



Tsoknyi Gechak Ling Nunnery

Volunteer Teachers

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the application process?

All Volunteers are required to fill out our volunteer application form and to provide 2 references. Volunteers must sign the volunteer waiver.

As the position involves working with children in a residential setting, we may also request that volunteers apply for a police background check. The requirements vary from country to country.

Volunteers from the UK may apply online for free to the UK Government's Disclosure and barring service. Please follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disclosure-application-process-for-volunteers>

Volunteers from the Republic of Ireland may make a Subject Access Request to A Garda Síochána. <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/online-services/data-protection-foi-police-certificates/an-garda-siochana-f20-october-2019-.pdf> The process takes 1 to 2 months. This will be accepted by TGL.

What are the visa requirements?

Volunteers will need a tourist visa to reside in Nepal. Tourists are allowed to stay up to 150 days in a single western calendar year.

Tourist Visas

Please visit this link for further details: <https://www.immigration.gov.np/en/page/visa-on-arrival>

What are the costs involved during your volunteering stay?

TGL will provide room and board. You will be responsible for covering your own travel expenses, visa expenses, health and travel insurance and other expenses such as toiletries, treats & transport. In general, we would suggest at least US\$35 pocket money per week. Pocket money is a total guesstimate depending on how you use your time & what you buy.

What is the currency and how can I manage my money?

The Nepalese Rupee is the currency of Nepal and is available at the Airport, Banks and at other Money outlets, mainly in cities. Exchanging euros, pounds or dollars won't be any problem at the airport in Kathmandu and large towns, plus your visa card and bank debit card should work in ATMs too. Before coming ask your bank & credit card company about their fees & service charges for withdrawals made in Nepal. There is no need to carry all cash, but wise to carry some as a backup especially if you are travelling to rural areas.

It is very important to notify your bank of your dates of stay in Nepal and that you will be spending money and using your credit card here. Otherwise, your bank may freeze your card in response to unexpected expenses from unexpected quarters.

What should I bring?

Sheets and bedding are provided. You will need to bring your own towels.

Clothing & Footwear:

Short skirts, shorts or low-cut tops are not suitable while volunteering or visiting a monastery setting. Given the Nepali & Tibetan custom of removing your shoes before you enter a room, shoes that come on & off easily are advisable. We do not specify particular clothing for volunteer teachers, but neat casual dress is preferable. Since TGL has many stairs, sensible shoes are a must. We advise not to use any stilettos! Having a pair of flipflops for the bathroom and showering is advisable though you can easily buy those here. You may also want to include your hiking boots if you want to do any trekking on your day off or holidays. Do give your footwear some thought. Apart from flip-flops, finding decent footwear in Kathmandu is a challenge! The same is true for underwear.

Spring/Summer

The weather is warm and wet. You will need light summer clothes - with some warm things for early mornings and night, cotton underwear, socks and a good rain jacket. Footwear: given the mixture of weathers, rubber shoes like crocs or flip-flops are suitable as footwear, rubber boots – ankle wellington boots come in very handy as well. Comfortable walking sandals are also advisable. Umbrellas and a range of clothing including hiking clothes are available to buy in Kathmandu. Additionally, Kathmandu has also become a place for mosquito-borne diseases in recent years. Therefore, we recommend that volunteers bring long-sleeved cotton t-shirts to wear in the morning and evening along with repellents.

Autumn/Winter

The rains are over and from mid-November on it can get quite cold, especially at night. It may still be sunny during the daytime so it's best to dress in layers. You will need: some autumn clothing and warm winter clothing with plenty of layers that you can take off during the day, warm long underwear, warm pyjamas, a warm coat or jacket, hat scarf etc.

General Items:

Any medication, vitamins or supplements you take.

Special toiletries or cosmetics. There is a plentiful supply of toiletries available in Nepal – but you should bring any brand specific items.

Mosquito repellent.

Torch (flashlight).

Sun hat and sunscreen.

Pollution Protection:

Kathmandu is very polluted. Do bring and use a smog mask if you are in any way sensitive to dust and pollution. Simple cotton face masks are available widely throughout Kathmandu. You can also purchase disposable masks from all Pharmacies. Please note the air quality up at Tsoknyi Gechak Ling and Chobhar village is generally good. The main problem is while travelling across the city.

Must Haves:

Always carry toilet tissue and hand sanitizer. It is also advisable to carry a torch (flash light) if you are going out at night.

What Medical Preparation should I make for my trip?

Please get a complete health check before departing for your trip. If you have any existing medical conditions consult with your medical practitioner before travelling to Nepal. You are required to give details of any pre-existing conditions on your Volunteer application form. While there are an abundance of Pharmacies, bring a supply of any prescription medication or emergency medication you may require.

You are required to have health insurance.

Should I inform my family &/or next of kin?

You should always inform your next of Kin/family of your travel plans. You are required to give details of an emergency contact person on your Volunteer application form.

What telecommunication services are available at TGL and in Nepal?

Wi-Fi at TGL

Tsoknyi Gechak Ling has Wi-Fi running throughout Shedra and School for teachers to use during working hours for educational purposes. Outside of working hours you may access the WiFi in your residence.

Wi-Fi while out & about in Kathmandu

Wi-Fi is used widely throughout Kathmandu. Most guesthouses, hotels, restaurants and café's offer free Wi-Fi to their customers.

Local Mobile Networks

Local sim-cards from the NTC and NCELL tele companies are available at shops in the airport and all over the city for approximately 100NR. Bring a photocopy of your passport and visa and also a passport-sized photo. We advise you to purchase the sim-card in the airport before checking out, but if you couldn't do it, you can always ask us for help. You can recharge your sim-card with recharge cards available in many denominations at most stores in the city. You can also buy various data packages to have access to 4G data.

What is the accommodation like?

TGL School volunteers are currently housed in the school building. The room has a double bed, an ensuite bathroom with shower and western style toilet. Water availability can sometimes be challenging, but there is generally sufficient water to drink, wash and for the toilet.

You can ask our Admin Officer to arrange for items such as water heating jar but you will need to return them safely to her before you leave.

What is the food like?

The nunnery food is vegetarian but not gluten free. Breakfast is served at 7am. The main meal is served at 11.30 and is white rice, dal, 2 vegetable dishes and chutney, a kind of savoury relish. Supper is at 6pm. Safe drinking water is supplied.

TGL Weekly Food Menu

DAY / MEAL	Breakfast 7am	Lunch 11.30am	Tea time 3pm	Supper 6pm
Sunday	Tibetan Bread & Tibetan Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables	Beaten Rice & Tea	Chowmein (noodles)
Monday	Ti-Momo, Kidney Beans & Tibetan Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables (with mushroom)	White Bread & Tea	Rice Vegetables & Chutney
Tuesday	Flour Bread (puri), White Beans & Tibetan Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables (with Paneer)	Doughnut & Tea	Chinese Noodles with Vegetables

Wednesday	Tsampa, Butter, Fruits & Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables	Popcorn & Tea	Rice, Vegetables & Chutney
Thursday	Ti-Momo, Kidney Beans & Tibetan Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables	Puff & Tea	Fried rice/Soup
Friday	Tibetan Bread, Egg & Tibetan Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables	Croissant & Tea	Ti-Momo & Potatoes
Saturday	Flour Bread (puri), Grams & Tibetan Tea	Rice, Dal, chutney & 2 seasonal vegetables	Biscuits & Tea	Rice Vegetables & Chutney

How do I do my laundry?

We advise you to come prepared to hand wash your clothes – you will be provided with a large basin and bucket. You can get in touch with the city's laundry services if you are unable to wash by hand. Here's a link to one of the nearby laundry services: www.laundryhub.com.np

What is the Tsoknyi Gechak Ling Institute (Shedra)'s annual schedule?

Tsoknyi Gechak Ling Institute academic year begins around the first or second week of April. Every two months, there are written exams. At the conclusion of the academic year, which typically occurs in early to mid-January, there is a final exam. During the first half of the Tibetan fourth month, Saka Dawa, Shedra students engage in Nyung Nye practice. This usually occurs in late May or early June. Holidays are granted to volunteers and lay teachers.

What is the daily schedule for Tsoknyi Gechak Ling Institute's Students?

5:40am wake up

6:30am Mediation

7.00am Breakfast

8.00-9:45am Tibetan/Dharma Philosophy class

9.30-11:30am Nepali, English and Chinese language classes

11.30am-1:00pm Lunch break

1:10-3:00pm Nepali, English and Chinese language classes

3.00pm Tea break

3:30-4:45pm Tibetan/Dharma Philosophy class

4.45pm Break

5.00pm Self study

6:00pm dinner

7.00pm Debate practice

8.00pm Break

8:15-10:00pm Homework/self study

10:00pm Lights out

What is the Tsoknyi Gechak School's annual schedule?

In Nepal the school year begins the first day of the first Nepali month. This is generally April 14th or 15th. At Tsoknyi Gechak school we take a summer holiday during the first half of the Tibetan 4th month, Saka Dawa, as the nuns do Nyung Nye practice. This generally falls late May to early June. Nepal's biggest festivals are Dashain (approx. 8-10 days) and Tihar (approx. 3-5 days). These generally fall in October and are about 15 days apart. TGS has a winter vacation of about 4 – 5 weeks anytime between mid-Jan and the end of February the timing changes annually so we can include Tibetan New Year, 'Losar', and TGL's annual Drubhchen, which generally starts a few days after Losar.

The school year ends in early to mid-April and we take a one-week break before reopening for the new school year.

What is the daily schedule for Tsoknyi Gechak School Students?

The timetable varies a lot since the nuns are on rotating schedules for prayers and other monastic training activities. In addition, the younger nuns go to bed earlier. The Shedra and Trasang nuns have different schedules, but to give you a rough idea here is what a day looks like for one of the older school nuns:

(Note: puja in Hinduism or Buddhism is the ritual daily devotion involving offering of food and drink and prayers to a deity)

4.45am early wake up for puja goers

5.00am Wake up for non-puja goers (5:45am for wintertime)

5.45am Tibetan reading and memorization

7.00am Breakfast for everyone

8.00am Clean-up time and morning prayers

9.00am School

11.20am Lunch break for school students and staff

12.10pm School resumes
3.00pm Tea break
3.20pm School resumes
4.00pm School ends/evening puja for puja goers
4.00pm Break time for non-puja goers
4.45pm Tibetan reading
6.00pm Suppertime
7.00pm Homework time
8.00pm LKG/UKG/Class 1 Bedtime
8:45pm Classes 2-3 Bedtime
9.45pm Lights out

Will Tsoknyi Rinpoche be there?

Though Kathmandu is Rinpoche's home, he spends much of the year traveling. However, he should make at least one visit during your 5-month stay.

Is there any possibility to attend Tibetan classes or study the Dharma at TGL?

Unfortunately, there are currently no opportunities for non-Tibetan speakers to study Dharma or Tibetan at TGL. You may join the morning and evening prayers and Dakini, Guru and Big Puja days (three times a month) which are in Tibetan. For those with already basic spoken Tibetan or Nepali there will be a chance to practice basic conversation during day-to-day life at the nunnery. Those with basic pecha reading skills can join the morning puja and practice their reading.

How can I stay healthy and safe while out and about in Kathmandu?

Food safety

Avoid water that is not filtered or bottled or boiled. At TGL, filter water is provided in Guest/Volunteer room and the staff room. While out and about in Kathmandu avoid raw vegetables and pre-cut fruit and tap water.

Must haves

Always carry toilet tissue and hand sanitizer. It is also advisable to carry a torch (flash light) if you are going out at night.

Sun protection

In the sunny months (April to October) the sun can be very strong during the day and it is advisable to wear sunscreen and a sun hat.

Foot wear

Roads and pavements (sidewalks) are uneven with plenty of potholes so sensible shoes are advisable at all times.

Pollution protection

Kathmandu is highly polluted. Bring and use a smog mask if you are in any way sensitive to dust and pollution. Simple cotton face masks are available widely throughout the city. You can also purchase disposal masks from all Pharmacies. Please note the air quality up at Tsoknyi Gechak Ling and Chobhar village is generally good. The main problem is while traveling around the city.

Safety at night

Women travellers are advised not to go out alone at night.

What is the Local etiquette?

The form of greeting in Nepal is “Namaste” performed by joining both palms together. It literally means, “the divine in me salutes the divine in you”. Do not touch someone’s head or sit showing the bottom of your feet towards them. It is considered rude. Do dress conservatively when visiting temples, monasteries or sacred places – no shorts, short skirts, or low-cut tops. You will generally need to remove your shoes. If invited inside someone’s home it is polite to remove your shoes.

I would like to take a trip during my vacation time, any advice?

Here are web links for further information on visiting Nepal:

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/nepal>

<https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/asia/nepal/>

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g293889-Nepal-Vacations.html>