



SWS Mountain Guides

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General Trekking/Adventure Information

Hotels, Flights, Food, Feet, Drink, Hygiene, Altitude, Attitude and You

One of the definitions of adventure travel is when the outcome of an undertaking is uncertain. By this definition trekking certainly qualifies and especially trips to foreign lands. We go to the mountains, jungles, and deserts for many reasons, but a common one for most people are the adventurous nature of the experience. But the same variables that contribute to the feelings of joy and excitement we can get in the wilderness or remote places, can also cause problems and discomfort if not taken into account by those planning an adventure into the third world. This brief overview of some of the more important issues concerning the health and safety of all trekkers or adventures and their impact on the mountains, jungles, or deserts of our wonderful planet and is provided to help you take more control over your own well being while on your adventure.

Hotel Reservations and Plane Flight Schedules:

14 days prior to your departure date, you will be sent the hotel name, address and phone number, along with instructions on how to get to the meeting place "hotel". You will also be sent your guide's name(s) and flight information, so you can check at the airport to see if there has been a delay in your guide's flight(s). Make sure you have this information prior to leaving home. And, be sure to give your personal flight information to the SWS Mountain Guides office once it's been confirmed so we can check on you.

The reservations for your room will be in the name of your guide(s) or SWS Mountain Guides, you can try either, it depends on the hotel and the staff. Your guide(s) will try to get to the hotel prior to the clients, most of the time we do, but this is international travel in third world countries, so don't panic if we are delayed. If the hotel staff can't find your reservation when you arrive at the hotel, get a room and we will find you! If you are uncomfortable with getting to the meeting "hotel" on your own, we can make arrangements to meet you at the airport or we will have transportation to our hotel pre-arranged. Above all don't panic, we will find you at either the airport or the hotel.

Altitude: As altitude is gained and the atmospheric pressure drops there is less available oxygen in the air. The percentage of oxygen remains the same but there is less per given volume. At 18,000 feet the atmospheric pressure and the pressure of oxygen in the air is only half that at sea level. Our bodies undergo complex, and as yet not fully understood, changes to compensate for the lack of oxygen. At moderate heights (8,000'-10,000') most people coming from sea level start to notice shortness of breath that can progress to tiredness, headache, and flu-like symptoms. Usually this will subside after a day or two at altitude. At higher elevations these problems can be much more severe.

It takes longer than the length of most treks or adventure trips to fully acclimate to altitude but there are a few things you can do to facilitate the process: 1.) Try and be well rested, fed and hydrated at the start of your trip. 2.) Avoid alcohol and other drugs immediately before and during your trip. 3.) Drink lots of water and reduce caffeine intake especially during your airline flight, most airline cabins are pressurized to between 6,000 and 8,000 ft. 4) When you arrive at your destination, pace yourself, breathe, slow and steady is the way to go and remember to continue to drink plenty of water. 5.) Our adventure trip schedules allow for as much time as possible to acclimatize properly. At first, the trip may seem to go at a slow pace. This is to allow everyone to acclimatize since people do acclimatize at different rates. So relax, enjoy the culture and explore the new country. 6.) On longer treks or adventure trips, remember to bring a book, a travel journal, or other diversion because time maybe spent sitting at a remote location to continuing the acclimatization process. This is very important to maintain your health at altitudes above 14,000 ft.

Hydration: How much water do you think you drink in a typical day at home or work? Most of us need to drink at least 4-6 quarts in a day of climbing or hiking; more on a hot day. That's a lot more than most people drink in the city, but drinking enough water is the easiest thing you can do to avoid problems with altitude, fatigue, heat and cold. Dehydration is a contributing factor in almost all health problems in the mountains. Do not include caffeine or Alcoholic drinks when gauging your fluid intake. They actually dehydrate your body. We encourage the use of the new "Sports Drinks" – they do help replace lost electrolytes, and besides, they make the water you need to drink more appealing – something that's important in a situation where natural hunger and thirst responses are suppressed. See below.



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Food: SWS Mountain Guides provides the food on all treks while in the field, there are no great decisions to be made – we know how much and what kind of foods are best for each type of activity. You will be asked for your input as we buy/or served mostly local foodstuffs in the market, the selection is quite large in big cities. You are welcome to come along on our shopping days (if we shop) and help with the selection. If you are bringing special snacks from the United States there are some important choices to consider. Contrary to the popular image of increased appetites in the “Great Outdoors”, most people experience diminished appetites at the increased altitudes of most of our seminars. Though your body is working much harder and using up to 4,000-6,000 calories a day, or roughly twice the normal expenditure, many times you just won’t feel like eating. This is why it’s important to make every calorie count. Choose foods that are high in complex carbohydrates, for sustained energy, and have flavors that you strongly like. Remember that this is one place fats are okay. You won’t have to worry about gaining weight – many folks lose weight on an expedition! Try to eat small amounts frequently – even if you don’t feel like it. On our more strenuous trips, you’ll get used to your guide urging you to eat, eat, and eat. Finger foods work best, so look for whole grain bars, trails mixes (usually labeled “super” or “deluxe”), dried fruit, power bars, energy bars, and other compact, tasty choices. Go for as much variety as possible, but remember, you’ve got to eat it or the weight in your pack is just wasted – so forget the jar of peanut butter, bring the shelled peanuts.

Sanitation: In the field, human waste should be disposed of at least 200 feet from trails, campsites, huts, and water sources or use the facility provided. Solid human waste should be buried 6-8 inches underground in mineral soil and toilet paper should be burned. In most areas of the foreign countries we visit the sewage systems are not as developed as here in the U.S., you will find a small trash can next to the toilet for your used toilet paper (South America and Mexico). Don’t put the paper down the toilet, because the systems can’t handle the paper. There are other methods for waste disposal depending on the specific environment or hut system; your guide will provide more information.

Obviously, staying clean in a foreign country is not always as easy as it is in the States, but probably more important to prevent disease and travelers diarrhea. Bring soap for the hotels, huts and camps when in the mountains, also individually packaged alcohol towelettes or small bottles of hand sanitizer are great for cleaning hands, a task that is just as important in the mountains as it is at home, especially when preparing or eating meals.

Foot care: Even perfect feet in the best boots can be prone to problems. A bad blister can ruin a trek, so it’s important to fix irritating hot spots before they become serious trouble. Hot spots on your feet, caused by friction between your foot and boot, should be repaired with moleskin when they first appear. Don’t worry about slowing down the group to stop; most folks appreciate the break. Come prepared with plenty of moleskin and some Vaseline. A thin layer of petroleum jelly (Vaseline) applied to all potentially troublesome areas is an inexpensive and effective blister prevention technique. It is a bit messy, so be prepared for stained sock liners, but happier feet!

Impact: Our prime directive when in a foreign country is to be ecologically minded. Respect the environment as you would any wilderness area in the States. You may find locals and others abuse the land more than we are used to, but respect their country and their right to do so, it does not give you the right to abuse the land as well. Pick up all the trash, burn your toilet paper and bury your feces. Try to leave a good example and respect the environment and remember this is not our country, and you are a guest!

Adventure Packing: If you are in doubt about something on the equipment list or have any questions, please give our office a call. Remember the airlines have restrictions on the weight and bulk of your equipment (see below). We recommend you pack the bulk of your equipment in a large duffel bag, including your pack. This prevents the straps from being tangled or broken in the baggage equipment or your nice pack from getting grease or dirt on it. Tape up all sharp objects such as trekking poles with cardboard and duct tape. Remember, no fuel or fuel containers are allowed on any airlines. Hopefully, you can restrict your baggage to one large duffel max 50 lbs; Use two duffels to keep the weight under 50 lbs per bag. Second, you should bring with you on the plane a small travel bag containing these important items if you get delayed or separated from your luggage.

Extra change of clothing (socks, underwear, shirt), good footwear,



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Toiletries: toothbrush, razor, personal prescriptions,
Camera
Jacket
Passport, money, airline tickets, expedition hotel information
Possibly your trekking boots

International flights can at times be tricky; you may end up in another destination due to weather conditions in the mountains or other circumstances. We will wait for you to arrive if this happens. You will be much more comfortable with the above items with you if you have to “overnight in a strange place”... it’s just part of the adventure. Remember, it will be a great story when you get home! Try to carry your boots/comfortable on the plane as well, usually we can replace or borrow other items and make the expedition happen if they lose your luggage, but boots /comfortable can be a problem.

Airline Baggage Regulations: Current international baggage limits are as follows, but check with your particular airline for international baggage restrictions: Airlines are not charging for baggage on international flights at this time.

2 Bags weighing no more than 50 lbs/ plus one carry on that fits under your seat up to 35 lbs

Bag one: 62” determined by Length x Width x Length = 62 inches

Bag two: 55” determined by Length x Width x Length = 55 inches

If you go over these restrictions, the airlines may charge you excess baggage charges, which can be expensive.

5/09