



BACK ROADS OF SOUTH ASIA!

- Countries: India, Srilanka and Nepal
- Duration : 12 Weeks
- Age: 18- 22 Years
- Service Hours : 40
- Service Type: Refugees teaching, constructing toilet facilities, social service and animal welfare

HIGHLIGHTS

Learn first-hand about Tibetan refugees history and struggle as well animal conservation building enrichment structures and feed, bath, walk and monitor elephant behavior.

Help construct toilets in the rural Himalayan village and work on education projects in rural Rajasthan and backwater of Kerala.

Stargaze in the Clear Mountain and desert. Hike the mighty Himalayas, explore the majestic Thar Desert, Golden temple, Taj Mahal and beaches relaxing beaches of Sri Lanka many historic sites of South Asia.

Explore the land of MT. Everest “Nepal”.

INDIA

WEEK 01 – DELHI TO MCLEOD GANJ

Welcome to India! Start your program in a land of 1.2 billion people, home to every major religion in the world and a dizzying variety of histories and languages. What better way to experience the heart of India than diving straight in? Spend your first few days in Delhi getting oriented mixtures of language, culture, and energy in the capital. Then board an overnight train headed to the foothills of the Himalayas. This week will be spent with Tibetan homestay families in McLeod Ganj. McLeod Ganj may be in India, but you'll feel like you're in Tibet due to the large population of refugees that has streamed across the border because of conflict with China. The exiled Tibetan government resides here and you will work with Tibetans who need to learn English skills as they build new lives. Practice yoga and meditation and meet with local poets, activists, and monks to understand life in McLeod Ganj.

WEEK 02 - BALLA

After a week in McLeod Ganj you'll travel to the nearby village of Balla. Balla is a mixture of Gurkha (Nepali) and Gaddi (Indian Himalayan) cultures. Meet your new homestay family and get accustomed to mountain village life. During your time in Balla you will be working on community service projects including building toilets for specified families and engaging with a nearby special needs school. In the evenings after your service work learn how to cook pakore with your homestay family, wash clothes in a mountain river, shake a leg Bollywood style, and challenge the village kids to a game of cricket.

WEEK 03 – TRAVEL – AMRITSAR, AGRA, WSOS

After two weeks of service and homestays in the Himalayas, it's time for some travel. Your first stop is the city of Amritsar, home of the Golden Temple, the holiest site of the Sikh religion. Experience the Sar Sarovar and do service at the langar, the community kitchen that feeds over 40,000 people a day. Don't forget to sample the best chai in India! Next it's off to Agra via overnight train. Get ready for a sunrise viewing of the Taj Mahal, then shift into Wildlife SOS' volunteer quarters. At Wildlife SOS you will learn about their work on animal conservation in India and spend two days contributing to two important programs: building enrichment structures for rescued sloth bears and monitoring their behaviors throughout the day.

WEEK 04 – TRAVEL – JAIPUR, JODHPUR, OSIAN

Bid farewell to the sloth bears and elephants in Agra and board the bus to the Pink City of Jaipur. Settle into a heritage hotel outside of the city, explore Amer fort, and shop for jutis and salwars in the local bazaar. Explore the gullies of the old city and sample the best lassi in India on MI Road. Next it's off to Jodhpur where you'll zip-line through an ancient Mughal fort, then head to the sand dunes of the Thar desert for an overnight camel safari under the stars. Tonight around a campfire reflect on the first half of your program tonight, and get prepared for the next experience: rural Rajasthani life.

WEEK 05 – GALTHANI

Emerge from the desert and head to Galthani, a small village in southwest Rajasthan with a population of 2,000 people and home to potters, snake charmers, shepherds, and carpenters. Galthani will provide an intimate look into rural Indian life – an experience that is hidden to most visitors to India. Celebrate Holi (the festival of colors), play cricket with the local kids, and participate in service programs aimed at education and small construction projects. Settle into the rhythm of daily life here while you continue to practice your Hindi skills and learn Rajasthani style cooking with your homestay family.

WEEK 06 – HOUSEBOAT

Soak up the last few days of North India before traveling south to “God’s own country.” Welcome to Kerala – home of coconuts, palm trees, the famous backwaters, and lip-smacking seafood curries. In the south, relax into the laid back atmosphere as you explore historic Fort Cochin and take in the sights of a traditional Kathakali dance performance on the coast. Then head inland to explore a small section of the 900 km of waterways hidden amidst Kerala’s verdant fields and hills. Sleep on a Ketuvallam houseboat, race through the narrow canals on country boats, and celebrate a mock Onam festival to welcome the Gods to Kerala. Contribute to ongoing community service work, helping at a school and other organizations to learn about the local culture and issues of the area.

WEEK 07 – THE TIP OF INDIA

Continue your travels in Kerala during your last week in India. Head south to the southernmost tip of India: Kanyakumari. The tip of a peninsula between two sides of the ocean, watch the sunrise over the Bay of Bengal to the east, and watch it set over the Arabian sea to the west. At this point you will have traversed the entire length of the Indian subcontinent – all the way from the Himalayan peaks in Nepal to the very tip of India! Head north to Kerala’s capital city Trivandrum, for a final night in India, then get ready for your flight to Sri Lanka.

SRILANKA

WEEK 08 - SRILANKA

Upon arrival to Sri Lanka we head south along the coast to Hikkaduwa for some well deserved time on the beach! We will spend the next few days unwinding to the easy pace of life, friendly smiles and sincere warm welcome this community has to offer. Being one of the many areas strongly affected by the Boxing day Tsunami of 2004 we will take some time to learn about some of the struggles faced by many people involved in the effort of trying to rebuild their families, lives and communities to what they once were. This will also include a visit to a local sea turtle hatchery to learn about the challenges faced by those trying to help protect these cute little creatures from the many difficulties they endure such as poaching and loss of habitat. With surf lessons, yoga lessons, jungle side tours and smiles all around we continue our coastal adventure by visiting Yala National Park for a real wildlife safari! As we explore we'll keep our eyes peeled for wild elephants, many types of deer, crocodiles, a huge variety of birds and with a little luck we may even see the elusive Sri Lankan leopard!! Not stopping there we continue our quest of seeing rare and amazing animals by going on a whale watching trip with hopes of seeing the biggest animal on the planet, the Blue Whale! Coming full circle we stop for one last evening in Hikkaduwa for a traditional beach BBQ with our new local friends and say goodbye for the new adventure ahead.

NEPAL

WEEK 09 – INTRO TO NEPAL

Welcome to Nepal's capital city, Kathmandu. Home to 2.5 million inhabitants, Kathmandu is a mixture of rural and urban, ancient and modern. Explore the famous Buddhist stupa of Boudanath, and the Hindu cremation ghats of Pashupatinath. Learn the meaning of Namaste, ramro, and daal bhat as you orient to the Nepali language and try your hand at Nepali cooking during the first several days. This week is your introduction to the program, to the group, and to South Asia. Get ready to go deep!

WEEK 10 – TREKKING

After a thorough introduction to the culture, language, and religion, strap on your hiking shoes and head to the mountains. You'll drive due north to the remote Langtang region and start a weeklong trek into the Himalayas. Trek through one of the most beautiful places in the world, staying in small villages and tea houses, swimming in mountain hot springs, and gazing at 8000 meter Himalayan peaks beneath a sea of stars. Halfway through your trek, you will spend several

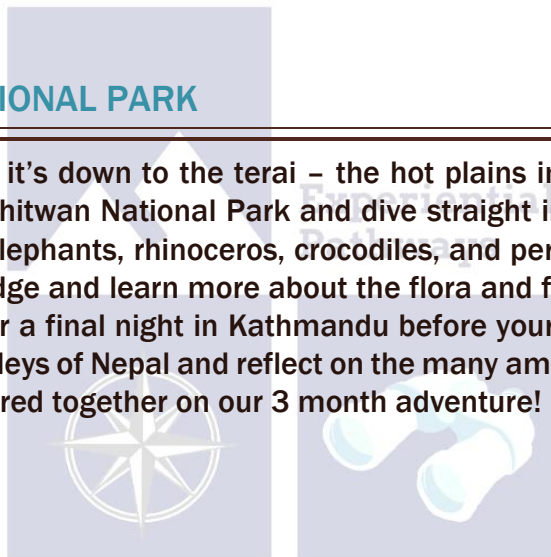
days in one of the local communities, living in homestays and working on community service projects.

WEEK 11 – MEDITATION

The next part of your journey will take you inward and outward and push your comfort zones in both directions. Prepare for silence and meditation as you head to a monastery for a multiple day meditation retreat. You will get instruction in meditation and philosophy, then put it to practice in active meditation. After several days of silent reflection, find your voice again as we process the experience as a group. Head to Pokhara, entrance to the Annapurna mountains, and spend a few days relaxing and rejoining society while gazing at the Himalayan Peaks, where you will process your experience with the group and have a few days to relax under the gaze of the Annapurna mountains.

WEEK 12 – CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK

After taking in the mountains, it's down to the terai – the hot plains in the southern border of Nepal. Arrive at the famous Chitwan National Park and dive straight into the jungle for a jeep safari and the chance to see elephants, rhinoceros, crocodiles, and perhaps the elusive Bengal tiger. Sip chai in the jungle lodge and learn more about the flora and fauna of the terai region. You'll head back to the hills for a final night in Kathmandu before your flight to fly back home. Bid farewell to the peaceful valleys of Nepal and reflect on the many amazing people, places and experiences we have encountered together on our 3 month adventure!



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