

Volunteer Opportunity in Nepal teaching English for tourism

The Opportunity

A remote mountain village is looking for volunteers to teach them simple English. Gurja Khani (alias Hidden Village), comprising 250 families, lies at the foot of Gurja Himal, a 7000 metre peak in the Dhaulagiri range of the Himalayas of western Nepal. For the past two years we have been helping this village to develop homestays (like airbnb) for tourist trekkers, and these households are now in need of learning or improving their English. The school at Gurja Khani (grades 1-10; 150 pupils) has also indicated an interest in having volunteers to supplement their English teaching with conversation practice. We are looking for volunteers, or pairs of volunteers, willing to spend a minimum of 1 month, and ideally 2-3 months (or more), any time during 2016 or 2017. Recommended months are October to May.

Location and living conditions: the challenges and rewards

This opportunity is a rewarding but challenging one. It is not for everyone. The village is located two days' walk from the nearest road over steep terrain which requires a level of fitness – the second day involves an 8 hour hike across a 3200 metre pass (the rewards: great views of Gurja Himal). The village lies at 2800 metres and from November onwards the temperature can dip below 0 degrees C at nights while remaining warm and sunny during the day. Snow falls periodically during December and January though the pass is rarely blocked for long. There are few conveniences in the village but there is electricity (from their own micro hydro-electric plant) and mobile phone connection. There is no heating other than cooking fires. Families collect water and do their washing at public tap-stands in the village, but by October they should complete the construction of a community shower house with hot showers!! Currently, there is a handful of people who can converse in English, and one of these will be your host. But the rewards more than compensate for the toughness of the situation. Hidden Village is a peaceful, friendly and happy village where you will be made welcome, appreciated, and included in all their events.

Costs and living arrangements

Volunteers will not be paid, and will have to finance their own international air fare and domestic travel in country. You will be provided with your own private bedroom (extremely small!) in a family home. Accommodation will be provided free of charge in appreciation of the volunteer work. It is assumed that you will eat all your meals with your host family for which you will pay a weekly fee of around USD 55. Food will be traditional Nepali food – rice, lentils, vegetable curry – with eggs or porridge for breakfast. Dried meat may be available, but fresh meat only at festival times.

Support system, health care and emergencies

The volunteer will be met by taxi at Kathmandu airport and introduced to a liaison family in Kathmandu who will act as mentors should any problems occur during their time in Nepal. They will arrange for transport to Pokhara where the volunteer will be linked with an English-speaking licensed mountain guide who will accompany the volunteer to the village.

There is a government health post in the village with three paramedics including a nurse-practitioner, but no doctor. They can treat all common ailments such as chest infections, diarrhoea and parasitical infections, urinary infections, skin infections, and minor wounds. Major trauma and serious conditions would require referral to the nearest modern hospital which would be Pokhara, or Kathmandu. If the patient is unable to walk, the options are: be carried out by porter, by horse, by helicopter. The helicopter is expensive. It is a requirement that every volunteer has health insurance which would cover the cost of helicopter evacuation if necessary.

Further details: contact us at offthebeatentreks@gmail.com and we will be happy to answer your questions. Please visit www.offthebeatentreks.org to view photos and detailed information about Hidden Village.