

# WOODSTOCK SCHOOL'S gap semester IN THE himalaya

## What would you rather be doing?

Ask yourself, would you rather be:

- Taking Freshman English or having a Hindi conversation with a shepherd in the Himalaya?
- Riding the bus to University or going on a jeep safari looking for tigers?
- Eating cafeteria food or sharing a meal with Buddhist monks in a 1000 year old monastery?
- Walking the stairs to class or climbing a Himalayan peak?

If you are looking for a meaningful way to take a break before college, then the Woodstock Gap Semester in the Himalaya may be for you.

Studying Indian culture, learning to communicate in Hindi, trekking up snow peaks in Garhwal, exploring the picturesque settlements of Kaza, stumbling across millennia-old monasteries, spotting tigers in Corbett National Park, white-water rafting on the Ganges - there is something for every true adventurer in the Woodstock Gap Semester in the Himalaya.

### Highlights are:

- Learning Hindi and experiencing the culture of the Western Himalaya
- Service-learning projects and homestays in Himalayan villages
- Advanced first aid, basic mountaineering and introductory rafting
- Wildlife safari and an introduction to human-animal conflict

## Dates & Cost

- August 19 to November 16, 2012
- US \$11,500 (starts and ends in New Delhi)

## What is a Gap year?

When students decide to take a year off from academics after high school and before joining college, to explore the world or just explore their own self-beliefs they are considered to be taking a "gap year". The time is typically spent with volunteer work, and experiential educational opportunities of their choice in the U.S. or a foreign country. These experiences give them an edge over their peers because of the sheer freshness that they bring back, having a myriad of experiences under their belt. These days, the choices are many. One could choose to volunteer in an institution, teaching English in a foreign country, work in a program, take on an internship, participate in an academic program abroad or sign up with different programs that meaningfully occupy a whole year.

A GAP program generally lends itself to a higher degree of student involvement. It offers many "real time" opportunities for leadership qualities to develop. The need to be motivated and stay positive in the face of adversity and uncertainty constantly gets tested. Students will have "real" exposure to convert challenging situations into opportunities. When the going gets tough, they will learn to use humor and keep things in perspective.

The popularity of a GAP Year is growing at an exponential rate around the world. Some of the leading schools and universities encourage students to take a GAP year, and sometimes even mention it in their acceptance letters, especially when it is a deferred admission. In 2009 Princeton University took the lead

by creating their Bridge Year program which provides need blind financial aid for a portion of incoming freshman to take a Gap Year.

## **Adventure**

You will attend a three-day first aid course known as the Wilderness First Aid (WFA), taught by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) USA. In your free time, you will have the opportunity to visit Woodstock School's state-of-the-art gym with its indoor climbing wall, basketball and squash courts, and swimming pool. All of this will help you get fit for the rest of the semester, which will include an eighteen day high-altitude trek, guided by the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, India's foremost school of mountaineering training.

## **Culture**

As you build a foundation in Hindi at the world-renowned Landour Language School, afternoon classes on Indian philosophy, culture and socio-economic issues will keep you engaged. At Kaza, you will learn about the culture and economic challenges of the high-altitude, remote landscape where Buddhism is the main religion. There will be a visit to the millennia-old Tabo monastery and the Ki gompha. You will also spend time in the Kumaon Himalayas, getting to know this region's distinctly different culture and economic challenges.

## **Environment**

Hiking around the Himalayan foothills of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, you will learn about the environment and wildlife of this region. Spending time in Corbett National Park (one of India's premier tiger preserves), you will study forest management and wildlife-related issues, including the politics of tourism and human-animal conflict. You will spend many hours birding with trained naturalists, as they guide you through the periphery of the National Park. Game drives to view wildlife will be a highlight.

## **Service**

During your time in the Kaza area of the Lahul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh and the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, you will be involved in construction work and service-learning projects in villages. Throughout these projects you will be interacting with a variety of local residents, from school children to village elders.

## **College credit**

A limited number of internships for undergraduate degree credits are available to select students registered through the University of Pittsburgh. Internships are coordinated with the existing GAP Semester programs at the Hanifl Center of Woodstock School. Students selected for internships must pay a fee of \$400 to the University of Pittsburgh to maintain active registration. Interested students should contact Joseph S.Alter ([jsalter@pitt.edu](mailto:jsalter@pitt.edu)) in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. Students can earn upto six credits either for one intensive internship, or for three credits each for two different but closely related internships projects. The credits would be anthropology internships.

For information on the credit structure for internships, go to <http://www.as.pitt.edu/node/426> .

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