, including IP addresses, browser type, ISP, referring/exit pages, operating system, date/time stamp, and clickstream data. We use this information, which does not identify individual users, to analyze trends, to administer the site, to track users' movements around the site and to gather demographic information about our user base as a whole. This data is collected solely for internal use within Ekno Experience.

Online payments are processed through a secure third party site, and Ekno Experience does not receive sensitive information such as credit card information.

#### **COMMUNICATION FROM VOLUNTEERS**

You warrant to us that all information provided, in electronic, written or oral communication to Ekno Experience, is true and correct. Ekno Experience will not be liable or responsible from any consequences that result if false information is provided.

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