

## Welcome to Nepal, Autumn 2018

Your destination and postal address in Nepal for the first two weeks is Buddy Hotel, Amrit Margh, 29, Thamel, 44600 Kathmandu. After two weeks we will be moving to Pokhara and remain there until the end of the program. Your address in Pokhara will be Holiday Home Apartments at Lakeside, Dihikopatan Khahare Marg, Pokhara.

After your arrival in Nepal, you will be meeting the Kulturstudier team almost every day. They are well prepared and eagerly awaiting your arrival. For the time being, we have made this document to give you the most important information you need when settling into these exciting towns. Please read it thoroughly before departure, and bring it with you to Nepal.

We are arranging an introduction and welcome meeting with all the students and team on **Sunday, August 19 at 16:00 (4pm)**, at the reception lobby of Buddy Hotel. The location depends on the number of students, so be aware that changes may occur.

The management team in Nepal consists of Samrat Schmiem Kumar (manager) and Elida Jacobsen (+977 9813692269). Your contact person is Samrat at phone number (+977) 9813692392 or (0091) 8588944284 (WhatsApp only) or by email: schmiem@kulturstudier.org (English only). If you need help in organizing a taxi to pick you up at the airport in Kathmandu and to bring you to the hotel, then you have to write the complete flight details (including departure airport and flight number).

Monday, August 20, is the first day of class. In the following days, we organize a regular academic schedule, with classes starting at 09:00, 11:00, etc. Breakfast and Lunch is served at Hotel Buddy in Kathmandu and Hotel Tuki in Pokhara (2 min walk from the student house). Breakfast, from 07:45 to 08:30 and lunch is served at 13:00 (1pm).

### Help yourself

Kulturstudier is an organization run by social scientists. We regard ourselves as a university, and the academic courses are our main task. We regard our students as responsible adults, and do not want to make their stay overly organized by us. It is mainly your own responsibility to get the most out of your stay in Nepal.

Kulturstudier does not have a guide who watches you at all times. We regard it as part of the learning process that our students enable themselves to be independent. This way, it is also easier for you to get to know your way around in Kathmandu and Pokhara. This means that if, for instance, your baggage gets lost on the flight than it is you who will have to follow up on the travel agency/airline. If you have any problems with your ticket, you will have to contact the travel agency yourself. Likewise, if you are having minor health issues, you go to the doctor yourself (bring another student along), and if you are going on weekend trips, you do the organizing of transport and hotel booking; if you have trouble with your visa you contact the embassy or immigration office yourself; if the shower in your apartment stops working, you contact the manager where you live. In short: we expect you to behave as if you were on your own.

This being said, our team represents a security net for you. You will see us every day, and we are available for you when you need advice on different issues. We will facilitate your stay in

Nepal. In case of emergency or a difficult situation, we are always there for you. It is advisable that in case of certain incidents such as things getting stolen, harassment etc. you should inform the team immediately so the necessary steps can be taken. In this document, you will find most of the basic information you need to get all set in Nepal.

Already before your arrival in Nepal we will send you important information via e-mail. We expect you to check your e-mail account regularly and to send us a response when requested. We will do equivalently. During the semester, you will also get necessary information about schedules, trips, festivals, long weekends etc. on a regular basis. Usually information is given at the weekly meetings. This is scheduled every Monday after classes. These meetings are mandatory for students. If you miss out on these meetings, it is your own responsibility to get briefed on the given information from one of your fellow students.

### **What you get out of it depends on what you put into it**

Studying with Kulturstudier is at its core much the same as studying in any university campus; what you get out of it depends on what you put into it. This goes for the academic work, cultural learning, social life and recreation. You can fail your studies and learn nothing – or you can be academically inspired and find what you want to do for the rest of your life. Our students are diverse in their backgrounds and priorities and, wonderfully, find friendship and respect amongst each other.

### **Accommodation**

Living in a developing country has its challenges. You can expect that some of the comforts you are used to are hard to recreate in Nepal at a price you can afford. This pertains for example to noise, heat, privacy, internet access, poverty, cleanliness and more.

The accommodation Kulturstudier offers varies from semester to semester according to availability of housing. It is not possible to give full predictability in what you can expect. Rooms vary in size, furnishing and appeal. You may find that someone else had more luck than you when the rooms were assigned. You may also find that construction is going on nearby or that the window in your room looks into a ventilation shaft, or directly into your neighbor's kitchen. Please be prepared for these possibilities, as they are all a part of life in Nepal.

On arrival in Kathmandu and Pokhara, you will be accommodated in a room together with one to three other students. This semester the students will likely be living in the following house:

#### *Kathmandu: Hotel Buddy*

The Hotel is located in Thamel, one of the main tourist hubs of Kathmandu. We will stay there for the first two weeks and classes will be organised at Saraswati Campus, Tribhuvan University and in a nearby conference hall (both walking distance from the hotel). The hotel provides daily room service and cleaning. We recommend for environmental reasons that you only ask your bed-sheets to be changed once every week. More information about staying at the hotel will be given at the welcome meeting.

### *Pokhara: Holiday Home Apartments*

At Holiday Apartment House, close to the Lakeside, we have several apartments with kitchen, bathroom and balcony. This is a large, centrally located apartment house where most of our students will be staying. The house has a roof terrace with a nice view of the Phewa Lake. You will be in charge of cleaning the apartments yourself. If you want the room to be cleaned, you have to inform the landlady who will organise it against a surcharge (ca. 200 rupees). You will get 2 sets of clean bed sheets and towels upon your arrival. You can either wash them yourselves or give them for laundry against a surcharge.

The landlady closes the main gate 22.00pm. We kindly ask you to respect the timing. In case you plan to return later than 22.00pm, you need to inform the landlady in advance.

If something in your apartment (like toilet, light, etc.) does not work, you give a notice to the landlady, Mrs. Pampha Pahari.

### **Addresses**

In Kathmandu: Hotel Buddy, Amrit Marg 29, Thamel.

In Pokhara: Holiday Home Apartments at Lakeside, Dihikopatan Khahare Marg.

### **Other**

After the welcome meeting on Sunday, you will meet with the management of your housing facility and together we will brief you on everything you need to know about the place you are living. The various houses and rooms are simple and practical. It is impossible and unnecessary to make every house and room exactly the same. But because of the variations we sometimes experience that some may envy others based on first impressions. However, in a couple of weeks, after settling in and appreciating the particular advantages of their place, almost everyone prefers the room and house that chance placed them in. The same goes for roommates. People are placed in rooms together, mostly by chance. And it is impressive how well roommates get along. We expect you to respect your roommates as well as the apartments.

Toilet paper is expensive in Nepal, and you will have to buy your own. We equip the apartments in Pokhara with toilet paper before you arrive, and from then you will have to get it yourself in the nearby shops.

Because all locations are for the students and team only, you are not allowed to bring people besides fellow students to the apartments without first informing Kulturstudier management well in advance. Please note that no visitors are allowed to stay overnight at the student houses. Visitors need to identify themselves and register at the entrance, and leave at times designated by Kulturstudier management. Kulturstudier reserves the right to deny access to any guest to our housing facilities. This rule may seem strict, but is based on long experience.

### **Laundry**

Many students choose to do their own laundry in buckets in the bathrooms. The student houses also arrange for laundry services for you against a surcharge (400 rupees per load), or you may use laundry places on the streets. The house owners will inform you about the different options in the first house meeting. When you deliver laundry, you can usually pick it up the day after. At the laundry stall, they give the clothes a rather rough treatment. We therefore recommend that you wash the most sensitive materials yourself.

## **Meals**

As you know, breakfast and lunch is organized by Kulturstudier on weekdays. On the weekends you organize your own meals. Dinner is on your own expense, all week. There are lots of nice places to eat in the Kathmandu and Pokhara. Please help each other to find the best places. Kulturstudier always arranges welcome and goodbye events for the students. A welcome dinner is held during the first week.

## **Staff**

Mr. Samrat Schmiem Kumar is field manager. Ms. Elida U. Jacobsen is the seminar leader. In addition, Kulturstudier has local people employed who assist the main staff members during the semester. You will see them all almost every day.

## **Day trips and weekend trips**

With many years of experience, we have learnt that students get the most interesting and unforgettable feeling of South Asia “under their skin” when they organize trips and explore the area by themselves. Therefore, we encourage you to use your time off to explore some of Kathmandu and Pokhara and the nearby areas on your own. We always make room for one long weekend off, so you can explore some more of Nepal. Remember to give notice to the team when you leave for overnight trips.

Kulturstudier does arrange one or two trips every semester, which are relevant to the curriculum. These trips will be announced during the semester. We do not charge anything from you for organizing these trips, but students pay for accommodation (and for meals on weekend trips) themselves.

## **Other activities**

In addition to the academic schedule, we always suggest additional courses that you may join in your spare time. Usually, these are: yoga, cooking classes, Bollywood or Zumba dance, and more. Kulturstudier arranges evening get-togethers with different themes (such as Nepali culture, movie-nights etc.) during the semester. These evenings are usually planned together with some students who like to engage themselves in the organization of cultural evenings. You will get more information about these courses and evenings in the early weeks of your stay.

## **Transport**

Lots of places in Pokhara have bicycles for rent. The price varies from approximately 400 to 500 Nepali Rupees a day. You may also buy a (second hand) bicycle. To take a taxi around the lakeside is around 200-300 rupees. At night time it will cost a bit more. Always bargain and fix the rate before taking the taxi. Also, be aware that some taxi drivers might be drunk at late evening / night time, so take taxi at night-time with caution. Due to the chaotic traffic conditions in Nepal, we request that you do not rent mopeds/ motorbikes.

## **Banks**

There are many cash machines (ATMs) all over Kathmandu and Pokhara; and most of them accept Visa and Mastercard. There are also many money exchangers where you can change Euros and Dollars easily.

## **Telephone/ Internet**

*Telephone:* Most students get a Nepali SIM-card and cell phone numbers, which is cheap and practical. Remember to give the management team your Nepali number if you do get one. You may use foreign SIM cards in Nepal, but it is very expensive.

*3G/4G:* The best access to Internet is if you get a Nepali sim-card and use your phone as WIFI/Hotspot for your computer. 5 gigabytes cost around 1500 rupees.

*WIFI:* Slow and disrupted internet connection in the student house and places of study can cause a lot of frustration for some students. If you cannot study or live without internet – you should not study in a developing country. Kulturstudier does not promise internet access in the houses or at the study center. We ask that you do not make video calls from the house internet as this requires too much band width.

## **Copying**

Many places have copying machines. They usually have a sign with “Photocopy” outside the shop. It is in general not expensive to make copies.

## **The Classroom**

Lectures and seminars are held Monday through Friday. We put the weekly schedules on the notice boards in the classroom as well as in the student houses. The week schedules will be sent to you via Fronter.

## **Outdoor Activities**

Nepal offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, paragliding or rafting. There are many professional agencies, which offer outdoor activities both in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

## **Weekly meetings**

Every Monday right after class we have our weekly meeting (all-meeting) with students and team. This meeting is mandatory. The idea is to share information about upcoming events and to discuss issues that need to be addressed. Please do not hesitate to give us your comments or suggestions regarding trips, food and other things, at the meeting or at any other time. We always strive to make the students happy, and to do that, we need your feedback! When necessary, we will give other general information at any weekday after lunch, or via email, Facebook, etc. The all-meetings are also there to address problems related to study conditions, etc.

## **Student representatives**

Kulturstudier gives importance for a vivid collaboration between students and staff. Therefore student representatives will be elected during the first week. These representatives are: class rep, house rep, Fronter facilitator and cultural committee. These reps have a certain responsibility regarding issues related to studying conditions, class dynamic, accommodation, cultural events etc. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff, to help make sure that staff know what the problems are and together with students can work together to solve them. The student representatives have meetings with the field management and seminar leaders on a regular basis. For specific occasions, trips, happenings, etc., separate committees can be formed. These will be responsible for planning and carrying out the activities.

## **Communication with Kulturstudier**

We appreciate suggestions from students during the semester. It is important for us to make sure that suggestions and grievances are communicated to us while there is still time to make changes. This includes issues with the academic program, housing, food, and other aspects of the program and the welfare of the students. After many years of experience there is usually a reason for the way we do things. And if you ask us we can probably give you the reason. But there is always room for improvement and reminders. So please voice your suggestions.

### *Talk to us*

If you need help with something it is important that you let us know. Do not take for granted that your suffering is obvious and visible to everyone. Our staff is international and nonverbal body language can have different meanings, so please use your voice and contact us.

### *Evaluation/Final evaluation form*

We encourage all our students to give feedback to Kulturstudier's team in Nepal on how you feel things are working out during your stay in Nepal. You may also use one of the student representatives if you feel uncomfortable bringing things up directly with the team.

At the end of the semester you will receive an extensive evaluation form where you are expected to give us your feedback and help us improve.

### *Complaints*

If you have tried the above, and feel that you are not getting serious response, you are welcome to read file a complaint by contacting Kulturstudier in Oslo in accordance with specifications given [here](#). Preferably in time to make us able to act on your issues. If you decide your complaint is not treated seriously by Kulturstudier, and you want to further your complaint beyond Kulturstudier, you can contact the university.

### *Harassment*

In Kulturstudier there is no tolerance for harassment or bullying. We also expect everyone to avoid using swearing and offensive language in his or her communication with each other. Harassment also includes sexual harassment from staff towards students. If you experience sexual harassment from Kulturstudier staff or lecturers you should report to [alarm@kulturstudier.org](mailto:alarm@kulturstudier.org), which will be treated confidentially. Staff and teachers are informed that sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. We expect staff and students to socialize together, but drunkenness or drugs is not accepted. Neither is drunk driving.

### *Behaviour and etiquette*

In Nepal, you will find quite different concepts about what is considered good behaviour and decent dress codes than what you are used to. Patience is a virtue in Nepal; the idea of efficiency is very different from home. For instance, timing is different there: "five minutes" is never five minutes, but perhaps more like twenty minutes. Communication difficulties often result in misunderstandings. To lose your patience or get openly agitated is considered loss of face. Please be patient - this can be challenging in the beginning, but you may gain this ability while living in Nepal.

When you interact with the local population, you have to be sensitive to what they might consider impolite, rude or disrespectful. You cannot take for granted that it is enough to just "be yourself". Especially the dress code is an important issue in Nepal. The more decently you dress, the more respect you will get. In Pokhara as well as in the villages, there are certain dress codes, and respecting these will enable your communication with the people living

there, and you will get less unwanted attention. The importance of the dress code in Nepal is often underestimated. In other words: the respect you get reflects the respect you show.

### *In the city*

It is important that you realize that although you will see tourists in Kathmandu and Pokhara practicing a very relaxed dress code, the locals are taking notice of what you wear. What you wear out in public communicates a lot to the people surrounding you. We suggest you consider and reflect on this, and follow these codes to both show and get respect.

### *Women*

A general rule is to cover your shoulders and knees. Avoid tight blouses/ shirts, transparent fabrics, short tops and miniskirts. The clothes in Nepal are beautiful and comfortable in the heat, and you can get more suitable clothes for the environment there. According to many of our female (Norwegian) team, the best (and easiest) way to get respect for young girls is to wear a Kurta or Punjabi. (See further down for packing tips).

### *Men*

For men, it is a bit less complicated. Light pants (not shorts) and short-sleeved shirts/ t-shirts are what we recommend. Singlets and shorts are not suitable in public. It is totally unacceptable not to wear a shirt. It is okay for western men to wear traditional Nepali clothes also (like dhoti, lungi), and it is very comfortable compared to jeans, etc.

### *Rural areas*

When you pass through the nearby villages, the general rule is to always be dressed in a decent way. That means women should cover their shoulders and knees, and men should not wear singlets! The same rule applies when we walk to and from the beach.

## **Drugs**

All kinds of narcotics are strictly forbidden in Nepal, and the penalty is harsh if you get caught with any kind of drugs. To give an example: if you happen to get caught with 10 grams of hashish, you risk 10 years in prison. Anyone who ever set foot in a Nepali prison knows that just to spend a week there would be unbearable. The Nepali government is particularly harsh on tourists if they are caught with drugs, and quite a few Westerners serve long sentences in Nepali prisons after being charged with possession of illegal substances.

In spite of it being illegal and in spite of risking long time in jail if getting caught, smoking marijuana and hashish is common among certain groups of people in Nepal. Someone will probably offer you marijuana, and they will also tell you that the police don't care, or that you can bribe your way out of a situation if you get caught. This is simply not true; the local police do care, and they have a lot of knowledge about dealers and the general drug situation both in Kathmandu and in Pokhara.

Kulturstudier does not accept that our students use any kind of drugs. Kulturstudier has been present in South Asia over a long period of time, and everyone, from the people on the street to the authorities, pay particular attention to what we do. The police are very helpful towards our students and us when we need their assistance, and we are dependent on keeping our good reputation in order to maintain our good relationship with the local authorities. Breaking the law in any way would be very damaging to Kulturstudier's business/work in Nepal, and could threaten our very existence in Nepal. We will not hesitate: students who use drugs will be expelled, and told to leave our premises.

## **Beggars**

For many of you, the sight and awareness of many beggars in Kathmandu will be grim and shocking. To us, who are not used to this extreme poverty being exposed in such a manner, this can be very difficult and uncomfortable. You may feel sad, very helpless and constantly worrying about what to do about this, how to react or how to help. We do know from prior experience that some students solve this by donating enormous sums (by Nepali standards) of money to some of the beggars. This has led to certain expectations among the beggars and their “beggarmasters” in Kathmandu and Pokhara, regarding our students’ generosity. You can be sure there will be a lot of beggars in the area around the accommodations the first weeks. To avoid that the streets around your home are crowded with beggars, you simply must not give anything in the area you live!

Begging is a socially accepted way of surviving in Nepal, and it is common among the locals to give some rupees to beggars. The beggars might be very persistent. Naturally, Kulturstudier does not want to make any decisions regarding how our students spend their money, but we recommend that you give beggars amounts that are considered “normal” to give; 10 rupees and less. It is worth reflecting on the fact that many people that you interact with on a daily basis, such as auto drivers, waiters, etc. carry on their jobs earning very little. We know that students sometimes have huge disputes with rather poor taxi drivers over 50 or 100 rupees, and then the minute after, they donate 50 rupees to a beggar, which is something to think about. Be aware of the fact that children begging on the streets are usually forced to do this by their family or beggar masters. Children being “good at the job” seldom get the opportunity to go to school.

## **Night life**

Restaurants and bars close between 22:00- 23:00 in Kathmandu and Pokhara at the latest. After eleven, the streets are empty, the exception being dogs and people sleeping on the sidewalks and in the streets. In Nepal, most people have a different view on late evenings and drinking than we are used to. It is not acceptable for any Nepali to be seen drunk in public, and especially not for women! It is also highly unusual to see women alone in the streets at night time.

In general, it is safe to walk around in Kathmandu and Pokhara on your own, but some of our students have experienced threatening episodes at night-time. We strongly discourage that women walk or take a taxi alone at night, and recommend that you go in groups. Make sure you walk with someone after 22:00pm.

## **Illness**

Many of you will get ill in Nepal. In general, most students get sick from bad food (mainly from meat, fish, eggs or old oil from street food) at least once or twice during their stay. This is very difficult, maybe impossible, to avoid. It is not dangerous, but could be painful. Symptoms are stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhoea, and vomiting; it usually lasts for a couple of days. It is of utmost importance that you drink enough water; at least 3 litres every day. This is more than your body will actually ask for; so do remember to drink even if you don’t feel thirsty. If you have a loose stomach, it is wise to mix “electral” (electrolytes) in the water to avoid dehydration. This enables your body to absorb liquid, salts and minerals although you are vomiting or having diarrhoea. Charcoal tablets have also proved to be very efficient when having stomach trouble. You can buy them at any pharmacy.

Due to the different bacteria than we are used to from home, it is very important that you wash your hands often to avoid getting sick.



CIWEC CLINIC Hospital both in Kathmandu and Pokhara are the medical centres that we advise you to use. We do not recommend that you use any other medical centres. Both are located close to the student houses.

If your roommate gets ill, we expect you to take a certain responsibility regarding the situation. Make sure that your roommate gets water and light food, and medications if required. If necessary, you will follow him or her to the doctor. (Remember; they will do the same for you if you need it!). If you get ill and cannot make it to a lecture or seminar, you or your roommate should inform the team before breakfast (e.g. send sms). When students get ill, they usually call back home. Quite often we get calls from worried relatives who already contacted the insurance company regarding illness, and that's why Kulturstudier's team needs to be informed on this issue. Kulturstudier can only answer their questions if you keep us informed on these issues. There is absolutely no reason to contact the insurance company unless you become seriously ill. In case of serious illness, Kulturstudier always contacts your family.

It is quite usual to get ill, but prior experiences tell us that it is seldom serious when students get sick. Even so, being a long way from home, the students often feel that is more dramatic than it is when they become ill. Remember to take care of each other. Do not hesitate to contact the team if you feel unsure about how to handle your own or your roommate's situation.

### **Before You Leave Home**

When our students arrive in Nepal, various authorities (Immigration, Foreign Registry Office, and local Police) want to be informed about who is with us. For this purpose, please provide Kulturstudier by-mail ([schmiem@kulturstudier.org](mailto:schmiem@kulturstudier.org)) the following scans and information before you leave home:

- Passportscan
- Permanent address (in home country)
- Phone number in resident country
- Estimated date of arrival in Nepal

It is a good idea to have the scans (passport, visa) on record for your own use as well.

### **Three-weeks-crises**

There is a phenomenon that we call "three-week-crises". The first three weeks, most people are happy and excited about Nepal and their new, radically different every-day life in Kathmandu and Pokhara. New impressions are met with enthusiasm and curiosity. After three weeks to a month or so, many students get mood swings, and they tend to complain about different things. This is quite normal. Nepal is an intense experience, and sometimes you wish you were back home. Make sure to plan your reading schedule well in order to have time for relaxation. We encourage our students to take weekend trips; it helps when you feel down! This soon passes, and in the end, everyone is always happy about spending the semester in Nepal!

## **Packing advice & tips**

### *Clothes*

It is very likely that most of your regular summer wardrobe will be a rather bad choice for Nepal. Most of our female team live by the rule saying: “when in Rome, do as the Romans”. By this, we mean to say that it is a good idea to leave your tight small tops and miniskirts at home. Also, the temperature in February to April is higher than back home; there is no need to pack too many thick wool sweaters (unless you are planning to hike in the mountains). Most Nepali women in Kathmandu and Pokhara are dressed in Sari, Kurta or Punjabi; that is a long shirt either with leggings (Kurta) or wide trousers (Punjabi).

Kurtas and Punjabis are comfortable to wear in the heat, and also they are considered decent. You can get them ready made, or get one at the tailor. They come in all different styles, material, colours and patterns. It is great fun to go to the tailor in Nepal; they make a Kurta, Punjabi or Sari for you in a couple of days. You might have a couple of strange and funny misunderstandings along the way regarding material and style, but after a while you will be the best Ethno style-shopper there is.

### *Shoes*

Most likely, you will end up using sandals every day everywhere. As you always take the shoes/sandals off when you enter in a house it is important that they are easy to put on and off. You should also bring a pair of sneakers / hiking shoes along. You will most likely need them at some point; they might come in handy if you go for a trip in the mountains or plan to go trekking.

### *Pharmaceuticals*

You can get every kind of pharmaceutical in Kathmandu and Pokhara at the pharmacies – a lot cheaper than home. Bring Immodium and idoform and medications that require a prescription from your doctor. Charcoal, disinfection liquid, band-aids, compressors, painkillers etc. you can get in Kathmandu and Pokhara. There are many websites about travelling and medicine where you can find advice.

There are mosquitoes in Nepal. There are luckily also many good mosquito repellents such as creams and sprays that keep them away. You will get bitten anyway, but a good way to reduce the amount of bites is to apply cream every evening and before you go to dinner and to bed, and wear long trousers and shirts in the evening. Many students bring Eurax, but you can get different creams in Nepal to relieve itching. If you go for trips in the inland, we recommend you to get a mosquito net.

Unless you are very picky, you will find shampoo, balsam, deodorant, soap, body lotion, etc. in Kathmandu and Pokhara. You also get toilet paper, shaving equipment, tampons, etc. in many shops.

### *Other*

Paper and pens, stapler, tape, etc. you can get anywhere. You should however bring a portable computer and your academic literature, and then you're all set for three months in Nepal!

We look forward to seeing you. And once again:

Welcome to Nepal!