

Arrival Guide

Peace and Conflict Studies

Pokhara, Nepal

Spring 2025

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1 Introduction

Welcome as a student with Kulturstudier!

We hope you are excited about the upcoming semester. Our local staff in Pokhara will do their best to help you adapt to your new life upon arrival. However, a successful journey always begins at home.

This guide aims to provide you with essential information about life in Pokhara and help you prepare to make the most of your semester abroad. For details on academic preparations, please refer to the study guide.

We urge you to read this arrival guide carefully, to download this PDF on your computer, and print it to keep with you while in Nepal.

If you have any further questions, contact us at mail@kulturstudier.no or by phone at +47 22 35 80 22.

2 Important information

Make sure to save this information and pass it on to your emergency contacts.

2.1. Local staff contact information

Manager: Oda Steen. Phone: +977 9803 144 549 / WhatsApp: +47 940 34 850 /

E-mail: oda@kulturstudier.no.

You may write to Oda in Norwegian, Swedish or English.

Seminar leaders:

Anna Falch. anna@kulturstudier.no

Aashmani Upadhyaya. aashmaniupadhyaya14@gmail.com

Academic coordinator: Mira Kinn. mira@kulturstudier.org

2.2. Your address in Pokhara

Hotel New Darshan,
17th Street, Lakeside
Pokhara-06

Hotel New Darshan will serve as your postal address. The mail system can be very slow. It is not recommended to send valuables by mail as they can get lost.

2.3. Medical help in Pokhara

We advise you to use the **CIWEC CLINIC Hospital**, located on street 14.

2.4. Ethical conduct

We have a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or bullying. We expect students and staff to treat each other with respect and to avoid offensive language in their communication with each other. Sexual harassment is unacceptable, both in the case of harassment of fellow students and from our staff towards students. All Kulturstudier staff and teachers are informed that any sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. If you experience harassment, sexual or otherwise, from Kulturstudier staff or lecturers, we urge you to report this to alarm@kulturstudier.org. All reports will be treated confidentially.

3 Preparation: getting ready

3.1. Be prepared to take responsibility

Kulturstudier is an organization run by academics, and we consider the academic aspect of your stay our primary responsibility. We see our students as responsible adults and believe that each student should take responsibility for creating a good life for themselves in Pokhara.

For instance, if your luggage does not arrive with you, you must contact the airline yourself. If you need to see a doctor, you should go by yourself or with a roommate. We expect you to act in the same manner you would if you were traveling independently. Nevertheless, our local staff serve as a safety net. If you encounter problems or something serious occurs, you can always ask them for help.

You must also be prepared to take responsibility for your studies. Studying with Kulturstudier is fundamentally the same as studying at any university; what you gain from it depends on what you put into it. You can fail your studies and learn nothing, or you can be academically inspired and discover what you want to do for the rest of your life. Read more in the study guide.

3.2. Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone

You will be part of a group of Scandinavian students, which provides a sense of safety in a new situation. It is easy to only spend time with your fellow Scandinavians instead of stepping out of your comfort zone to get to know the locals. However, if you wish to truly experience Nepal, you must be adventurous and make an effort to get to know the locals and their culture.

3.3. Packing

3.3.1. Clothing

For students travelling to Pokhara in the spring, the weather will be a bit chilly during the first few weeks, but get warmer after a while. In fall, expect high temperatures and a lot of rain during the first few weeks, and more comfortable temperatures and less rain for the second half of your semester. It is likely that much of your regular summer wardrobe will be inconvenient outside of Lakeside. Tight-fitting tank tops, miniskirts and short shorts are not considered suitable clothing in Nepal. We recommend that you bring t-shirts, light cotton pants, and long-sleeved light sweaters for evening time. If you plan to go on hikes in the mountains, bring suitable clothing. Bring swimwear as this can be hard to find in stores in Pokhara. Most likely, you will wear sandals or flip-flops. Be sure to bring a pair of hiking shoes. You can buy or rent hiking gear (including shoes) from shops in Pokhara, but the quality varies. You do not need to bring regular towels, but you may want to bring a beach towel.

3.3.2. Toiletries

You can buy most pharmaceuticals in Pokhara. Bring any prescription drugs you might need. The quality of sunscreen available in Nepal varies, so you should bring enough sunscreen for the entire stay. You can buy shampoo, conditioner, deodorants, soap, etc. in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Please note that some products contain whitening agents. Contact lenses are hard to find. Shaving equipment, tampons, pads, etc. are available in most shops, but dry shampoo is not widely available.

3.3.3. Study supplies

Paper, pens, staplers, tape, etc. can be bought in Pokhara. Be sure to bring your laptop and books. Many places have copying machines, often with a sign that reads "Photocopy" outside the shop. One page typically costs around 5-10 rupees.

4 Your first week: settling in

4.1. Arriving in Nepal

If you arrive on the joint arrival by Kilroy, you will be picked up at the airport. If you do not arrive with the joint flight, and need help with organizing a taxi to pick you up at the airport/bus junction, you must contact manager Oda Steen and provide her with your complete flight details (including departure airport and flight number). However, taxis are easily found outside the airport. A fair price for a taxi from the bus junction is approx. 400 rupees, and from the airport, 1000 rupees. Should you have any trouble finding your destination, ask your driver to drop you off at Lakeside Centre and Oda will come meet you.

As soon as you arrive in Nepal, we request that you register your stay with your country's embassy if you have not already done so prior to departure. Register your travel with your Ministry of Foreign Affairs in [Norway](#) / [Sweden](#) / [Denmark](#).

4.2. Information meeting

An information meeting will be held on the first day of lectures. At the meeting, we will go through important practical information with regards to the houses, the study center, transportation, social activities, and cultural etiquette. There will be plenty of time for questions. The time and location of the meeting will be announced in the Facebook group.

4.3. Buy a SIM-card

Most students get a Nepali SIM card and cell phone number, which is cheap and practical. Remember to give the management team your Nepali number if you get one. While you can use foreign SIM cards in Nepal, it is very expensive. If you have an old phone that still works, bring it as a backup in case your primary phone gets lost or stolen. You can put your home country SIM card in the backup phone to use services like BankID. The best access to the internet is through a Nepali SIM card, using your phone as a Wi-Fi hotspot for your computer. There are many package deals to choose

from. Typically, 10 GB costs around 250 rupees, but you might also find a good deal with 60 GB at the cost of 500 rupees. Most tourists choose Ncell or NTC (Nepal Telecom) SIM cards during their stay in Nepal.

4.4. Withdraw cash

The currency in Nepal is the NPR (Nepalese rupee). 10 EUR = 1 500 NPR (approx.). You should always carry some cash with you. There are many ATMs in Pokhara, especially in the Lakeside area where you will be staying, and most of them accept Visa and Mastercard. Additionally, there are several currency exchange kiosks where you can easily exchange Euros and Dollars for Nepalese rupees. Always count your money after withdrawing from an ATM, as mistakes can occur.

4.5. Communicating with Kulturstudier

4.5.1. Student representatives

During the first week, we will ask the students to elect representatives who will meet with Kulturstudier staff every other week. These individuals will act as intermediaries between students and staff and they are responsible for notifying the staff of any problems. For specific occasions or trips, separate committees may be formed.

4.5.2. Canvas, WhatsApp and Facebook

Check your Canvas, WhatsApp and the Facebook group frequently to stay up to date on the academic programme and other activities. It is your responsibility to make sure that you receive important information. Please use WhatsApp / staff's local phone numbers and not e-mail for urgent matters.

4.5.3. Compulsory Monday meetings

Starting the first week, each Monday after class all students and staff gather for a weekly meeting. The purpose is to share information and to discuss any difficulties and opportunities for change. These meetings are compulsory. If you for some reason cannot attend, you are responsible for obtaining the information from fellow students.

4.5.4. Suggestion box

At the study house, you will find a suggestion box where you can submit your suggestions and comments. We truly appreciate feedback from students throughout the semester. It is important to us that suggestions and grievances are communicated while there is still time to make changes, so please do not hesitate to voice any concerns. This includes issues related to the academic schedule, housing, food, welfare, and other aspects of the programme.

4.5.5. Complaints

If you have spoken with our local staff about issues or used the suggestion box but still feel that your concerns have not been appropriately resolved, you are welcome to 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.

4.6. Academic schedule

The academic program for the semester can be found in the study guide. Most lectures will be held at the study center, a 5 minute walk from the student houses. Classes usually start at 9 AM. The academic week lasts from Monday through Friday.

Early on you will be given a preliminary schedule for the whole semester. Here you will find dates, times, venues and important deadlines for lectures, seminars and assignments. The intent is to create predictability throughout the semester. However, changes are inevitable; lecturers get sick and unforeseen incidents may occur. Changes to the academic schedule will be sent by e-mail and important information about different activities will be posted on Facebook and/or Canvas. Check your Canvas, WhatsApp, and the Facebook group daily before breakfast.

5 Health, accommodation and food

5.1. Health: staying well in Nepal

If you are insured with Europeiske, you have access to counselling for health issues by phone at +47 21 49 24 01. Check with other insurance providers what options they have for counseling if you suffer health issues.

Roommates have a special responsibility to look out for and help each other if someone gets ill. If you or your roommate is too sick to attend a lecture or seminar, inform the team before breakfast. It is inevitable that some students will get sick during the semester. You will most likely be affected by an upset stomach at some point during your stay. At the pharmacy, you can buy electrolyte powder, which can help. Preventative measures include washing your hands often and being careful with uncooked/raw foods. However, try not to let anxiety prevent you from exploring and enjoying new foods.

It is important to stay hydrated—aim to drink at least 3 liters of water daily. Fresh juice is another great way to maintain hydration. If you feel weak and unwell, dehydration is the most likely cause. You should not drink tap water. Always use sunscreen with a high SPF to protect your skin from the sun. If you spend too long in the strong sun you can suffer a heat stroke, which will make you feel ill and exhausted. Stay out of the sun, rest and drink plenty of water to recover.

Kulturstudier has prepared a fully equipped first aid box which you can find in the student house. You should buy some form of mosquito repellent in Pokhara. You can buy different creams and sprays, as well as plugs that you plug into your electric outputs. Apply repellent cream every evening and wear long trousers and long sleeve shirts to avoid bites when the weather becomes warmer.

If you struggle with mental health difficulties, please consult your doctor before departure and inform the staff beforehand if there is anything we should be aware of. Read more on [your page](#).

5.2. Accommodation

The accommodation Kulturstudier offers varies from semester to semester according to availability. Rooms vary in size, furnishing and appeal. Read more on [your page](#).

5.2.1. Student houses

This semester the students will likely be living in the following housing in Pokhara: **Hotel New Darshan** and **Immortal Inn**, both located in Lakeside (note: student housing may change). You will share a room with one other student. Each room has a bathroom, some have an attached balcony, and all students have access to a kitchen. The student houses have rooftop terraces with a great view of the neighborhood, and the main house also houses three lovely dogs that makes the place feel like a home. Your room will be cleaned weekly, and bed sheets and towels changed once a week. The main gate will be open 24/7. The rooms are equipped with toilet paper, water jars, and a cooking gas cylinder in the kitchen. Bring a bottle which you can refill.

5.2.2. Electricity and wi-fi connection

Electricity is 220 volts. Please note that the internet connection in the student house and study areas can be slow and disrupted, which may cause frustration for some students. If you cannot live without reliable internet access, studying in a developing country might not be the best choice for you. Kulturstudier cannot promise reliable internet access in the houses or at the study center.

5.2.3. Laundry

Many students handle their own laundry using buckets in the bathrooms or on the rooftop terrace. You can purchase soap and other supplies in local shops. You may use laundromats, which typically charge around 100 rupees per kilogram. It is also possible to have your clothes washed at laundry services in town, usually with next-day pickup. Keep in mind that the clothes will be dried out in the sun, so return times vary depending on the weather. At laundry stalls, clothes are often given a rather

rough treatment, so it is wise to wash sensitive materials yourself or avoid bringing delicate clothing items to Nepal.

5.2.4. Safety and house rules

If something in your apartment is malfunctioning or there is an issue, you must notify the landlord, Mr. Rupak Thapa by phone/WhatsApp at +977 976 535 8212. Daytime visitors must identify themselves and get approval from the manager before visiting and they must leave at times designated by Kulturstudier management. Kulturstudier reserves the right to deny access to any guest. These rules are in place to protect the safety of all students. See the full list of house rules below.

House rules

1. Cleanliness and responsibility

All students are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of shared spaces, including the kitchen, bathrooms, and living rooms. Personal belongings should be stored properly to ensure that common areas remain orderly.

2. Noise control and respect for quiet hours

All students must maintain a peaceful environment conducive to study and rest. Students must respect their neighbors and observe quiet hours in accordance with local laws.

3. Safety first

For the safety of all residents, students must follow the security protocol, which include locking doors and informing staff of any safety concerns. Furthermore, individuals who are not Kulturstudier students are not permitted stay overnight.

4. Substance use

The use of drugs is strictly prohibited. Alcohol consumption must be conducted responsibly. Excessive drinking that endangers your own safety, or the safety of others, is not permitted.

5. Respectful behavior and non-discrimination

All students must treat their housemates with respect and dignity. Discrimination based on identity, race, sexual orientation etc. is strictly prohibited. So is physical or verbal violence, intimidation, and threats. Sexual harassment, bullying, or any actions that compromise the well-being of others will not be tolerated.

5.3. Food

Lunch is served at Little Windows, Monday to Friday, at 1 PM. We provide options for dietary needs such as celiac disease or lactose intolerance. Vegan and vegetarian options will be provided. Please notify us of your dietary needs in the arrival form before departure. While breakfast and dinner are not included in your stay, there are plenty of restaurants in Pokhara. Nepal has a splendid culinary tradition. If someone invites you to dinner, you should accept, as the best food is often served at home!

6 Living in Pokhara, Nepal

6.1. Etiquette

Patience is a virtue in Nepal, where the concept of efficiency is very different from what you might be used to at home. For instance, timing is flexible—“five minutes” often means twenty. Flexibility is another important virtue since it can be challenging to plan things precisely and make everything predictable. When interacting with the local population, it is crucial to be sensitive to what they might consider impolite, rude, or disrespectful. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences will help you build positive relationships and navigate your new environment more smoothly.

6.2. Dress code

The more you adapt to the local dress code and show respect for local customs, the more respect you will receive. In Pokhara and the surrounding villages, certain dress codes should be respected to facilitate better communication with the locals. While the dress code in Lakeside is generally more relaxed than in rural areas, take extra care to dress according to local views on decent attire when passing through nearby villages. The importance of the dress code in Nepal is often underestimated. You may see tourists in Kathmandu and Pokhara practicing a very relaxed dress code. However, if you wish to be taken seriously by the locals in Pokhara, always dress appropriately.

6.2.1. Women

A general rule is to cover your shoulders and knees. Avoid tight shirts, transparent fabrics, short tops and miniskirts. Traditional Nepalese clothes are beautiful and comfortable in the heat. Most Nepali women wear a Sari (a long shirt) with Kurta (leggings) or Lungi (trousers). It is accepted and encouraged that tourists/foreigners use these clothing items. You can buy these items ready-made, or have them fitted by a tailor.

6.2.2. Men

We recommend wearing light pants (not shorts) and short-sleeved shirts. Tank tops and shorts are not suitable in public, and it is totally unacceptable to walk around shirtless. It is also acceptable for Western men to wear traditional Nepali clothes, such as dhoti or lungi, which are very comfortable compared to denim shorts.

6.3. Culture shock

To stay in a foreign country for a long time is usually a wonderful experience, but you should also expect to experience some difficulties during your stay. Many students go through phases of feeling very happy, followed by times when they suddenly feel sad and irritable. This phenomenon is common enough to have a name: culture shock. Culture shock is often divided into three phases:

1. **The tourist phase:** initially, everything new is exciting and fascinating. You are likely to feel happy and energetic as you explore your surroundings.
2. **The sentencing/reaction phase:** as the novelty wears off, you may start to experience frustration, homesickness, and irritability. Everyday challenges, such as language barriers and cultural differences, may become more difficult to deal with.
3. **Reorientation phase:** you begin to develop routines and feel more comfortable navigating cultural differences. Eventually, you find a balance and start to appreciate your new life more fully.

Communication problems are bound to happen. Keep in mind that it is not the locals who should learn to speak better English, but we as guests who should ideally make an effort to learn to understand basic Nepalese. The language barrier may be challenging and may lead to misunderstandings. Getting angry will only escalate the situation and may contribute to someone “losing face”. This is a severe offense in Nepal, so try your best to avoid it.

6.4. Activities in your free time

The cost of living in Pokhara is generally modest. Nepal offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, paragliding, and rafting. There are many professional agencies in Pokhara that offer these activities. It is possible to do shorter treks over the weekend or during a long weekend. Among the most popular and relatively easy treks are the Poon Hill and Mardi Himal treks, which include Khumai Danda and pass through the beautiful villages of the Annapurna Region. Please note that you need a trekking pass for all trekking routes, and it is now mandatory to bring a guide. It is your responsibility to check what your insurance covers.

Kulturstudier will arrange events such as trips and other activities during the semester. These trips/activities will usually be announced at the Tuesday meetings. Kulturstudier does not charge to arrange group trips, but those who participate must share the cost of transport and accommodation. If you are interested in leisure activities such as Nepalese cooking classes, sports activities, or volunteering, local staff can assist you with this.

You should try as much as you can to plan and carry out some of your own activities. This is the best way to become familiar with Nepalese culture. We always schedule at least one long weekend off, allowing you to explore Nepal on your own or with fellow students and local friends. If you go on overnight trips or leave Pokhara during the weekends, you must notify the manager.

6.5. Transportation and traffic safety

Biking is a good way to get around. You can rent bicycles, with prices varying from approximately 500 to 1000 rupees per day. You may also consider buying a used bicycle. An average taxi ride around Lakeside costs around 150-300 rupees, although prices tend to increase at night. Always bargain and fix the rate before taking a taxi. You can also use the InDrive app, which allows you to easily book taxis at a fixed and fair rate. Due to the chaotic traffic conditions in Nepal, we strongly advise against renting mopeds or motorbikes. Additionally, in Nepal, you are required to have a valid international driving license, which you must show during frequent police checks.

6.6. Illegal drug use

We do not accept that our students use illegal drugs. Students who use illegal drugs will be expelled and told to leave our premises. The use and possession of illegal drugs is a serious criminal offense in Nepal, and the penalties are harsh for those caught in possession of illegal substances. The Nepalese government is particularly strict with tourists, and some Westerners serve long sentences after being charged with possession of illegal substances. Someone may offer you cannabis claiming that the police do not care. This is not true.

Kulturstudier has been present in Pokhara for a long time. Local people as well as the authorities pay particular attention to what we do. The police are very helpful towards our students and staff when we need their assistance, and maintaining our good reputation is important for our good relationship with local authorities. Breaking the law would be very damaging to Kulturstudier's work in Pokhara, and could threaten our very existence in Nepal.

Please keep in mind that while you may be comfortable taking the risk, breaking the law will affect others besides yourself. Our local staff will suffer consequences for your actions.

6.7. Begging

For many of you, the sight and awareness of the many people begging in Nepal will be grim and shocking. You may feel sad, helpless, and unsure about how to react or help. Avoid donating large sums of money to specific individuals, as this has previously led to certain expectations regarding our students' generosity. Avoid giving anything in the area surrounding your student housing. Begging is a socially accepted way of surviving in Nepal, and it is common for locals to give a few rupees to beggars. Some individuals might be very persistent. We recommend giving amounts that are considered "normal," such as 10 rupees or less. Be aware that children who beg are usually forced to do so by their family or beggar masters.

6.8. Tipping and bargaining

You should bargain in a firm but polite manner, kindly making it known that you are aware of the local price. Bargaining is a learning experience that can be very enjoyable. It helps to consider bargaining as a conversation rather than a competition. Keep in mind that many locals in Pokhara, their businesses, and Nepal's economy in general have been hit hard by the lack of tourism following Covid. Many families lost their income overnight, and several family-run shops and businesses are currently struggling for survival. Be mindful and considerate when bargaining, yet do not be naïve. If you enjoy the food or are satisfied with your waitress's service, consider giving a tip. Several restaurants and cafés include a Service Charge (S.C.) of 10%, in addition to VAT (13%). If this is the case, it will be noted on the restaurant's menu, and you are not expected to give additional tips.

6.9. Personal Safety

In general, it is safe to walk around Pokhara on your own. Restaurants and bars close sometime between 10 PM and 5 AM, and after 11 PM, the streets are relatively empty. While Lakeside offers a vibrant nightlife on the weekends, you are strongly advised never to travel home alone at night, neither by foot nor by taxi. This is especially relevant when leaving bars and clubs after a night out. If you experience anything uncomfortable please contact the local staff as soon as possible and provide them with your specific location. We kindly request that you follow this advice for your own safety and well-being.

7 After your stay

7.1. Returning home: reverse culture shock

Having lived abroad for months, you may experience a reverse culture shock when returning home. After finally having become familiar with life in the foreign country, the way of living in your home country may suddenly seem strange. Everyday life might feel different, and you may find that you have acquired a new way of looking at things. You are not the same person you were when you left, and it may take some time to integrate your new experiences—and possibly a changed outlook—into life back home. Sharing your new experiences with family and friends who have not gone through the same journey can be challenging. They may not fully understand what you have been through, which can make it difficult to communicate your feelings.

Experiencing a different culture and adapting to a new way of life can greatly benefit you in your studies and life moving forward. Consider how you can keep parts of Nepalese culture and everyday life with you as you transition back to your habits at home. It can also be useful to stay in touch with your fellow students to share experiences and discuss the challenges of living at home and abroad.

7.2. Honor your commitments

Please remember to fulfill your promises to local people who have helped you in your daily life or as research respondents in group work. It is easy to promise to send photographs or a copy of your group paper, but just as easy to forget to do so. Make sure to deliver what you have promised. It costs you little but can bring great joy to your Nepalese contacts.

7.3. Evaluation

At the end of the semester, you will receive an extensive evaluation form where you can give us your feedback and help us improve. We greatly appreciate your responses.

**We wish you the best of luck with your studies – get ready for
a life-changing semester!**

Questions?

Contact us at:

mail@kulturstudier.no

+47 22 35 80 22