

# considering service

## LIVING AND WORKING IN NEPAL

### Visas

According to a 5-year General Agreement with the Government of Nepal, and in line with current project agreements, INF is granted a number of visas for officially-recognised posts within the organisation.

Expatriates [or 'Secondees'] are normally seconded to INF by a partner agency and do not receive any payment from INF.

Some of INF's expat posts are located in Kathmandu, Surkhet and other areas, however, the majority are in Pokhara.

### Pokhara

As one of Nepal's largest cities, with approximately 400,000 residents in the municipality, Pokhara sits at the foot of the Annapurna Mountains.

While there is little in the way of industry, significant revenue comes from thousands of tourist who visit the city for its lakes and as a base for trekking and other adventure sports.

Pokhara is a recruiting centre for the British Gurkhas and many current and former servicemen live in this area. This brings income to the city and, along with remittance from other migrant workers, is the reason for much of the new housing. Pokhara is generally a pleasant place to live although levels of traffic and pollution are increasing.

### Climate

Pokhara is **sub-tropical** and one of the wettest places in Nepal [up to 4m rainfall during the monsoon: June – September]. Pokhara is also known for its electrical and hail storms. The coldest period is January – February but it never freezes. During the hot season before the monsoon, temperatures are in the mid-30s and humid. Many people find this time, and the monsoon, very tiring.

### Shopping & eating out

There is a huge range of shops selling most of the products you are ever likely to need; clothes, electrical goods, furniture, food [including a wide range of imported goods]. The main shopping area is **Mahendrapul** which is in the middle of the town. There are numerous restaurants with both local and international menus, especially in Lakeside [the tourist area].

### Services

There are a number of reasonable hospitals and clinics. Basic dentistry is available in many parts of Pokhara [fillings, crowns, etc.], such as, Smile Care near to Fishtail Hospital.

Post, cash-machines, email, internet and mobile phones are available.

### School

There is an INF-run **Pokhara Study Centre** [PSC] for primary age children. Pre-school may also be available for children aged 3yrs and above. Contact us for advice regarding secondary age home-schooling.

### Transport

#### Walking/public bus

This is the cheapest way to travel around Pokhara. The buses and 'micros' run regularly until dark. They are often crowded but they are a good way to get around and interact with local people.

#### Taxi

A 'Reserve-taxi' [hired for you alone] is more expensive than buses and costs the equivalent to US\$ 2-5 per trip. It will take you right to where you want to go. In Pokhara taxis generally do not use meters.

#### Bicycle

A multitude of brands of mountain bikes are available in Pokhara. Good, light framed bikes can be bought for US\$ 400-600 [or about \$200 if second hand]. We don't recommend road bikes due to the condition of the roads in Nepal. Many families travel on bikes with seats attached for young children. Helmets are available in Pokhara but only for adults - you may want to bring your own from home. Child bike seats are available nowadays. Basic ranges of children's bikes are also available. High-end dual suspension bikes can also be found usually costing the same, if not more, than the West. Shimano parts and other bike accessories are also readily available.

It is important to remember that the rules of the road are likely to be very different to what you are used to! Make sure you understand them well before riding around the busy parts of town.

## Church

There are at least 50 churches in the valley; the largest and oldest are Ram Ghat and Nayagaun. We expect expats to get involved in their local Nepali church but an English-medium Sunday service is also held on a regular basis

## Housing

INF will help you find accommodation. The lease is in the tenant's name but payments [normally 3 months in advance] can be made via the INF Admin and Support Office, rather than directly with the landlord. Tenants are responsible for the payment of utilities, such as, water and electricity.

Most expats employ a domestic worker ['didi' or 'bahini'] to wash clothes, cook and clean.

## Language & Orientation [LOT]

Training in the Nepali language and cultural orientation is provided for expatriate workers, differing in length depending on the duration of their assignments.

## R&R

We recommend that you set aside time to rest properly. Thankfully, Pokhara and the surrounding countryside is an excellent place to enjoy God's beautiful creation. The local expat team can make good recommendations.

Pollution and busy traffic are becoming more of an issue in Pokhara. Be aware that the prices mentioned do vary due to the constant change in exchange rates and inflation.

### Motorbike

Some people purchase their own motorbike or scooter. Prices range from about US\$ 2,000 – 3,000 for a basic model. Higher specification bikes [e.g. those from Japan] may be available but are expensive and parts can be hard to find. The process of getting a licence and other documentation can be complex and time-consuming. Second-hand motor bikes are available from time to time.

Again some bike seats from home countries have been brought out with a special rack made on the back of the motorbike to carry children up to four years of age. Older children should sit behind the rider with a belt attaching them to the rider if possible.

All persons riding on a motorbike **must wear helmets** (a legal requirement for the driver). Adult helmets are available but may not be of the same safety standard as in your home country. Baby size helmets need to be brought with you for children under three. A quality small-sized motorbike helmet for children between three and ten is advisable, although low quality small helmets are available.

### IMPORTANT NOTE:

**Be sure to check your health insurance policy. Are you covered if you don't wear a helmet (as a passenger)? And on what size of engine [CC] are you covered?**

### Cars

Cars, even second-hand, are very expensive due to this high level of customs tax (about 225%). Most brands cost at least US\$ 20,000 although the new Nano [from India] may be purchased for about US\$ 8,000

Note: it is important to remember that the rules of the road are likely to be very different to what you are used to! Make sure you understand them well before driving. There is a session on this in the orientation course.

### From town to town

A local bus or minibus/Hiace is the cheapest form of travel in Nepal, but not always the most reliable or safest. Take local advice at the time you wish to travel. You may also encounter delays [breakdowns, transport strikes, etc.].

Tourist buses between Kathmandu and Pokhara are a safe way to travel and cost from US\$ 5-15 one way.

It is also possible to hire a private vehicle [with a driver] which costs between US\$ 80-150.

Pokhara has a domestic airport with multiple airlines and flights per day to Kathmandu [approximately US\$ 135 one way].

The INF office can make bookings for you, or you can do this directly or through a local agent.

### INF vehicles

You may book an INF vehicle with a driver for private use within your centre and for transporting you or your goods to other towns, e.g. Pokhara to Kathmandu. Rates are charged according to the number of kilometres travelled [this will include the vehicle's return, even if you're not in it]. Additional charges are made if the driver is required to stay overnight.

## Being part of a TEAM 😊

One of the most fulfilling aspects of life in Nepal is the rich experience of close community. This is formed with the expat team as well as local Nepalis. We encourage everyone to embrace this opportunity. Most of the expat team live in Nayagaun [in the south], some in Ram Ghat [middle] and a couple in Deep [in the north].

There is an **Expat Team Leader** [ETL] and **Expat Support Coordinator** [Nepali staff member] who oversee the wellbeing, and various functions, of the team. The ETL is the point of contact for visits, emergencies, etc.

Different team roles are shared out within the team [e.g. social events, arranging fellowship meetings, security, crisis response, etc.] and expats are expected to participate in team activities.

Area Fellowship Groups (**AFGs**) meet every week for fellowship and mutual support. We also hold regular Professional and Team Development sessions.

We have a **Member Care Team** and **Pastoral Link People**, however, the most immediate support comes from the care that is shared within the team 😊

In addition to being part of the team, we encourage all expats to get involved in the local community.

## Family life

### Unmarried expats

Being unmarried offers unique opportunities for flexibility and for service within INF and the local community. For some, however, being labelled as 'single' can be a challenge, especially when local people ask why they are not married, or attempt to find a partner for them.

Many of our unmarried expats have been a blessing, and have been very blessed, by acting as surrogate aunts, uncles and grandparents to expat children who miss their relatives, and to families in the local community.

### Married Secondees

Living in another culture, with different models of family life and roles of husbands and wives, requires couples to re-evaluate the outworking of their relationship and roles in the light of Scripture and the new culture. You are encouraged to talk through issues related to your marriage, parenting, home making and your vocation with someone in INF or your sending agency before coming to Nepal. It can, initially, be challenging for spouses who do not have an official role within INF. However, most go on to find meaningful and fulfilling ways to engage with the community. Couples who do not have children can expect to be asked frequently why not.

Awkward questions about marital/parental status are common and can be expected early in conversations with anyone from shopkeepers to taxi drivers! This can be very upsetting when it happens frequently. Situations can, however, be managed with a sense of humour and a handful of pre-prepared responses 😊 We encourage you to think about how you can build your resilience and preparedness in this area.

Whatever your status, please discuss any questions of concerns with us.

### Children

In addition to the education needs you will need to consider and prepare for the effect on your family of having no grandparents or extended family nearby to care for and support you whilst here in Nepal. You will need to work on friendships that will give your family support for the times when extra hands are needed that are known and acceptable to your children. Literature on 'Third Culture Kids' by David Pollock may be helpful.

## Culture shock

Culture shock is normal and happens to everyone in different ways and at different stages. Building right expectations will help mitigate some of the effects, and we will support you through this.

For most children the 'honeymoon period' in the new country wears off quickly and they become tired of being stared at, poked and pulled. They may withdraw and become lethargic, go off their food, and become homesick. This may lead to regression. Bed wetting and thumb sucking are common.

This can be countered by allowing affected children to withdraw into the familiarity of their home, be comforted often, and to do things at their own pace. Time, love, and security will usually bring them back to normal and they can then be re-introduced to the host country gradually.