

NEPAL

The Insiders' Guide

Your guide to Nepal's must-see temples, treks, national parks – and more – by our local experts



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Welcome!

Nepal is a destination that knows how to leave a lasting impression. Whether it's the natural beauty of Everest and the Himalayas, the misty jungles of Chitwan and Bardia national parks, or the rich, colorful culture, and the kindness of the local people – it's a country that's truly unforgettable.



Our Insiders' Pick of Nepal's Top 10 Experiences

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It's no wonder that trekking is the most popular activity in Nepal.



Cho La Pass, Everest region

Samantha McMahon

Drink in the gasp-worthy views of the Himalayas

With eight of the world's ten highest peaks located in Nepal, and a variety of options catering for different fitness levels and endurance, it's no wonder that trekking is the most popular activity in Nepal.

The **Everest Base Camp Trek** is by far the most popular route and takes approximately 12 days to complete. Trekkers walk along the **Khumbu Valley**, passing through authentic villages and visiting monasteries on their way to the tallest peak on earth.

If you're looking for more of a challenge, the **Annapurna Circuit** is

an epic, three-week adventure most notable for the sheer variety of scenery it passes through. For novices, the **Langtang Valley Trek** is one of the easiest and most popular treks that takes 10-12 days. If you're really short on time, the **Kathmandu Valley Trek** is the perfect option, with stunning valley views and cultural heritage rolled into just 3 days.

Offer a prayer in Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu

Built in the 14th Century and located in the eastern outskirts of **Kathmandu**, this temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the holiest Tibetan Buddhist temple outside Tibet.

The entire structure is designed in the shape of a Mandala, representing a microcosm of the universe.

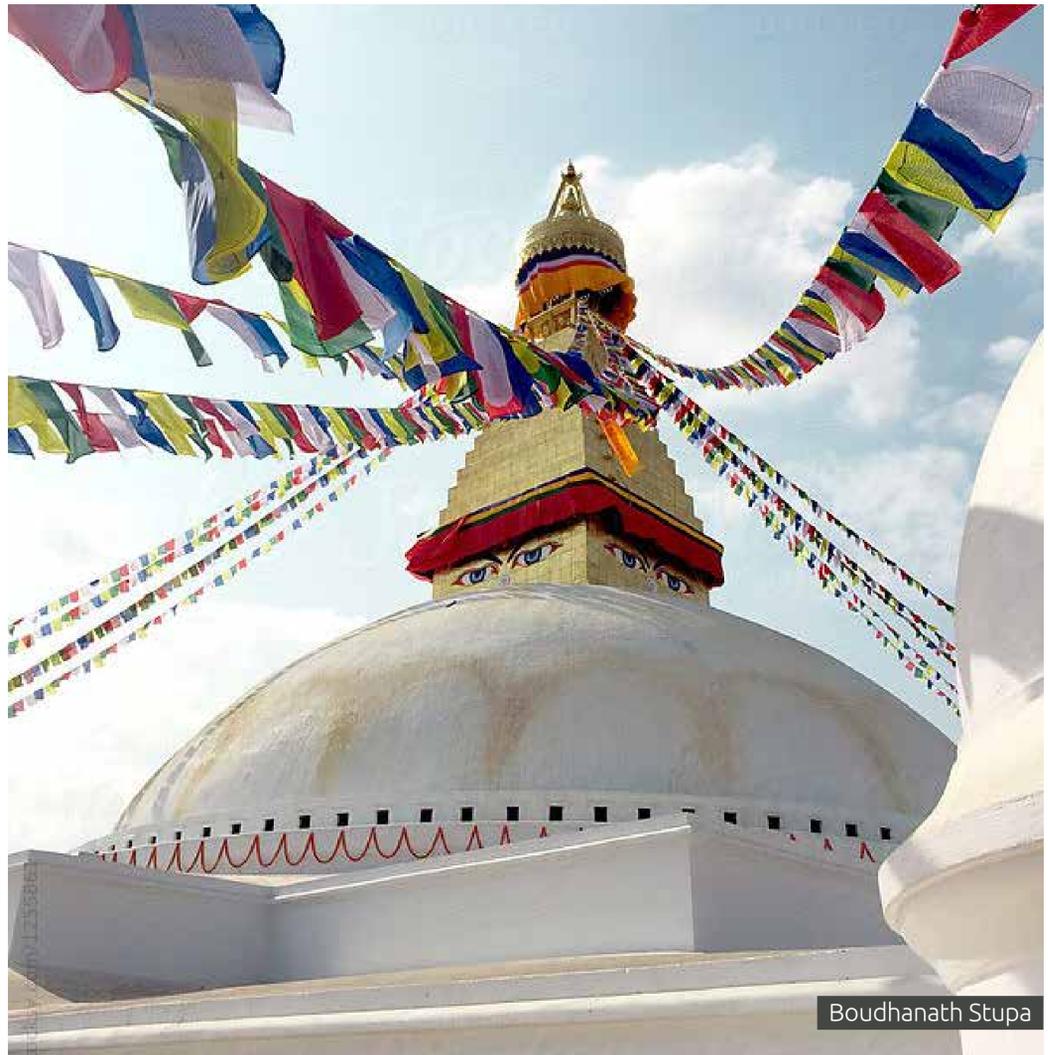
Explore the grounds – clockwise – and spin the prayer wheels inscribed with the famous mantra of *Avalokiteshvara (Om Mani Padme Hum)* to spread some good karma.

Cycle around Phewa Tal and surrounds in Pokhara

With nine lakes, **Pokhara** lives up to its label of “City of Lakes”, but **Phewa Tal** is no doubt its main attraction.

Rent a bike from any of the local stores and cycle around the lakeshore to take in the tranquil scenery. Here, you'll meet a variety of native birds, with a panoramic backdrop of rolling hills and the **Himalayas**.

If you have more than a day here, take one of the brightly painted *doongas* (boats) and stop off at the **Barahi**



Boudhanath Stupa

Temple. Situated in the center of the lake, it's built in honor of the deity *Ajima*, and the locals regularly make the trip on Saturday to worship her.

Wander through Patan's Durbar Square

The oldest of the three UNESCO World Heritage-listed Durbar Squares, **Patan Durbar Square** is situated in the center of Patan, also known as **Lalitpur**.

As one of the oldest known Buddhist cities, the **Royal Palace** is best known for its artistic prowess. The numerous temples and idols within the square's three main courtyards (or “*Chowks*”) are masterpieces of Newari art and architecture.

Spend an afternoon wandering through these royal grounds and visit the street markets around Durbar Square. With almost half the local population working as craftsmen, it's a

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In Pokhara you'll meet a variety of native birds, with a panoramic backdrop of rolling hills.”





paradise of Nepalese handicrafts and a great way to funnel tourism dollars directly to those who need it most.

Get a taste of authentic Nepalese cuisine

Thanks to its wonderful cultural and geographic diversity, Nepalese cuisine is a hodgepodge of lip-smacking, fiery dishes that are rich in spices and bursting with flavor.

More often than not, the ubiquitous *dal bhat* – a big plate of steamed rice served with delicious accoutrements of stir-fried vegetables, meat curries, spiced potatoes, and salads – will be on the menu. As will the meat-filled dumplings, *Momos*, the second crown jewel in Nepalese cuisine.

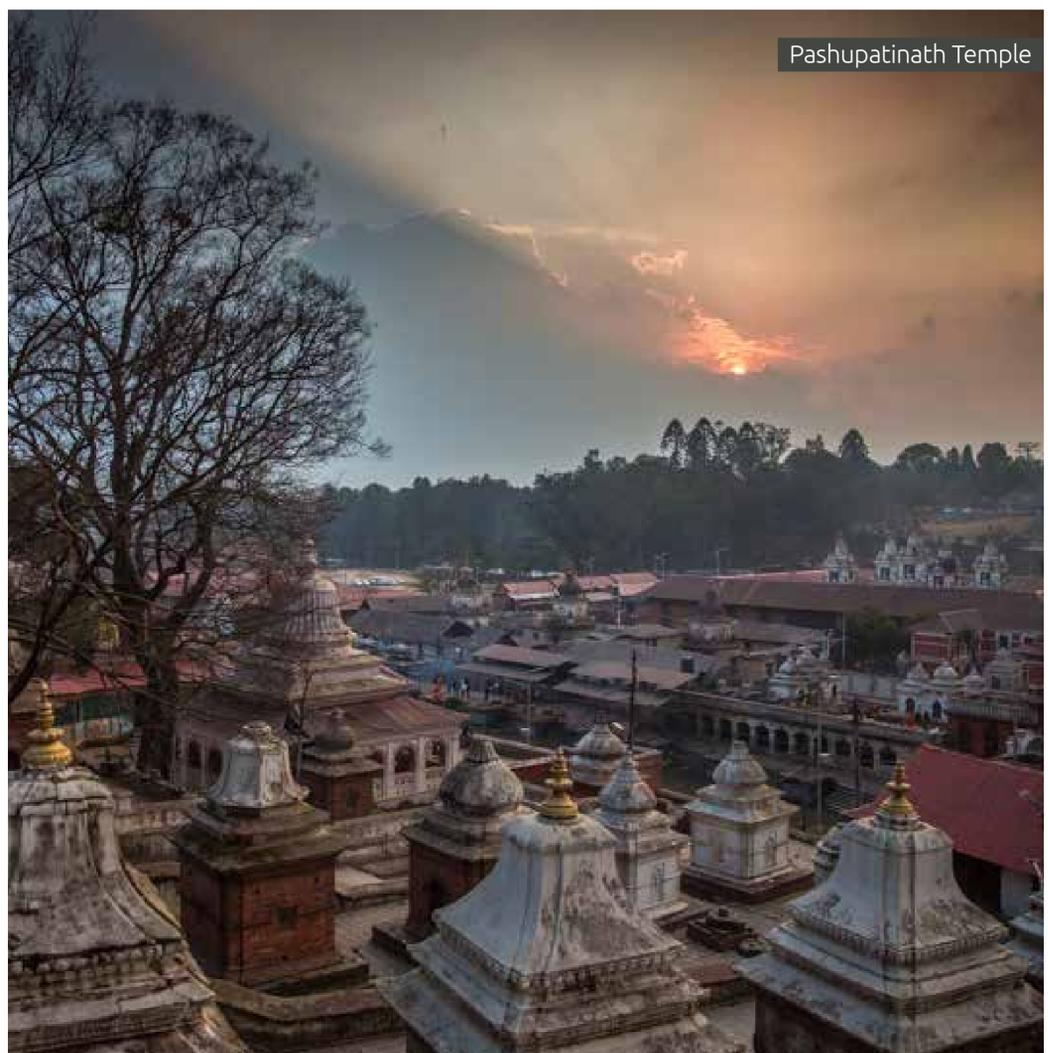
If you're looking for more "everyday" local flavors, try *choyla*. This renowned Newari specialty is an appetizer made with grilled meat, typically buffalo, but chicken and other forms of meat are also common. Pair it with *Tongba*, a naturally fermented millet alcohol, served in long bamboo canisters, and you'll earn bragging rights to have tasted authentic Nepalese cuisine.

Spend a day exploring the traditional villages of Bandipur

Bandipur, located midway between **Kathmandu** and **Pokhara**, is an enchanting hilltop settlement that was once an important stop on the India-Tibet trade route.

Bandipur is a beautiful example of traditional Newari culture. The town's winding lanes are dotted with 18th century architecture and teeming with farmers and traders going about their daily business on foot. Spend a day wandering through the local streets, temples, and bazars to soak up the unique culture.

Make sure you take your camera with you. The town offers breathtaking views of the Himalayan range – perfect for those Instagram-worthy sunset shots – as well as the **Marsyangdi River Valley**.



Pashupatinath Temple

Mahadev Rojas Torres



Nagarkot

Go on Safari in Bardia National Park

You've heard of South Africa's Big Five, but **Bardia National Park** – perhaps Nepal's best kept secret – is home to the Big Three: the Bengal tigers, the Asian elephants, and the greater one-horned rhinoceros.

Located in the **Terai Region** in the far west of Nepal, Bardia is Nepal's largest national park and wilderness area. Covering 968 sq kms of sal forests, grasslands, and savannahs, it's home to more than 50 species of mammals, 400 species of birds, and over 125 recorded species of fish.

It's also far less tourist-focused than the popular **Chitwan National Park** and the well-known white water rafting paradise, **Karnali River**, is running close by. So, if you're an outdoor enthusiast, don't leave Bardia off your itinerary and aim to spend 4-5 nights here.

Spend a night in a homestay in Nagarkot

If a glimpse of true Nepalese culture and family life is what you're after, then there's nothing like spending a night (or several) in a Homestay.

Just an hour's drive from **Kathmandu**, and uniquely surrounded by lush rainforests and waterfalls, **Nagarkot** is the perfect place to combine sight-seeing and an unforgettable cultural experience.

For between USD \$5-\$30 a night, you'll have a basic but comfortable room and the chance to immerse yourself in the day-to-day lives of your host family. Many homestays also offer guided tours, meditation, and (best of all) authentic home-cooked Nepalese food.

Go white water rafting in Upper Seti

If floating down a sun-bathed river,

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Many homestays also offer guided tours, meditation, and (best of all) authentic home-cooked Nepalese food.



Samantha McMahon

camping on white river beaches, and getting far away from clamoring cities sounds good to you, then you've got to try white water rafting in Nepal.

Only 30 min from **Pokhara's Lakeside**, the **Upper Seti River** is the best single-day white water rafting adventure. There are challenging rapids for rafters and kayakers in the October/November season, where you can pass through a gorge with the high **Annapurna Himalayas** looming above.

If you love the great outdoors, there are many fantastic multi-day kayaking or white water rafting tours departing frequently from **Kathmandu** and Pokhara. Some even combine rafting with short treks to reach some unique landscapes, so check with local tour operators when you arrive.

Lend a hand to rebuild Nepal

After the devastating earthquakes in 2015, Nepal is still rebuilding from the damage, with many travelers wondering how to help.

With tourism being one of the main sources of income for the Nepalese people, your return to this magnificent

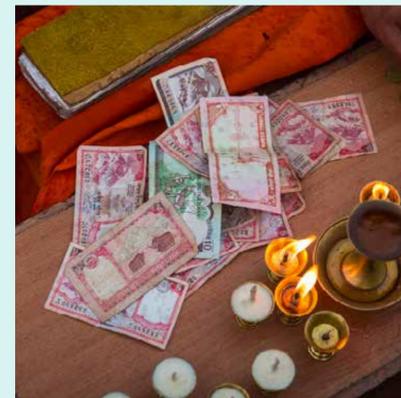


Cleanup in Kathmandu

Jase Wilson

General Cost Guide

As a rule of thumb, the higher in altitude you go, the more expensive things are. But as a guide, here are some basic prices to give you an idea of what to expect:



Mahadev Rojas Torres

Dhal Bhat: Rs. 100-150 in Kathmandu's local markets, and at elevation of 4,500m, expect around Rs. 200-850.

Drinks, such as a cup of tea: Rs. 10-30 per cup.

Beer: A 600ml bottle local beer will cost you Rs. 250-700, depending on the elevation.

Chapati (flat bread): Rs. 10-30 per piece.

Momo (Nepali dumplings): Rs. 50-100.

Western snacks: varies and more expensive than local food, but a 200g pack of cookies will cost Rs. 30-50 Rupees in Kathmandu, and up to Rs. 200 in the mountains.

Accommodation: A basic bed in a dorm room will cost Rs. 200 or if you're looking to stay one night in a luxury hotel, you'll pay up to Rs. 13,000.

Trekking permits: Rs. 2,000 Rupees up to Rs. 34,000 Rupees, depending on the region.

Porter: US \$15-25 per day (including medical insurance and food).

Guides: US \$30-40 a day (including medical insurance and food).

place is a great way to start. If you're looking to give back in a more concrete way, reconstruction projects of schools and homes in rural areas are one of the highly recommended – and much needed – volunteer projects.

If that's not for you, there are also a range of other programs like teaching English, helping with women's empowerment programs, assisting disabled care, child care, medical programs, and many more.

Be specific about your skills and what your time commitments are, and you'll find there are many rewarding programs that you can weave into your travel plans.

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Nepal is still rebuilding from the damage, with many travelers wondering how to help.

Climate & Weather

Nepal's climate varies with the landscape, with four distinct seasons including two monsoon seasons. The lowland Terai regions enjoy hot and humid, tropical conditions, and can rise above 45°C. The mountainous north, with altitudes above 3,300m, has an alpine climate that can drop to -15°C in winter.

Nepal's monsoon season

Nepal's monsoon season starts in June, bringing rains, filling the rivers, and making fields lush with bright green vegetation.

The dry season starts in October and lasts till mid-late May. This is the season of clear skies, crops harvesting, and you'll find it's freezing cold up in the mountains.

Best trekking seasons

There are two time slots where the weather is perfect for trekking.

Traditionally, the most popular times are called the "high touristic seasons". This lasts for two and a half months in Spring (March – May) and two to three months in Autumn (October – December).

Spring trekking season is typically warm, but can give hazy views of the mountains. Mornings are clear and sunny, but changes rapidly from noon-2pm. If you're planning a trek or a day



trip during this time, make sure you have plenty of layering options and start your trips early in the morning so you can finish before the afternoon.

Autumn typically brings clear skies, amazing views of the snowy mountains, and dry trekking paths.

The temperature in the valley is comfortable and warm, up to 25°C during the day, and may go below zero at night or when you're above 3,500m.

Wet season in Nepal

Mid-December to mid-February is wet season. It's usually not very pleasant this time of year because of the low temperatures, but the skies are very clear.

Due to climate change, the monsoon season has also moved closer to Autumn in recent years. This means the rain can sometimes keep pouring until the end of October.

WHAT TO PACK

Whether you're planning a trek or just enjoying day trips around Kathmandu, follow these key steps:

- Bring layers so you can adapt throughout the day. Your base layer should be a synthetic T-shirt, or a quick-dry, thin thermal shirt. If you're sensitive to the sun, wear long sleeves.
- Pack clothes that are light, with fast drying fabric, and good breathability.
- Wear comfortable shoes – preferably ones that you've already worn in.
- Bring a hat and sunglasses to protect you from the sun.
- Don't forget the small things: gloves, a fleece hat, sun cream, and a microfiber towel.
- At higher altitudes, you'll need more layers. Bring thermal shorts or trousers, a fleece jacket, and a light down jacket with a hood, or a dawn vest. Always have a wind and water-proof outer layer like a hooded soft shell jacket.

Where to Stay

Whether you're hiking in the Himalayas, strolling through medieval cities, or bargaining hard in souvenir shops, every minute in Nepal is exhilarating and exhausting in equal measure. At the end of the day, you'll need somewhere to rest your head and recharge your batteries. From guesthouses to hotels, teahouses to homestays, which one's right for you and your budget?

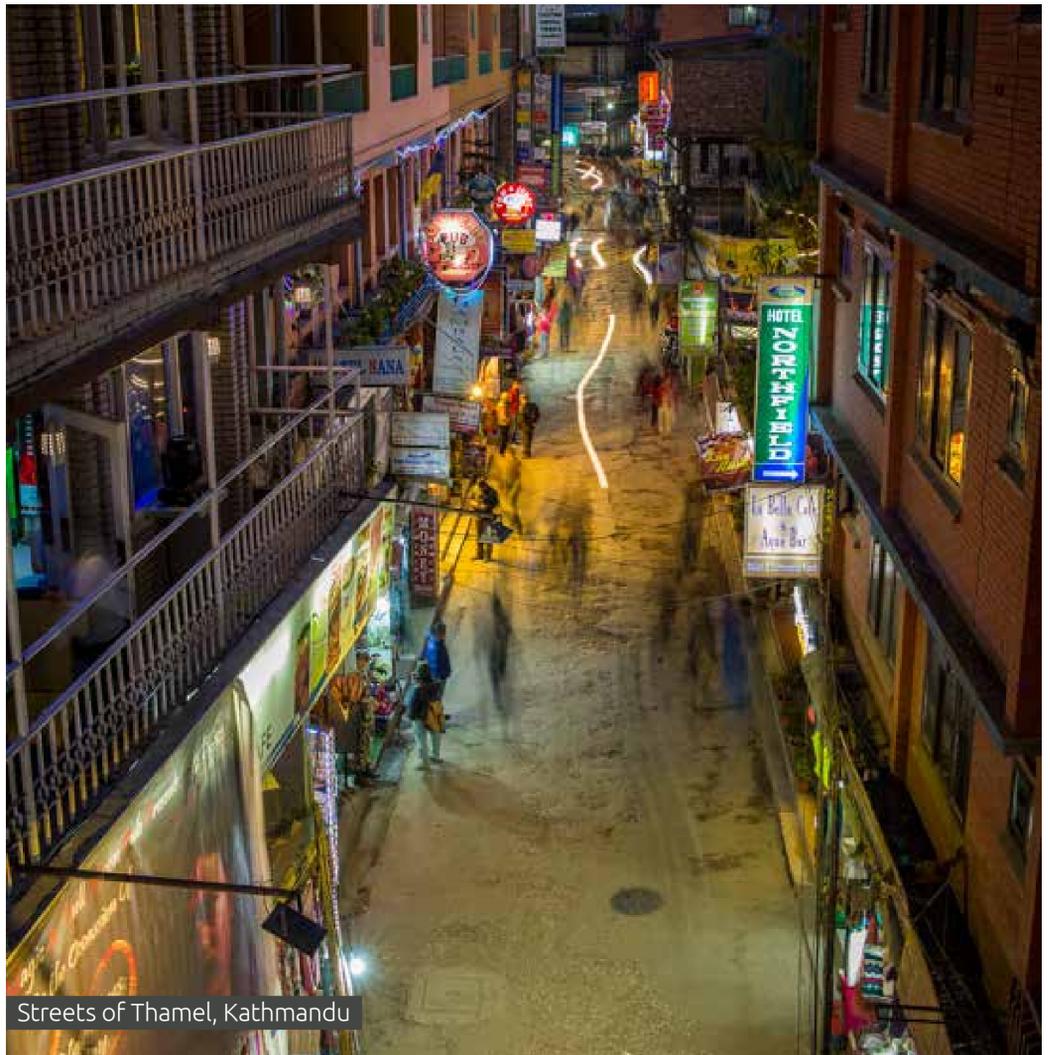
Guesthouses and hotels

In the main tourist areas of **Kathmandu**, **Pokhara**, and **Chitwan**, you'll find an ever-expanding range of options.

'Guesthouse' in Nepal can mean anything from a small, family-run lodge, to a generic budget hotel. Most have a large variety of rooms, so be sure to take a look before committing to stay.



Mahadev Rojas Torres



Streets of Thamel, Kathmandu

Mahadev Rojas Torres

Budget rooms start from as low as Rs. 250 a night and include little more than a bed and a roof over your head. Spend a little more and you can expect your own bathroom, some windows, and a balcony.

Unless you're going luxe, it's worth noting that much of Nepal experiences power outages throughout the day, and Wi-Fi access can be erratic.

In Kathmandu's bustling tourist district **Thamel** most hotels and guesthouses will offer free airport pick-ups. While many have breakfast included, it's usually a pretty bland affair. Booking ahead of time is recommended in peak seasons, but you'll get much cheaper rates if you enquire in person.

Teahouses

For those chasing mountain highs in the Himalayas, leave the tent at home.

“**'Guesthouse' in Nepal can mean anything from a small, family-run lodge, to a generic budget hotel.**”

Bandipur, with Mount Everest in the background



Mahadev Rojas Torres

Trekking trails are dotted with simple teahouses that offer a welcoming smile and a warming cup of tea at the end of a hard day's hike.

For as little as Rs. 300 a night, you'll get a firm bed, a thick blanket, and a power outlet to charge your devices.

Make no mistake – teahouse facilities are basic. Hot water, electricity, and clean toilets are never a guarantee.

You'll be expected to eat your meals at the teahouse's own restaurant, and will be charged a fee if you eat elsewhere.

The higher your altitude, the higher the prices for luxuries like Wi-Fi, so be sure to plan your triumphant Instagram summit post accordingly.

Homestays

If a glimpse of true rural Nepalese culture is what you're after, remote

homestays offer a passport into family life and a more authentic local experience.

For between US \$5–\$30 a night, you'll have a basic but comfortable room and the guaranteed kindness of your entire host family.

Get to know your host family and immerse yourself in their day-to-day lives.

You'll sleep well knowing you're spreading your tourist dollars into rural areas that may not otherwise reap the economic benefits of tourism.

Homestays, though, require an understanding that some luxuries like Wi-Fi and hot water won't always be available.

Meals here will be home-cooked Nepalese food that's so delicious, you won't think twice about eating curried vegetables for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

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You'll sleep well knowing you're spreading your tourist dollars into rural areas.



Alice McConnell

Nepalese Cuisine

More often than not, the mention of Nepalese food will conjure up an image of a plateful of *dal bhat*. But there's so much more to the local food here. A blend of Indian and Tibetan influences, Nepalese cuisine is simple, subtle, and satisfying. From *momos* to *aloo tama*, get ready for a mouth-watering journey through Nepal with our pick of the country's best signature dishes.

Dal bhat

Dal bhat and *nepali thali* are names interchangeably used for the same dish. This is typically a big plate of steamed rice, served with delicious accoutrements of stir fried vegetables, meat curries, spiced potatoes, and salads.

Sometimes, *dal bhat* might just be *dal* (lentil soup) and *bhat* (steamed rice) with no embellishments whatsoever.

If you find *dal bhat tarkari* on the menu, it means vegetables are served alongside your *dal bhat*.

Momos

After *dal bhat*, *momos* are perhaps the second crown jewel in Nepalese cuisine. These meat-filled dumplings are a permanent fixture in any restaurant – regardless of what kind of cuisine they serve.

Each restaurant has its own recipe

for the chutney, the spiciness of which ranges from extreme to super mild. If you're a spice-lover, let your waiter know when you order and they'll be happy to accommodate.



Newari specialty dishes

Choyla, an appetizer made with grilled meat, is a renowned Newari specialty. Typically, buffalo meat (or "buff" for short) is used, but chicken and other forms of meat are also common.

Pair it with *tongba*, a naturally fermented millet alcohol served in long bamboo canisters, or *raksi*, a strong tasting local brew, and you'll earn bragging rights to have tasted authentic Nepalese cuisine.

Another Newari specialty is a dense savory pancake called *bara*. This is a coarsely ground batter of *moong* (mung bean) and black lentils, cooked on a pan with toppings of meat strips and eggs. It's often served with a watery lentil soup.

Other local specialties

Other dishes to try include *sanya khuna* – a winter soup of dried fish, *aloo tama* – potatoes cooked with bamboo shoots, *gundruk* – a salad of pickled and fermented greens, *juju dhau* – sweetened yogurt and *thukpa* – a Tibetan meat noodle soup.

You'll find *thakali* kitchens in all cities and towns; they are modest places serving Nepalese cuisine alongside Tibetan specialties.



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You'll earn bragging rights to have tasted authentic Nepalese cuisine.

Cultural Highlights

The cultural sites of Nepal are as impressive and unforgettable as its natural wonders. While reminiscent of the traditions of India and China, Nepal has its own distinct cultural flavor. It'd take a long time to visit all of Nepal's cultural attractions, but many of the country's top temples and cultural sites are located in or around **Kathmandu**.

Swayambhunath Stupa

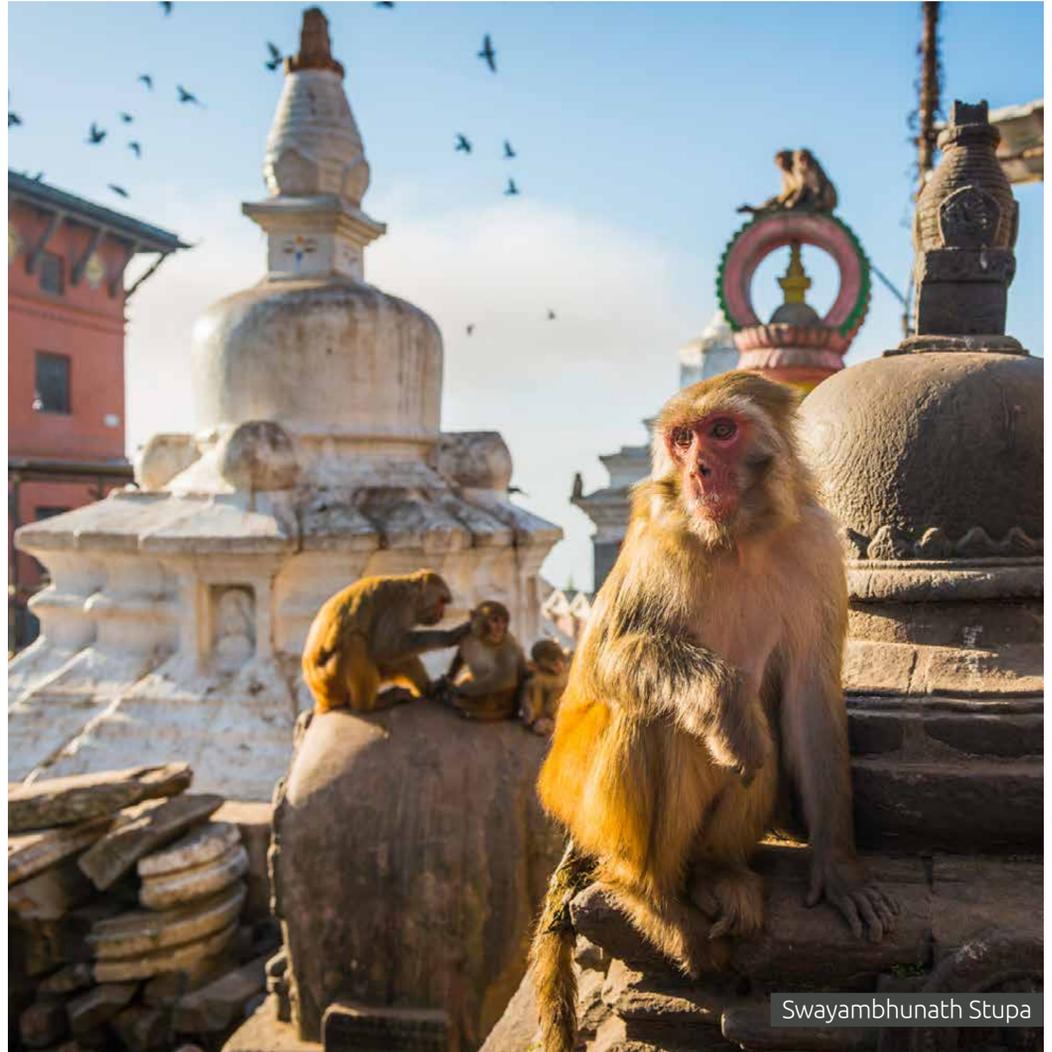
Located on a hill 2kms west of **Thamel**, **Swayambhunath** offers great views across the city. It's a particularly holy place for Nepal's Tantric Buddhists. It's nicknamed the 'monkey temple' and you'll see why as soon as you arrive.

Boudhanath Stupa

To the east of central **Kathmandu**, this is considered the holiest Tibetan Buddhist site outside of Tibet. The building itself is steeped in Buddhist symbolism and the surrounding area is a hub of Tibetan life and culture in Nepal.

Budhanilkantha

Located on the northern edge of Kathmandu valley is a unique, open-aired temple dedicated to Vishnu. The temple houses a stone statue of the Hindu deity, depicted lying in a pool of water and surrounded by serpents. The



Swayambhunath Stupa

statue is considered the largest and most beautiful stone statue in Nepal, and is carved from a single block of black basalt You can combine a trip here with a walk in the nearby **Shivapuri National Park**, further up the hill.

Changunarayan Temple

This is the least-visited of all of **Kathmandu Valley's** heritage sites, but would be a shame to miss. The two-story Vishnu temple at the top of the hill is said to be the oldest temple in Nepal, and represents a turning point in Nepali architecture and culture.

Dakshinkali

This *Kali* temple, on the southern edge of the Kathmandu Valley, is where animal sacrifices (especially of goats and chickens) are made. Only visit if you're not squeamish at the sight of blood!

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Mahadev Rojas Torres



Mahadev Rojas Torres

A young man selects mustard seeds at the top of a hill in Nama Bouddha

Pashupatinath

This is Nepal's holiest Hindu site. Located on the banks of the **Bagmati River** that runs through Kathmandu, it's always abuzz with pilgrims and *sadhus* (Hindu holy men). This is a place of somber worship, as **Pashupatinath** is also the city's most important cremation ground.

Manakamana

From the highway town of **Kurintar**, located on the **Trisuli River** between Kathmandu and **Pokhara**, is a long and scenic cable car leading up to the **Manakamana temple**. Although the temple itself is being rebuilt after the 2015 earthquake, it still attracts pilgrims from around India and Nepal, who believe their wishes will be granted if they pray here. The ride up on the cable car makes for a fantastic day trip from either Pokhara or Kathmandu.

The three Durbar Squares

Kathmandu Durbar Square, with its eclectic mix of architectural styles; **Patan Durbar Square**, with its fine museum; and **Bhaktapur Durbar Square**, an open-air museum of traditional crafts, are fantastic places to soak up the local culture and colorful atmosphere.

The Living Goddess

At one of the Durbar Squares, you might be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the Kumari, or Living Goddess.

The Kumari is a young girl believed to be the incarnation of the goddess *Talein*. She is worshiped by the local Newari people, some Hindus, as well as the Nepali Buddhists. Though each of the major old kingdoms of the valley have their own living goddess, the most famous is the **Royal Kumari of Kathmandu**.

She is usually hidden away inside the *Kumari Ghar*, but during major festivals, she makes an appearance in the Durbar Square – it's believed that her powers are so strong that even a glimpse of her brings good luck. Crowds of people wait below her window in the **Kumari Chowk**, the courtyard of her palace. Even though her irregular appearances last only a few seconds, the atmosphere here is always charged with devotion and awe.

Etiquette and Faux Pas

As a popular tourist destination, Nepal is used to the presence of tourists, so many of the local people are mostly tolerant towards various cultural differences. Nevertheless, the prominent religions of Hinduism and Buddhism permeates much of the local culture. It's a good idea to keep in mind a few etiquette pointers while interacting with locals and visiting places of religious importance.

Don't reach out to shake hands

In Nepal, a handshake is not the norm when greeting someone you've just met – especially when it's a member of the opposite sex.

Physical touch is reserved for friends and relatives, who would hug each other or touch the elder's feet when they meet.

Instead, join your hands together and greet people with a '*Namaste*' – just as you would in India.

Always finish your food

When offered a meal, try to finish the food served on your plate. An unfinished plate says to your hosts that you thought the meal wasn't satisfying. If you're worried that the food is too much to handle, just politely ask your host to remove some of it before you touch it.

It's also ingrained in the culture to be respectful of elders, so always let an

elderly host take a seat before you do. Never point the soles of your bare feet towards anybody while sitting.

Finally, be careful not to cross over food or a person while they're seated on the floor.

Etiquette at cultural sites

In some Hindu temples, such as the **Pashupatinath** temple in **Kathmandu**, non-Hindus are not allowed to enter. Buddhist shrines, however are OK.

While visiting a Buddhist shrine, dress respectfully – cover shoulders and knees. Shorts are also fine as long as they are knee-length.

While praying, don't go counter-clockwise around stupas. It's considered to bring bad luck.

Respect the locals

Expect homeless alm seekers in all the temples, shrines, and public places.

Though this can get annoying after a while, just be mindful that Nepal is a poor country. Old people who are abandoned by their families have nowhere to go and turn to the streets for begging.

It's okay to throw a penny to them, as it might help them get their next meal. However, it's discouraged to provide for children begging on the streets, as this might encourage them to pursue this as a career.

No whistling

We know the latest Taylor Swift song is annoyingly catchy, but keep in mind that it's considered inauspicious and bad luck to whistle inside the house.



Mahadev Rojas Torres x2

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Travel Safety

Tourism is a mainstay of the local economy, and coupled with the natural friendliness and religious nature of the local people, Nepal is a relatively safe country for travelers. But, as with all journeys, it's important to be prepared before you go.

Bribes and corruption

There are a number of checkpoints run by the police in **Kathmandu** and throughout Nepal. Sometimes, attempts are made close to these border posts to extort money from foreigners.

Another increasing problem are attempts to set up partnerships with foreign visitors. Be vigilant and avoid offering to carry jewelry to a "business contact" overseas in exchange for payment. Alert the local police if you are approached.

Drugs and drug smuggling are also taken very seriously in Nepal. Even



small amounts of marijuana can result in a five-year jail sentence. Never get involved in drugs in Nepal.

Common scams

Always keep your credit card with you and don't let it out of your sight when making purchases. Travelers have returned to find thousands of dollars of internet porn charges on their cards after it'd been skimmed.

When taking a taxi, ask the driver to use the meter. Many refuse and then try and charge exorbitant rates, so agree on the fare before you get into the cab.

Another common scam in Nepal is when a child approaches tourists and asks them to buy some milk for a baby.

When the tourist goes to the shop, they are charged an inflated sum of money. Afterwards, the milk is returned by the kid to the shop where both share in the profits.

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When taking a taxi, ask the driver to use the meter.



Mahadev Rojas Torres



One way of breaking the scam is to open the bottle for the child, which will then benefit the children.

There are some dance bars in Nepal, particularly in Kathmandu, where tourists are charged large amounts for drinks and harassed. It's also advisable not to leave any drinks unattended because drink spiking, leading to robbery, does happen.

Theft in Nepal

Theft is becoming a problem in Nepal, and there have been incidents of trekkers being confronted by groups of men demanding money, as well as muggings and robberies in the cities.

Always be vigilant as to where your belongings are, and don't leave your valuables on display.

Festival season – between October and November – sees a proportionate increase of crime in Nepal.



Have a designated emergency contact at home who knows your itinerary.

Earthquake safety

Nepal is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries. Unsafe buildings, patchy disaster response systems, and difficult terrain add to the risks.

Before you leave, register your travel plans with your government, and have a designated emergency contact at home who knows your itinerary.

When you arrive, take note of safe areas near your accommodation. They should be open spaces away from overhanging buildings, trees, powerlines, and bridges. Keep your phone, some food, water, water purification tablets, money, first aid kit, charged power bank, important phone numbers, and documents like your passport and travel insurance policy in your daypack. This will be a basic emergency kit.

If an earthquake does occur, crouch on the ground, cover your head with your arms, and hold on as soon as you feel the ground shaking.

If you're inside, take cover under a sturdy piece of furniture, or against an inside wall. Keep away from windows and anything that could fall on you, especially





Dashain Festival

heavy furniture. If you're in bed, stay there and cover your head with a pillow. If you're outside, find an open place.

After the earthquake, immediately move to your safe area, taking your emergency kit with you. Don't go into buildings as the aftershocks can be nearly as strong as the initial earthquake.

Get in touch with your embassy and emergency contact to tell them where you are, but conserve your phone's battery.

If you're trapped in rubble, keep still to avoid stirring up dust and save your energy; only call for help when you can hear people nearby.

Bargaining in Nepal

Although travelers don't have a habit of bargaining back home, it's a culture of Asian markets to do so, and permeates almost everything in Nepal. Don't hesitate to bargain and negotiate the prices down – you'll get more respect from the locals.

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Rebuilding Nepal: The Australian Himalayan Foundation

When the 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal on 25th April 2015, it caused nearly 9,000 deaths and destroyed countless lives, livelihoods, homes, and infrastructure.

The second earthquake, which hit on May 2015, was even more damaging – devastating hundreds of remote communities in the extremely poor (and under-resourced) region of the lower Solukhumbu.

Over 35,000 classrooms were damaged, leaving more than a million children without a safe, permanent place to learn.

The Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF) – one of our Footprints Network Partners – were one of the first NGOs on the ground to provide relief assistance in the form of food and other essential supplies.

With more than 200 of the 300+ schools supported by AHF's flagship Teacher Training & Quality Education Program in urgent need of rebuilding or repair, they leapt to action and provided 19 temporary learning spaces.

Using contemporary seismic design principals, and working with the pro bono assistance of Australian engineering and architectural firms, the AHF pioneered an innovative, lightweight, steel-frame design for schools. Using this technology, they have so far completed the repair and retrofit of 20 classrooms in five schools, with a further 18 planned over the next 12 months.

Today, reconstruction continues across Nepal and the country is getting back on its feet. Trekking trails in the Everest and Annapurna regions are open and clear, and the seven UNESCO World Heritage cultural sites across the Kathmandu Valley, including Bhaktapur, have also reopened.

Now, more than ever, Nepal needs support of tourism as it rebuilds, so the best way for travelers to support the country is to visit.

Learn more about the AHF at www.australianhimalayanfoundation.org.au

Getting Around

They say that the best things never come easy, and the same can definitely be said about traveling around Nepal. Although the distances are not especially far, given the mountainous terrain, unpredictable weather, and old vehicles, getting around Nepal can be quite the challenge.

Always plan ahead

Whether you choose to fly, travel by bus, taxi, motorbike, or even hitch-hike, the biggest rule is to play it safe. It's always worth planning your route before you travel and allowing yourself extra days on either side of flights, treks, or tours. Roadblocks, breakdowns, and landslides are not uncommon, and these can all result in unexpectedly long journeys.

Air travel

Flying is the transport of choice



Cassie Wilkins



Lukla Airport

for many visitors. It's certainly the fastest way to travel across Nepal. When faced with the prospect of a cramped 24-hour bus ride, shelling out US \$100 for an internal flight certainly seems like a small price to pay! Although, as flights are especially weather-dependent, they can often be cancelled, rearranged, or redirected at the last minute. It's always worth bearing this in mind if you're planning a tour or a trek.

Bus travel

The most popular form of transport in Nepal, the humble bus ride, can quickly turn into a rollercoaster of epic proportions. Take your pick of minibus, local bus, or tourist bus, squeeze into a seat or climb up top and settle in for an often sweaty and uncomfortable (but incredibly scenic) ride. Prices vary hugely, but for the 210km long journey

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The most popular form of transport in Nepal, the humble bus ride, can quickly turn into a rollercoaster of epic proportions.

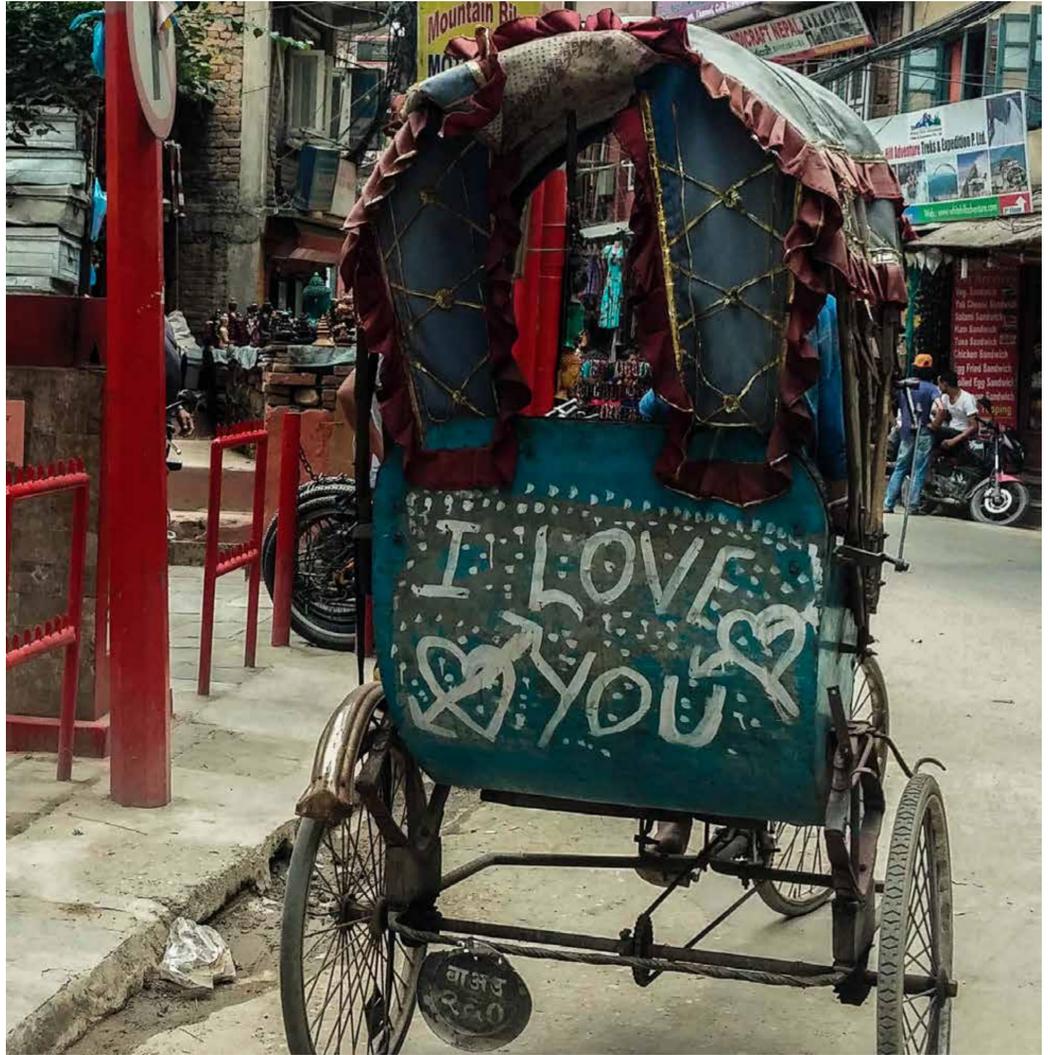
from **Kathmandu** to **Pokhara** (6-11h), you can expect to pay anywhere from US \$5 for a local bus to US \$30 for a luxury tourist bus with AC and Wi-Fi.

Motorcycle

Nepal's mountain roads are ideal for experienced motor biking enthusiasts, with rates normally starting at around Rs. 500 a day for a scooter. Just be sure to check that your insurance covers you for riding motorcycles before you head off into the hills.

Private car

A private car is considerably faster than a bus and a lot more comfortable and convenient. If you're traveling with family or a group of friends, this might be the better option. It's also possible to hire cars for multi-day trips around Nepal from US \$60 a day, including fuel and a driver. Top tip: If you're trying



Cassie Wilkins

to get from a smaller village to a main city, you can always try and flag down a private car. Passengers usually have to pay the return fare, even if they are only going one-way, so the drivers are often more than willing to pick you up for a heavily-discounted rate.

Taxis and rickshaws

Mostly found in the bigger cities, Nepali taxis can be hired for local or long-distance journeys and are ideal for exploring the **Kathmandu Valley**.

Although most taxis have meters, drivers are generally reluctant to use them, and you'll have to negotiate for the lowest rates.

These days, rickshaws are only really found in Kathmandu and the **Terai**. A pleasant and scenic way to travel through the winding streets, a ride in a rickshaw is often a tourist attraction in itself.

A view of the Annapurnas range from Bandipur



Mahadev Rojas Torres

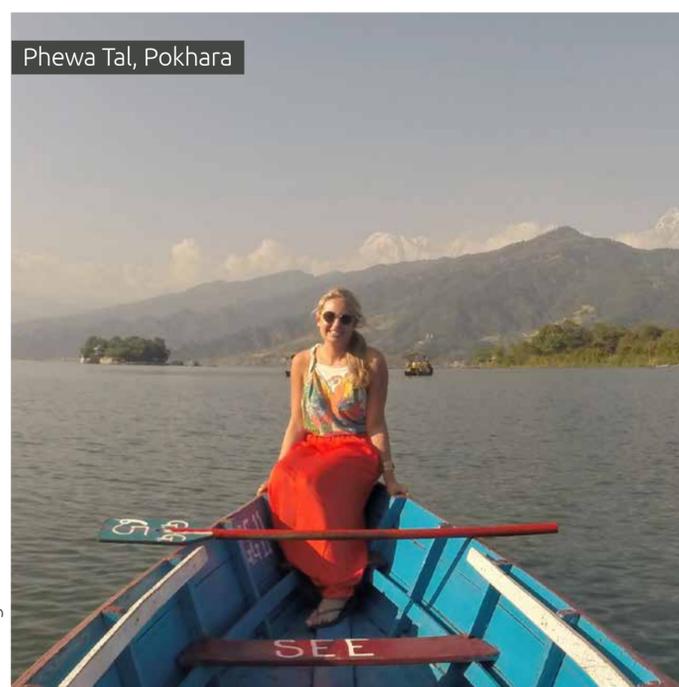
Visas and Vaccinations

With just under 600,000 visitors every year, Nepal is used to the influx of travelers, so they've made things easy when it comes to obtaining visas. But there are still a few details you need to know before you go.

Visas on arrival

Visitors of most nationalities can obtain a visa on arrival (by air or by land). Simply fill in some forms, wave your passport, flash some cash, and you'll generally be crossing over with no problems. Of course, there are some fine prints, but it's all pretty straightforward.

You must have over 6 months' validity remaining in your passport after your planned return date, and you need a passport-sized photograph along with the visa fee in US\$ (for overland crossings) or equivalent international foreign currency on arrival in **Tribhuvan Airport**.



Phewa Tal, Pokhara

Jamie-Leigh Hecht



Dashain Festival

It's not possible to use Indian Rupees, Nepalese Rupees or credit card to pay for the visa.

There are only twelve nationalities who aren't eligible for visas on arrival: Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iraq, Liberia, Nigeria, Palestine, Somalia, Syria, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. Indian nationals don't require a visa to enter Nepal and visitors from other South Asian countries and China will be granted one free 30-day visa per calendar year.

Types of visas

There are three options for visas on arrival: 15/30/90 day visas at US \$25/40/100 respectively. It's easy to extend your visa in-country too, and visitors can stay for a maximum of 150 days in any calendar year (January 1st to December 31st).

If you're planning a side trip to Tibet,

“““

Visitors can stay for a maximum of 150 days in any calendar year.



Bhutan, or India, it's worth paying US \$20 to upgrade your single-entry visa to a multiple-entry visa at the **Kathmandu Central Immigration Office**.

Fast-track your visa

To avoid queuing at immigration, you can speed up your visa application process by applying for a visa from your nearest Nepalese embassy, or completing the application form online before your departure.

Just bear in mind that the slightly chaotic nature of TIA Airport means that you'll probably end up waiting just as long for your bags at the luggage claim belt.

For up-to-date visa information, please visit: www.nepalimmigration.gov.np

Required vaccinations

No immunizations are required to visit

“““
You can speed up your visa application process by applying for a visa from your nearest Nepalese embassy.”””

Nepal, but it's always worth checking which vaccinations are recommended and ensuring you're up-to-date with all your booster jabs.

Although you can get vaccinations in **Kathmandu**, it's generally better (and often cheaper) to get them before you travel.

Either way, it's always worth consulting with your local doctor or nurse for up-to-date travel and inoculation advice at least 6 weeks before your planned departure date.

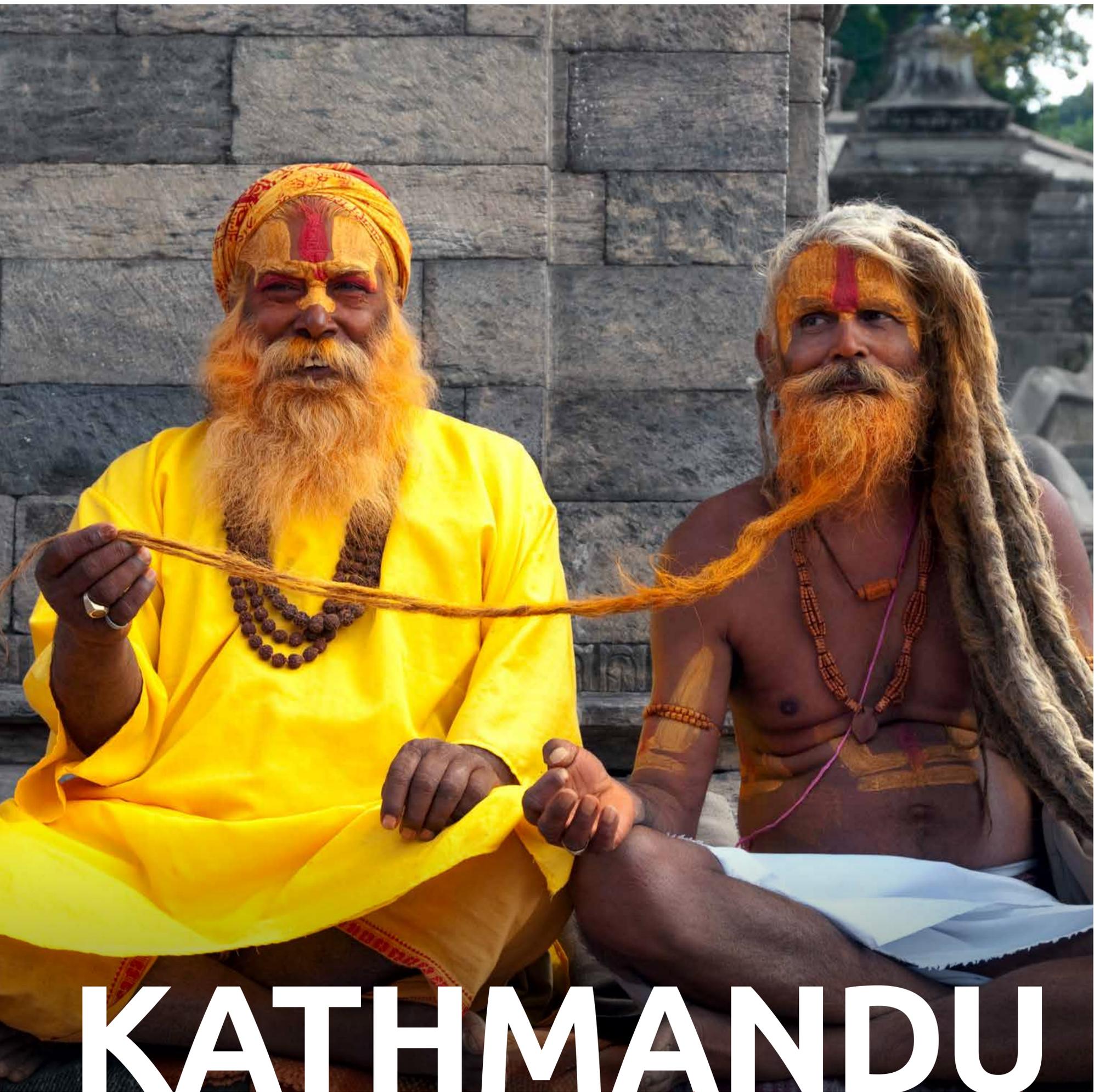
Recommended vaccinations

The main recommended vaccinations for Nepal are Hepatitis A, Typhoid, and Meningitis. Boosters are also recommended for Tetanus, Polio, Mumps, and Measles.

Depending on your travel plans, you may also consider inoculations against Japanese Encephalitis, Hepatitis B, and Rabies. This is especially important if you have young children, are coming for an extended period of time, working in health care, or visiting rural areas and the **Terai**.



Jamie-Leigh Hecht



KATHMANDU

and Surrounds

The capital of Nepal is choked with bustling rickshaw-lined streets, fragrant with incense, and populated by UNESCO World Heritage Hindu, Buddhist, and Newari temples. It's enough to awe even the most seasoned travelers. But step outside the chaotic city and explore the terraced rice fields and the sacred towns around Kathmandu valley too. Discover centuries-old, medieval towns of Patan, Bodhanath, and Bhaktapur to get a taste of authentic, local Newari Culture, and get ready to be transported to another time.

KATHMANDU

Must See and Do

Swayambhunath

Swayambhunath – or the **Monkey Temple** as it's commonly referred to – is an incredible place to soak up views of the Himalayas and the stretching sea of colorful houses. The traditional Buddhist stupa is second in importance only to Boudhanath in Nepal. It's definitely worth the long walk up the stone-cut staircase.

Boudhanath (Boudha)

Boudhanath is undoubtedly one of the most incredible sites in Nepal, and arguably one of the most important Buddhist sites in the world.

When you're inside, make sure you walk clockwise – or sunwise as it was originally referred to – around the Stupa. Spin the prayer wheels as such too, it's offensive to do the opposite.

Thamel

Thamel is the central tourist district in **Kathmandu**. Here you'll literally find everything you need for your Nepalese adventure.

If the shopping doesn't interest you, check out the impressive variety of restaurants. Try the vegetarian-friendly **Places Restaurant**. After a long trek, the chocolate soufflé will blow your mind! Also, don't be shy – try some Nepali dishes at one of the many traditional restaurants.

Coffee lovers can find warm coffee and tasty cakes at **Himalayan Java**.



Entrance to Swayambhunath

Inside Thamel, you can find ample amounts of live music, food, clothing, and trekking supplies, all within walking distance.

Pashupatinath

Pashupatinath is one of the most important places for Hindu people in Kathmandu, as it's where many of the city's Hindus are cremated.

Of course, it's important to practice the utmost sensitivity when witnessing the cremations.

For those who visit, you'll find a surprisingly serene and thoughtful atmosphere, populated mostly by men clad entirely in white with shaved heads, except for a small tuft at the back.

These mourners will spend up to two weeks - sometimes more – in the temple to grieve for their loved ones.

Kathmandu Durbar Square

This is one of the best places to see ancient Newari carvings, which are both beautiful and incredibly intricate.

It's a UNESCO heritage site, along with other Newari sites like **Patan** and **Bhaktapur**.

4 MUSTS

Our Insider's Pick of Kathmandu's Top 4 Local Experiences:

- Get a haircut! Seriously, it's quite the experience and it usually comes with a bonus shoulder massage.
- Visit **Jazz Upstairs** on Wednesday nights – very worthwhile.
- Go climbing at **Astrek Climbing wall** in Thamel.
- Take a language class – Nepali is surprisingly easy to learn the basics.

Day Trips from Kathmandu

There's plenty to see inside Kathmandu, but while you're in Nepal, you've got to catch a glimpse of the beautiful landscape and the Himalayas. From mountain biking to hiking, here are the best day trips to explore more of this incredible part of the world.

Bhaktapur

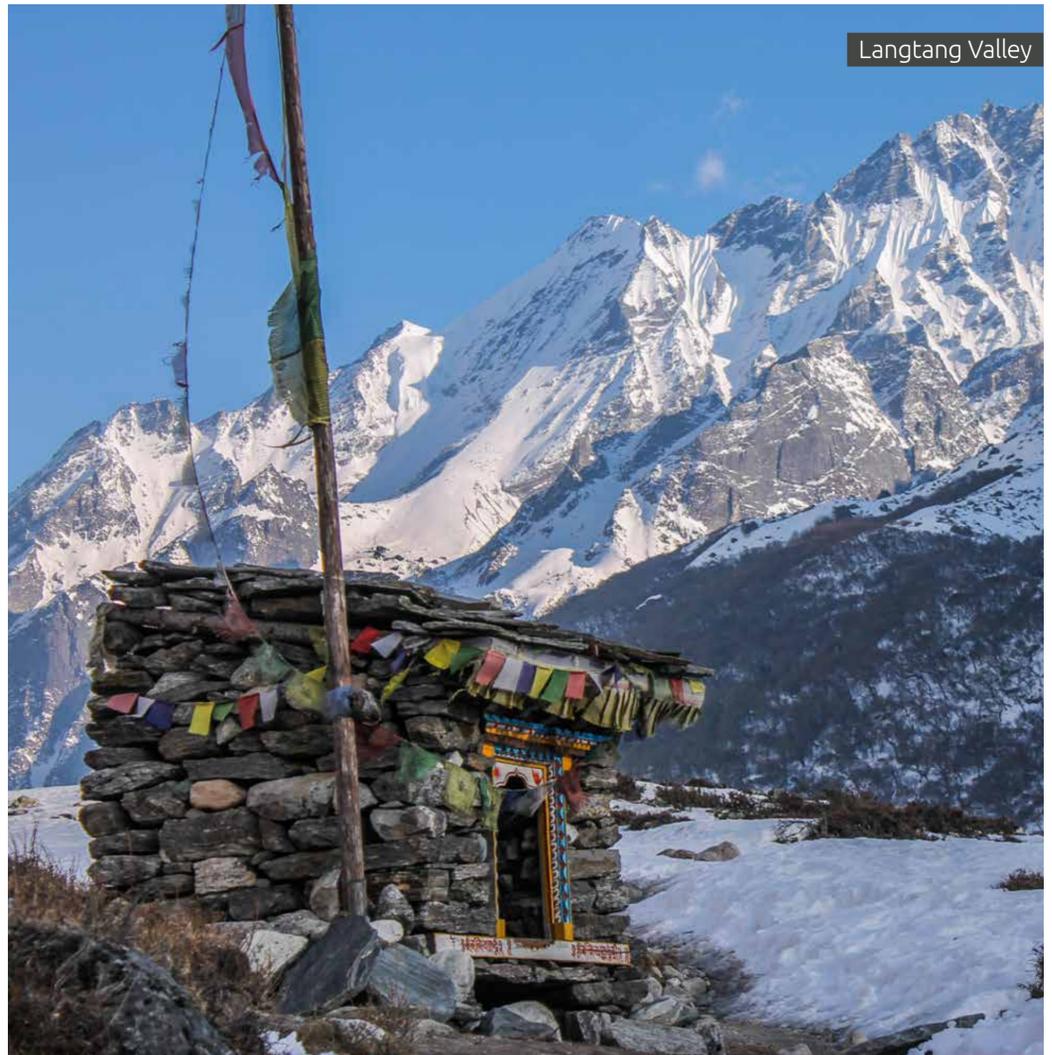
In the past, **Bhaktapur** was a cultural, political, and economic powerhouse of the Newari kingdom, which ruled over **Kathmandu Valley**. It's a must-see sight in Nepal, and is located roughly 13kms from the center of **Kathmandu**.

Bhaktapur is said to have the most temples per square kilometer in all of Nepal, and is an excellent place to shop for traditional handmade art and souvenirs.



Swayambhunath

Jase Wilson



Langtang Valley

Jase Wilson

Get a Rs. 50 bus ticket from the **Ratna Park bus stop**, close to **Thamel**, and expect the trip to take around an hour.

Alternatively, pay around Rs. 1,500 for a taxi to go one-way, but don't forget to bargain.

Patan (Lalitpur)

Patan is the center of fine art, as well as Hindu and Buddhist culture, and is one of the three ancient Royal Cities of the Kathmandu Valley alongside Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

Here, you'll see architecture and handicrafts similar to those in Bhaktapur. However it's much closer to Thamel and is today more-or-less located inside Kathmandu, on the south side of the **Bagmati River**. Don't miss the UNESCO World Heritage listed **Patan Durbar Square**.

Taking a taxi from Thamel should cost less than Rs. 500-600.

““

Bhaktapur is said to have the most temples per square kilometer in all of Nepal.



Jase Wilson

“Generally, the Eastern side of Kathmandu Valley provides some of the most attractive bike routes.”

Mountain biking around Kathmandu

Renting a mountain bike in Kathmandu is relatively easy, with many shops in Thamel offering guided trips or bikes for rent. Himalayan Single Track, for example, rents bikes for US \$25 a day, and is the best source of information regarding routes.

Generally, the Eastern side of Kathmandu Valley provides some of the most attractive routes. These can be explored from **Panauti**, or **Dhulikel**, **Nagarkot**, as well as **Shivapuri National Park** to the north.

Hiking Shivapuri National Park

Just outside of Kathmandu is a 3,000m peak with stunning views of Kathmandu Valley. The hike is quite steep and goes along cut stone steps almost the entire way.

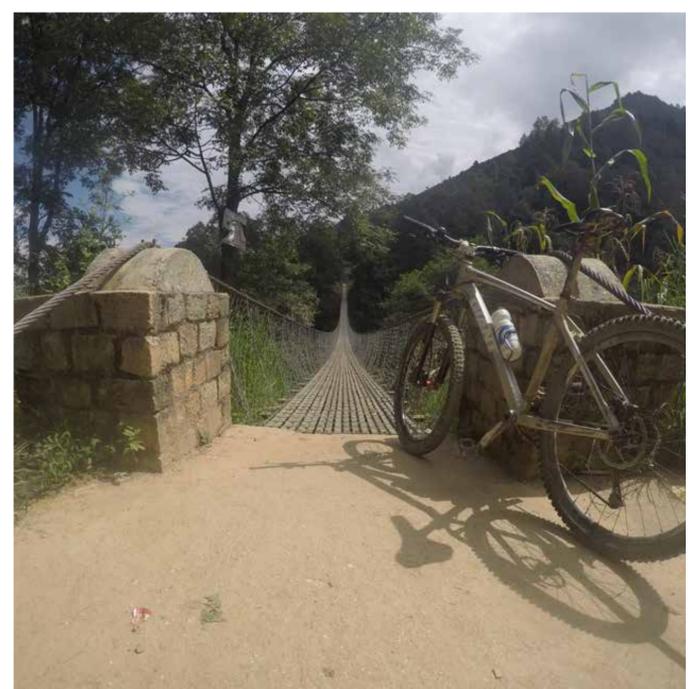
Getting to Shivapuri requires either a 1h mountain bike ride or a Rs. 1,000 taxi. The views and trails are worth it!

Leave early if you're planning a day trip here – it's a full day of adventure.

Rock climbing around Hattiban

Head down to **Astrek Climbing Wall** to ask about rock climbing day trips.

The closest rock climbing area to



Samantha McMahon



the city is **Hattiban**, which is located very close to the beautiful **Neydo Buddhist Monastery**, inhabited mostly by young children.

Yoga or meditation

The best places for yoga or mediation are Last Resort, Hattiban Resort and Neydo Monastery.

The forests surrounding Hattiban are a great place for walking, mountain biking, or going on a meditation retreat at the stunning Neydo Monastery.

Trekking in Langtang National Park

It's possible to do a short six-day trek to **Langtang National Park** from Kathmandu. The bus leaves from **Gongabu Bus Park** to **Syabrubesi**. It's best to use a travel agent to arrange the tickets the day before (at a fee). Be sure to bring your passport and arrange a TIMS trekking permit in advance.

The bus ride will take most of the first day, however, it's also possible to trek from Syabrubesi to **Kyanjin Gompa**, with views of Shishanpagnma and the **Langtang Himalayas** throughout.

“““
The forests surrounding Hattiban are a great place for walking, mountain biking, or going on a meditation retreat.

Getting Around Kathmandu

Local maps

If you fly in, pick up a free Kathmandu Valley map at the airport. Streets are not often named in Kathmandu except for major roads and in most cases, directions are given relative to the nearest *chowk*, or square. If you have a smartphone, download an offline version of Google Maps before you arrive to help navigate.

Getting around on foot

Traveling on foot is the best way to soak up the local atmosphere and explore a specific area, but be warned – it's not always a pleasant walk. Opt for public transport to get between places of interest.

Rickshaws and taxis

Rickshaws can be found around Thamel and taxis are parked near all major streets. All taxis have meters and you should insist on it being used. Before 9pm, rates start at Rs. 14 and after 9pm, they are Rs. 21. If a driver uses his meter, it's courteous to tip up to a third of the metered price.

If you're heading out on a day trip, you can hire a taxi one-way. Expect to pay Rs. 300 one-way to Patan and Rs. 800 -1,200 to Bakhtapur from Thamel or the airport.

For longer trips and to hire a taxi by the day, negotiate directly with the driver. Haggles hard and if you're not satisfied with the rate, don't be afraid to walk away – there are plenty of other drivers who are willing to take you.

Getting around by bus

Blue and green buses loop around the city along the Ring Road and costs around Rs. 20-35 depending on the distance. These will take you to many of the main attractions.

Though there are very few signs, these are well set up for travelers and every bus has a cashier/attendant who can tell you where it stops and when you've arrived. The locals are usually also very friendly and helpful, so don't be afraid to ask around.

Buses for longer trips within the valley are also available to Patan, Bakhtapur and Boudhanath.



POKHARA

and Surrounds

Dubbed the "City of Lakes", this tranquil gateway to the Annapurna has something for every traveler. Grab a brightly-colored, handcrafted boat and float along the serene Phewa Lake; hike through small villages and jungles to Sarangkot Hill to watch the epic sunrise over the Himalayas; or get your heart pumping with world-class paragliding, complete with panoramic views of the snow-capped mountains... Whatever your adventure, there's plenty to discover in Pokhara.

POKHARA

Must See and Do

Paraglide in Sarangot

Attach yourself to a complete stranger, glide 8,000ft in the air surrounded by the Himalayan Mountains, and you won't be able to wipe the smile off your face. The 25-minute winding Jeep ride up the mountain to the peak of **Sarangot** is an experience like no other.

The adrenaline begins during this ride, with instructors pumping music through the speakers as you watch Pokhara valley get smaller and smaller while you travel higher and higher. Your allocated instructor gives you a quick run through of the procedure and suddenly, you're attached to him and you're running off a cliff – as crazy as that sounds.

Float along Phewa Tal

Surrounded by monkey-filled forests and snow-capped mountains, **Phewa Tal** or **Phewa Lake** is undoubtedly Pokhara's main attraction. Don't reserve just one day for this adventure – there's plenty to explore here.

The local community has preserved its beauty by restricting motorized boats from accessing the lake. You can rent a bright, hand-crafted wooden boat and sail in tranquility.

Don't miss a small stop-off at the **Barahi Temple**, situated in the center. It was built in honor of the deity *Ajima*, and the locals regularly make the trip on Saturday to worship her.



Ellen Turner

Hike to World Peace Pagoda (Shanti Pagoda)

Opened in 1999 atop a hill overlooking Phewa Tal, the tower offers great views of the **Annapurna mountains**, including **Fishtail, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna South, and Annapurna III**.

The easiest way to get here is via taxi (Rs. 1,000 return, including wait time), but you can also make it into a fantastic day trip. Head to the south side of Phewa Tal – either on foot or across the lake on boat – and follow a pretty steep hike through the forest.

Explore mystical caves

Caves hold secrets, history, and mystery. **Sita, Gupteshwor, Mehendra** and **Devi's Fall** caves are no exception.

The natural formations within these caves are precious to the locals and they regularly journey inside to worship.

One of the major attractions here is the adventure into the **Chameri Gufa** ("Bat Caves"), deep below **Pokhara city**.

Not only will you be among hundreds of sleeping bats, but you also get the true caving experience by climbing out the other end!

4 MUSTS

The museums you shouldn't miss...

Pokhara Museum

Learn more about the region you're traveling in, its history, and the lifestyle of the locals in Western Nepal.

The International Mountain Museum

Venture into historical records, documents, and journals of successful mountaineers who conquered eight of the mountain peaks above 8,000m in Nepal.

You can also try your climbing abilities here on their 6m-high rock.

Annapurna Regional Museum

Here, you'll find a large collection of flora and fauna living in the Annapurna area.

Gurkha Memorial Museum

This museum holds the historical record of the great Gurkha Army who fought on behalf of the United Kingdom and were famous for their fearless discipline and commitment.

Immerse yourself in their photos, stories, medals, and uniforms.

Day Trips from Pokhara

If you're an adventure-lover and prefer exploring the great outdoors, then base yourself in Pokhara over Kathmandu. From mountain biking, hiking, and paragliding, to simply enjoying the mountain views, there are lots of unforgettable experiences to be had around this lakeside city.

Day hikes

While **Pokhara** is a good start and end point for multi-day treks in the **Annapurna Himalayas**, there are also some good day hikes from the city.

The **Shanti Stupa** (aka **the Peace Pagoda**) lies to the east of the lake, and is perfect for a half-day trip. This white structure was built in 1973 by a Japanese Buddhist organization.

There are various ways to hike here:



Ellen Turner

Begnas Lake



Annapurna Trek

one of the best is to take a boat to the starting point and walking through forest for about 30min.

At the top are great views across the city, lake, and mountains.

For something longer and more challenging, hike up to **Sarangkot**, on the western side of the lake. This is a much higher lookout point.

The hike here will take you through small villages and farmland, and the views of the Annapurna on the other side of the hill are spectacular on a clear day.

Mountain biking

Mountain bikes can be rented in Pokhara and are a fantastic way to explore the unique landscape of Pokhara Valley. Hiring a guide is a good idea, but not essential for all routes.

Circling **Fewa Lake** is a great way to exercise the legs and lungs, and

“”

There are various ways to hike here: one of the best is to take a boat to the starting point.

Miya Gaon



Ellen Turner

“
For a taste of white water rafting and kayaking, head to the Upper Seti.

the path is fairly straightforward. This route takes about five hours, or can be extended by taking smaller paths beneath Sarangkot.

For a longer ride, there's a fine road, paved only in its earliest sections, following the ridge between two beautiful lakes, **Rupa Tal** and **Begnas Tal**, and then westwards to **Besisahar**. This network of trails can be explored in one or several days, so enquire at Pokhara bike shops to plan your ride.

White water rafting and kayaking in Upper Seti

For a taste of white water rafting and kayaking, head to the **Upper Seti**, about 45 mins drive from Pokhara. Its name comes from the whitish waters.

The river has some technical rapids that will be a good challenge for experienced kayakers.

The views of the Annapurna

Himalayas at the starting point are impressive, and the river follows a shallow gorge. Water levels are most suitable in October-November.

Rupakot

About an hour's drive from Pokhara is the stunning **Rupakot Resort**. A day trip here is worthwhile for the million-dollar views.

Perched high above **Rupa** and





Begnas Lakes, and with an expansive view of the snow-capped Annapurna Himalayas and terraced farmland below, the views from Rupakot are of the kind that you can usually only get when trekking in the area.

You can also hike the 90 mins round-trip to the nearby **Miya Gaon**, unusual in these parts for being a Muslim village.

Begnas Lake, located below Miya Gaon, is also a quieter alternative to nearby Fewa Lake, in Pokhara.

Overnight trip: Lumbini

If you have a bit more time to spare and can stay overnight, visit **Lumbini**, on the plains. This is Buddha's birthplace. While the site was 'lost' for many centuries, nowadays it's been developed into a fascinating park, with Buddhist monasteries and temples built by many Buddhist countries and organizations.

If you're especially interested in archaeology, you might want to make the trip to **Tilaurakot**, to the west of Lumbini – the center of the ancient *Shakya* kingdom.

“”

The views from Rupakot are of the kind that you can usually only get when trekking in the area.

Getting Around Pokhara

Arriving to Pokhara

By far the most popular way to get to Pokhara is by bus from **Kathmandu**. These run from **Thamel** almost every 15 mins from 7:30am through to late afternoon. Night buses are available, but the ride is painful. Greenline operates a bus service every day for around USD \$23 with lunch included.

Yeti Airlines, Buddha Air, and Simrik Air are reputable airlines that operate regular flights (US \$117, 40 mins) – also from Kathmandu – that can be purchased online and at the last minute. The flights offer the benefit of a bird's eye view of the countryside and of the panoramic mountains themselves.

Exploring on foot

Pokhara's a fairly small city and can be easily explored on foot. Walking is necessary to get to places where vehicles or bicycles can't reach.

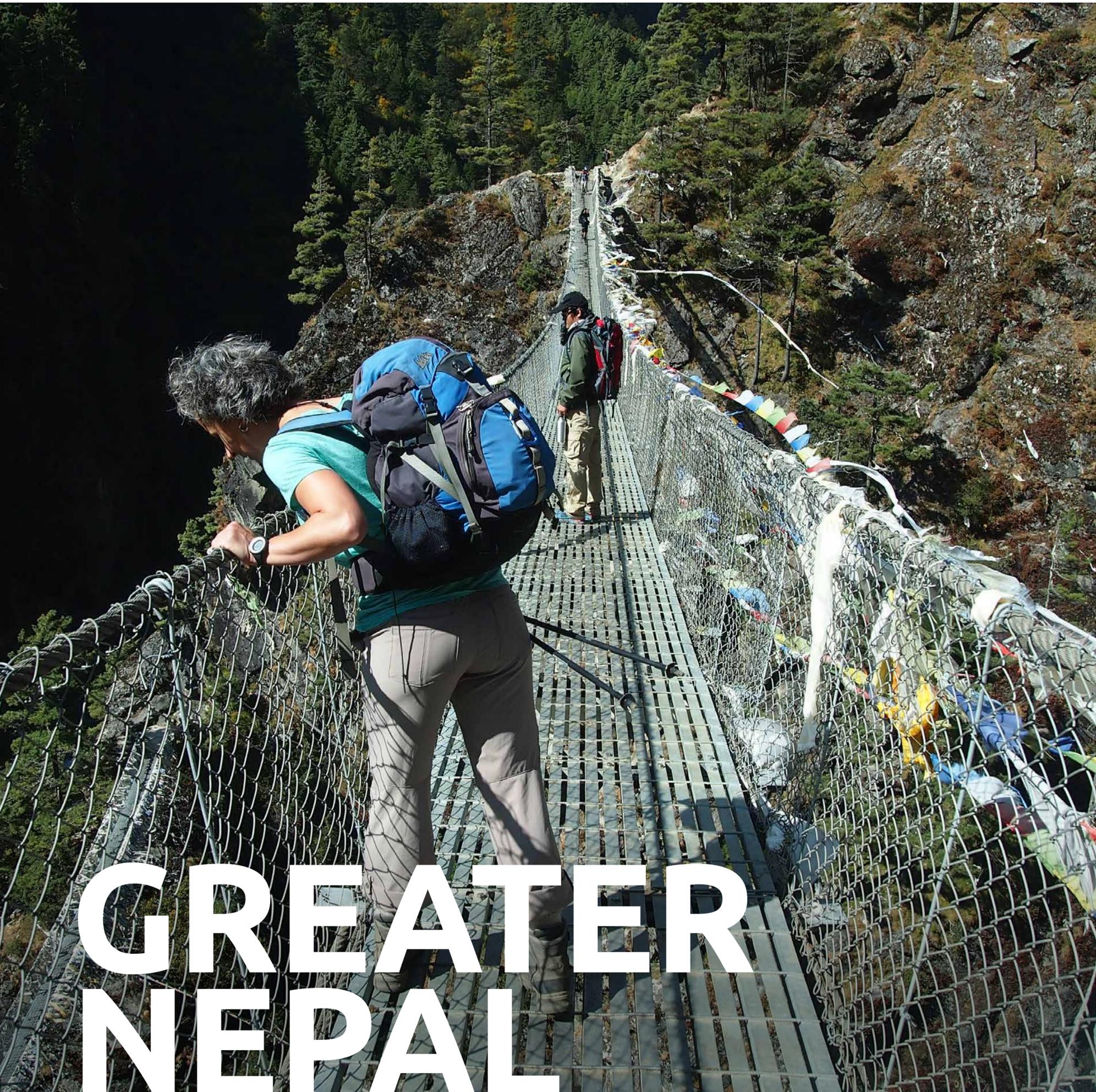
Bicycles, motorbikes, and scooters

Another great way to explore the city is by bicycle. These can be hired in **Lakeside** for around Rs.100-300 per day. Motorbikes and scooters are also available, but make sure you have a valid motorcycle license before you get on.

Local transport

Minivans operate on most of the popular routes and taxis are available throughout the city.





Ellen Turner

GREATER NEPAL

Most travelers heading to Nepal think only of its impressive mountains. They dream of summiting Mt Everest, or offering a prayer and dining with monks inside thousand-year-old monasteries perched atop impossible cliffs. But did you know, you can also go on safari to spot Bengal tigers, mountain bike through lush forests, and even go on multi-day kayaking adventures? With over 16 national parks, wildlife reserves, and conservation areas with abundant biodiversity, it's time to head into the jungle and uncover a different side of Nepal.

Nepal's Top National Parks

Whatever kind of natural experience you're after, chances are you'll find it in Nepal. In the jungle national parks of Chitwan and Bardia, you can come face-to-face with rhinos and maybe even spot a tiger. In the Everest region, be awed by numerous peaks above 6,000m. And in the remote far west of the country, you can get away from it all – including other people.

Jungle parks and reserves

Located on the hot, jungly plains of Nepal, the **Chitwan** and **Bardia National Parks**, and the **Koshi Tappu** and **Parsa Wildlife Reserves** are ideal ways to get up close and personal with wildlife in Nepal.

Chitwan National Park has run



Ellen Turner



Sagarmatha National Park

Ellen Turner

extremely successful rhino conservation efforts, and there are now more than 600 of the great animals in the park.

Busy **Sauraha** is the most popular point of access, but there are quieter lodges and homestays spread throughout the region.

The **Barauli Community Homestay**, in particular, allows you to get to know the local *Tharu* people, as well as join wildlife safaris.

Although previously decimated in the decade-long Maoist insurgency, the Bardia National Park in the far west is recovering well, and is a good place to look for Royal Bengal Tigers.

A visit here can be combined with a ten-day white water rafting trip down the **Karnali River**.

The **Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve**, in the east, is a bird-spotter's dream, with 439 species of birds living in and around the marshes and wetlands.

“”

The Bardia National Park in the far west is recovering well, and is a good place to look for Royal Bengal Tigers.

GREATER NEPAL

The **Parsa Wildlife Reserve**, which is adjacent to Chitwan, used to be a royal hunting reserve, but is now Nepal's largest protected area for wildlife. It's particularly notable for its tropical and subtropical forests.

Around Kathmandu

For a quick trip from **Kathmandu** city, the **Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park** is the best option.

Though split in two between **Shivapuri** in the north, and **Nagarjun** in the west, the main point of interest is the Shivapuri entrance, by the town of **Budhanilkantha**.

Stop here to check out the **Floating Vishnu Statue** surrounded by serpents, and then hike in the park.

Leopards are occasionally seen in the area, though it's unlikely you'll encounter them in the day.

“““
If you're not on a tight budget, helicopter tours are a stunning way to witness the grandeur of the landscape and move around quickly.



Samantha McMahon

Mountain parks and reserves

The **Sagarmatha National Park** is the area around **Mt. Everest** (known as **Sagarmatha** in Nepali).

Completing the **Everest Base Camp trek** is one way to see the park, as is the Gokyo Lakes trek.

If you're not on a tight budget, helicopter tours are a stunning way to witness the grandeur of the landscape and move around quickly.

Aside from the mountains, the bird life is especially important in this park, and you can see Nepal's national bird, the colorful danphe.

Within the **Dhaulagiri Himalayas** is the **Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve**.

Although extremely isolated – you can trek for three days here and not encounter a settlement – Dhorpatan is a stunning place to incorporate treks between **Upper Dolpo** and the **Annapurna** region.

It's the only hunting reserve in Nepal, and is home to a large variety of mammals, including the elusive snow leopards, red pandas, musk deers, and blue sheep.



Samantha McMahon

Sunrise in Bandipur

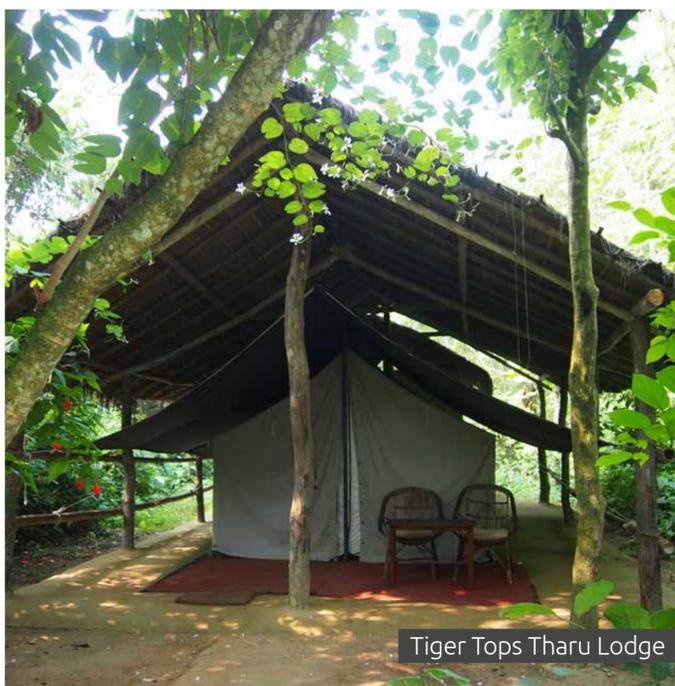
Safari Experiences

While people flock to Africa to see the Big Five, Nepal has its own wildlife safari: rhinoceros, elephants, tigers, gharial crocodiles, deer, and an abundance of bird-life. When you've had your fill of the mountains, head south to the national parks and wildlife reserves on the plains. The best time to visit the jungle is between October and March.

Spot rhinos, elephants, and crocodiles

The **Chitwan National Park**, accessible from **Kathmandu** and **Pokhara**, has run a very successful rhinoceros conservation project.

In 2016, it celebrated the second consecutive 'zero-poaching' year, and has roughly doubled its population of one-horned rhinoceros in the past decade.



Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge

Elen Turner



Now, there are more than 600 of the enormous animals in the park, and you're guaranteed to see at least one.

Other animals and birds live in and around the park, including elephants, gharial crocodiles, deer, and vultures.

There are various ways to go on safari in Chitwan, including on foot, via jeep, by ox cart, or on elephant back, although the latter is not ethically recommended.

While many tourists flock to busy **Sauraha**, there are some more peaceful and eco-friendly ways of experiencing the park:

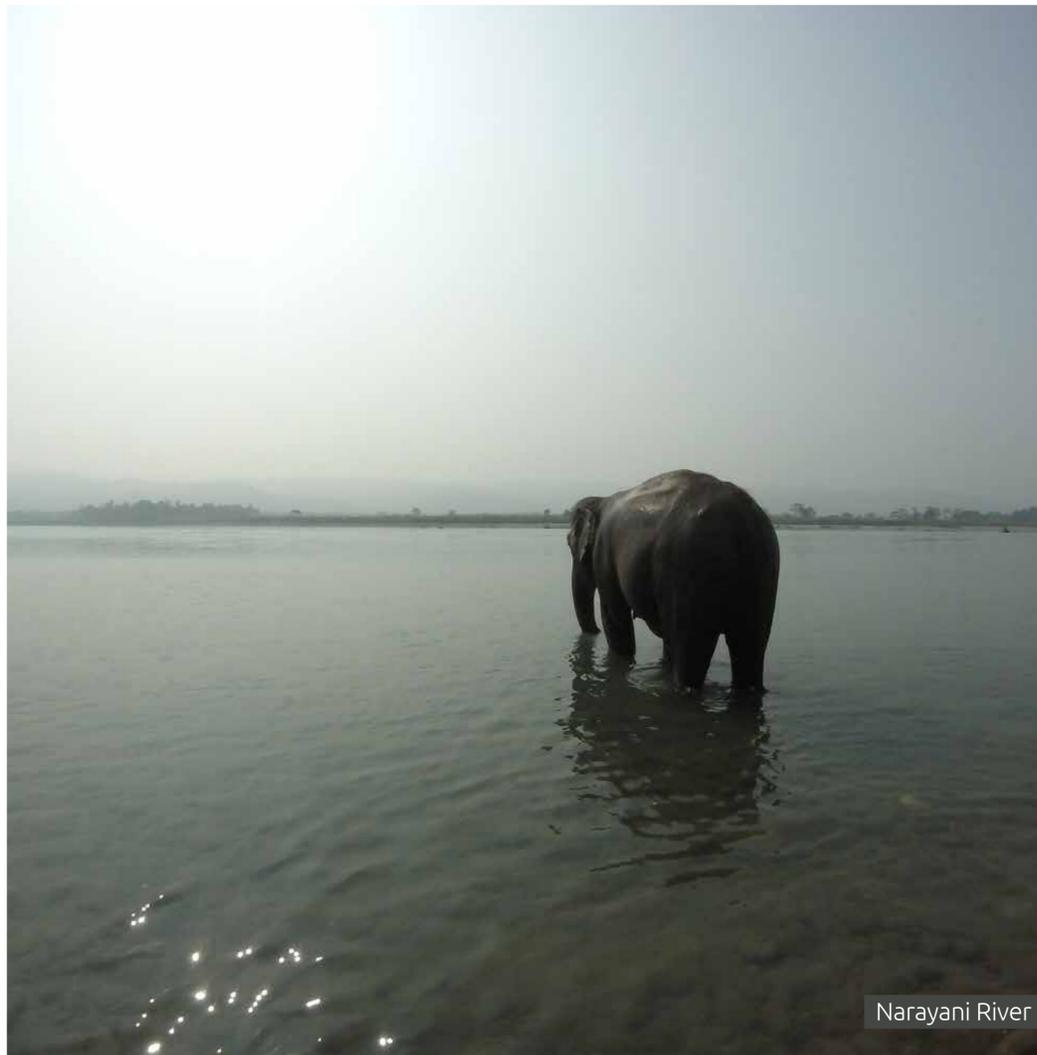
Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge

Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, on the edge of Chitwan, offers a range of lovely safari options.

Traveling through the jungle on an ox cart is much quieter than going in a motorized vehicle, and is far less disruptive to the wildlife. You are more

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Traveling through the jungle on an ox cart is much quieter than going in a motorized vehicle, and is far less disruptive to the wildlife.



Elen Turner

Narayani River

likely to see shy animals this way. You can also take on-foot safaris.

Barauli Community Homestay

Stay at the **Barauli Community Homestay** to learn about the local *Tharu* people and experience the jungle at a slower pace.

Join the Homestay's own jeep tours within the park, or take a sunset bicycle tour down to the banks of the **Narayani River**.

Tiger Tops Elephant Camp

The ethics of elephant tourism in Asia are problematic, but Tiger Tops Elephant Camp was developed in consultation with professional elephant welfare experts.

Guests stay in permanent tents close to the animals, and help with feeding and bathing, as well as collect grass for these majestic creatures.

“Guests stay in permanent tents close to the animals, and help with feeding and bathing.”

Spot tigers in Bardia National Park

Bardia National Park, in the far west of Nepal, is less crowded than Chitwan, so offers a more rugged safari experience.

While Royal Bengal Tigers live in various parts of Nepal, and are pretty elusive, you have a chance of spotting them here.

The **Karnali River** runs very close to Bardia, so a unique way of experiencing this park is to combine it with a ten-day white water rafting trip down the Karnali.

Bird watching in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Bird enthusiasts will love **Koshi Tappu** on Nepal's eastern plains. It also makes for an excellent day trip from **Pokhara**.

The wetland area is home to over 400 bird species. You can spot various species of storks, ducks, geese, eagles, terns, lapwings, kingfishers and more.

Tented camps – both luxury and quite basic – have been set up in the area, and cater specifically to bird watchers.



Chitwan National Park

Samantha McMahon

Adventure Activities

If you love adventure and adventure sports, Nepal is your playground. With the mighty Himalayas, fast flowing rivers, safaris and jungles, world famous thermal, and more, you'll be spoilt for choice here.

Trekking in Nepal

Famous for being home to the world's highest mountain, Nepal is one of the top destinations for trekkers and mountaineers from all around the world.

The **Everest Base Camp** and **Annapurna Circuit** are perhaps the two most well know treks in Nepal, however the options are endless.

When you're on one of the many trails in any of the Himalayan regions of Nepal, you'll be constantly in awe and pinching yourself to make sure what you're seeing is actually real – so make sure you bring a camera.

For more on trekking, head to the Trekking in Nepal section of this guide to get you started!

Mountaineering in Nepal

If you're feeling even more adventurous or want something more challenging than trekking, Nepal is also the perfect place to learn and try mountaineering.

There are many experienced guides who will take you to "trekking peaks" and teach you some of the basics of mountaineering, while being exposed to some of the most amazing views the



Samantha McMahon

world has to offer. If you're already a keen mountaineer, this will be your paradise.

White water rafting in Nepal

From these mountains flow numerous fast-flowing rivers, which means some of the best white water rafting in the world. There are a variety of grades to tackle on the river with multiple or single-day trips available.

The **Bhote Kosi** is a couple of hours north east of **Kathmandu**, and is perfect for a day trip. The landscape here is dominated by mid-sized hills and lots of little farming villages along the bank.

The other option from Kathmandu is **Trisuli**, about three hours west of the city. This popular river is open for rafting all year round.

From **Pokhara**, the best single-day white water rafting trip is on the **Upper Seti**. This offers challenging rapids for rafters and kayakers in the October/November season where you can pass through a gorge with the high **Annapurna Himalayas** looming above.

For a longer adventure, the **Sun Kosi**, known as the "river of gold", is an eight-day trip. It passes through high hills and

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You'll be constantly in awe and pinching yourself to make sure what you are seeing is actually real.

TIPS FOR BOOKING A RAFTING TRIP

When booking a trip, take note of the ratio of safety kayakers to rafters.

Some companies try to save costs by reducing the number of safety kayakers, but if anything goes wrong on the water, you'll want plenty of these guys around.

GREATER NEPAL

dense jungle, and the rapids are mostly mid-sized.

If you want to combine trekking with rafting, try the 12-day **Tamur River**. The first three days involve trekking high in the mountains. The river itself is challenging, and best suited to experienced rafters.

Canyoning in Jaibire Canyon

Why not turn your rafting trip into a two-day water adventure and add canyoning in **Jalibire Canyon** to the fun.

Here, you can enjoy repelling down beautiful waterfalls, sliding down mother nature's water slides, and take a plunge into the waterhole to work your way through the canyon.

It'll keep the adrenalin pumping and a nervous smile on your face.

Thermal paragliding in Pokhara

Another thing Nepal – or more specifically, **Pokhara** – is famous for is its thermal, which makes for paragliding heaven. Soaring on top of the hills in **Sarangkot** with an incredible view of the Himalayas is an experience you won't soon forget. If you are a real adventure-lover, you can also ask your pilot to do some acro-moves to test out the strength of your stomach.

Mountain biking around Nepal

With the majestic Himalayas as a backdrop – or for the more adventurous bike riders, part of the trail – it's easy to see why there's a boom in mountain biking as an attraction for travelers and locals alike.

For those who are relatively fit, are experienced riders, or those looking to challenge themselves tremendously, **Upper Mustang** and the **Annapurna Circuit** are popular multi-day mountain biking destinations. These may involve some tough climbing, but will reward you with some exhilarating downhill slopes.

If multi-day trips at high altitude sound a bit daunting, the **Kathmandu valley** might be for you. This ride becomes a unique cultural experience, as you pedal through local villages and see places that are less frequented by tourists. If you're based in the capital, check out the trails among **Shivapuri National Park**.

Pokhara also offers numerous options. If you've just finished a trek and want to enjoy Pokhara's relaxing atmosphere, hire a bike and enjoy a nice flat ride around the famous **Fewa Lake**.

If you're looking for more of a challenge, head into a bike shop near **Lakeside** and speak to the local guides who will take you to some of the more difficult trails.

Jungle safaris in Nepal

It might not come to mind when you think of Nepal, but **Chitwan National Park**, in the country's flat region, offers a jungle experience like no other.

Take a jeep or elephant safari, or if you're really brave, a walking safari to see if you can spot the elusive Bengal tiger and greater one-horned rhino.

Safaris are easily organized through the numerous hotels and guesthouses in Chitwan upon arrival.



“Soaring on top of the hills in Sarangkot is an experience you won't soon forget.”

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING A BIKING TRIP

Both Kathmandu and Pokhara have numerous bike shops, where you can hire or buy bikes, and also organize bike trips.

If you want to ride by yourself, they'll give you plenty of information and often free maps to show you where to go.

In Kathmandu, the tourist hub of **Thamel** is the best place to start when looking to hire a bike or book a trip, and in Pokhara, the main streets around Lakeside.

In association with



TREKKING IN NEPAL

With eight of the ten highest mountains in the world, and some of the most beautiful landscapes only accessible on foot, it's easy to see why Nepal draws over a million trekkers to its borders every year. Although “trekking in Nepal” often conjures up images of rugged, blizzard-defying types who brave Everest’s ominous cliff faces, today, there are options for travelers of every fitness level. From what to pack to how to choose the best route for you, we asked our partners from Kandoo Adventures to share their top insider tips and expert advice.

Mark Whitman



Essential Trekking Tips

What's the difference between trekking and hiking? What guides do you use and what do you wear? With so many options for your walking holiday, it can sometimes seem a little daunting to decide on the perfect option. Whether you're a novice or a pro, a little planning before you go can make all the difference.

Trekking vs hiking

We're often asked "what's the difference between a trek and a hike?" The simplest answer is that a trek consists of multiple walking days, while a hike is generally done in a single day.

Being such an epic country to explore, Nepal generally offers trekking routes that are at least three days in length.

While there are several hikes around **Kathmandu**, these don't even come close to what you can experience on a Nepalese trek.

Top trekking regions

There are ten trekking regions in Nepal, all of which offer something completely unique and wonderful.

If pushed for a favorite, the classic **Everest Base Camp Trek** is hard to beat, as is the famous **Annapurna Circuit**.

Both treks take you into the absolute wilds of Nepal where towering giants soar above you.


Mark Whitman

Top trekking seasons

The two best seasons to trek in Nepal are February to end of May and September through to November.

The weather is generally dry during these periods and the conditions are ideal to take in the spectacular vistas.

June to August is the monsoon season, where the Eastern and Southern sides of Nepal receive loads of rainfall.

Spring brings out the blossoming rhododendrons which sets the forests alight with color.

Altitude sickness

Many of the treks in Nepal are conducted at high altitude. Therefore, altitude sickness is a serious concern and should never be taken lightly.

There are very little treatments available for altitude sickness and you'll need to monitor yourself

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June to August is the monsoon season, where the Eastern and Southern sides of Nepal receive loads of rainfall.



Mark Whitman

carefully. Make sure you don't push yourself hard and remember to take in plenty of fluids. Always descend swiftly if symptoms occur.

Basic gear

Although you'll most likely be trekking in the dry months, high altitude means that it can still get very cold, particularly at night when temperatures often fall below freezing.

Wearing layers is key. Make sure to bring several under layers, a quality fleece, and an outer shell waterproof jacket.

Good trekking boots are key, as is an all-weather sleeping bag.

Who's who in your crew

Depending on who you decide to trek with, you'll most likely have one senior guide, an assistant guide, and porters to carry bags.

These guys work extremely hard and often have fascinating stories to tell if you're willing to listen.

Take the time to get to know them and always follow your lead guide's

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Make sure to bring several under layers, a quality fleece, and an outer shell waterproof jacket.w

instructions as he will know the best course of action at all times.

What to do in an emergency

If an accident does occur on your trek, get your guide's attention immediately. He will contact the relevant authorities to organize a rescue. Depending on where you are, you may need to be carried by a porter. If you're seriously unwell then a helicopter rescue is not uncommon, but be aware of the heli-vac scam (see sidebar).

If you are in danger and are insured with us at World Nomads, contact our Emergency Assist team immediately.

The Heli-vac Scam

If you get Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), you'll feel very un-well. The suggestion from the guide that you need evacuation off the mountain sounds appealing, but be aware. You might be taken for a ride in an entirely different way than you expect.

As it turns out, these unscrupulous guide companies also operate the helicopter evacuation services and the hospital you're taken to, so they have a strong financial incentive to get you off the mountain – whether you needed the emergency medical treatment or not.

Though your insurance may cover the costs, sadly your trip-of-a-lifetime is now over, as you won't be returned to where you were evacuated from. You're not going to have the great experience the rest of your party will talk about forever; you've been ripped-off, not monetarily, but they stole your experience!

So, before you agree to a helicopter evacuation, borrow the guide's satellite phone and call the World Nomads Emergency Assistance team. Medical staff will assess your condition and discuss options with your guide. If evacuation is really necessary, we'll get you off the mountain quickly.

But in most cases, mild AMS simply requires you to descend to a lower altitude for a day, and then you can catch up to your party. That way, years later you can all stand at the bar in the pub, and talk about that great adventure you had together.



Jase Wilson

What to Pack

They say that the key to any trek is to pack light and only bring the essentials. But what *is* essential? And what should you bring vs what can you buy there?

Clothes for hiking

If you're reaching higher altitudes, you'll need more layers. Bring thermal shorts or trousers, a fleece jacket, and a light down jacket with a hood or down vest.

The outer layer is very important and has to be wind and water-proof. A light membrane or soft shell jacket with a hood is your best option.

When hiking or trekking below 3,500m, wear light quick-dry trekking trousers, and a T-shirt. Be prepared to put on more layers like windproof jacket and trousers when the sun goes behind the clouds or as it gets windy.

Temperatures will drop below freezing in the mountains, even at the altitude of 3,500m, so be sure to always have a second (or third!) layer with you.

The right shoes for a trek below 6,000m

If you're trekking below 6,000m, you've got three options for footwear.

Mid/high trekking boots: These will provide great ankle support. Get a mid-weight hiking boot with a leather or Gore-Tex membrane for water resistance. Make sure these are the right size for your foot and are comfortable to



Mark Whitman

walk in. Remember, you'll be walking in these for 4-8 hours a day.

Sky running trainers: Some people say hiking in heavy shoes that keep your ankle stable aren't very good, as the body loses the knowledge of keeping balance. They recommend using lighter and softer shoes, for sky running. If wear these, you'll need ankle support in the form of special bandages.

Light trainers or sandals: When you come to a lodge to stay overnight, you'll definitely want to take your shoes off! So, bring a pair of light trainers or sandals (better with the covered tip) and let your boots dry overnight. Whatever shoes you decide to use for trekking, make sure that the sole is not slippery, and has good grip on the rocks.

Sleeping bags

If you choose to take the teahouse trek route and sleep in lodges, you can

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Be prepared to put on more layers like windproof jacket and trousers when the sun goes behind the clouds.

TREKKING IN NEPAL

easily survive without a sleeping bag. Most of these lodges will provide warm blankets. However, your own can be a good idea because:

1. It's more hygienic.
2. The lodge may be short of blankets during the high season.
3. At night, when the temperature drops in the mountains, you might want to use both your sleeping bag and a blanket.

Backpacks and important accessories

If you hire a porter, a 30-40L backpack will be enough for you to pack your jacket, snacks, documents, thermos, and a bottle of water.

If you plan to carry everything and don't want to use a porter, you'll need a bigger backpack. Find a backpack that will ergonomically distribute the load. It should have a solid frame and waterproof material to keep your back and belongings dry.

Trekking poles will also come in handy, and provide great protection for your knees when you're walking up and down hills.



Mark Whitman

What to pack vs what to buy there

Hundreds of trekking shops in **Kathmandu** and **Pokhara** will be happy to equip you with all the necessary gear, so don't worry if you arrive a little underprepared.

Be aware though that the products you buy in Nepal are made locally and won't last forever – it's likely that you'll leave most of them behind after your trek.

There are a number of outdoor clothing shops on **Tridevi Marg** in **Kathmandu** where you can purchase the real-deal, top quality branded gear, including fleece and GoreTex jackets, down jackets, and shirts.

We'd highly recommend you buy your trekking shoes well in advance and choose a trusted brand. Be sure to start wearing your shoes too some time before coming to Nepal!

““
Hundreds of trekking shops in Kathmandu and Pokhara will be happy to equip you.””

Trekking Food

If there's one thing that trekking for eight hours does, it's working up an appetite. In the good old days of trekking in Nepal, you really only had one option on your menu – *Dhal Bhat*. Today, with tourism soaring in the tiny mountain nation, food options have become varied and often delicious.

Full board treks vs a la carte

Until recently, most trekking agencies offered full-board treks – your meals were provided and you ate what you're given. However, with the modernization of tea houses in Nepal, more and more trekkers expressed a wish to try the local cuisine on offer. And why wouldn't you?

It's now far more common to purchase a half-board trek and choose your dinner from the extensive menus available. This option offers far more variety to your daily meals, gives you an opportunity to interact with the locals, and allows for a much more authentic experience.

What's on offer

Thanks to a booming tourist industry, tea houses now offer menus with 30 or 40 options.

Dhal Bhat is still a favorite among many trekkers as most tea houses will refill any empty section of the plate as you go.

Most menus in Nepal consist of potato, noodle, soup, rice, and bread dishes, as well as *Dhal Bhat* and egg / porridge dishes.

It's more of a gamble than anything else when you order. Each tea house offers a different version of the same thing and you never really know what you're going to get till you get it. Makes sure to try the Sherpa stew though!

Most tea houses now offer up western-style options too, such as pizza, pasta, and steak. Be warned – these are not what you would expect back home and can often be disappointing.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are a busy affair. Trekkers from all over the area literally descend upon tea houses *en masse*.

Food is operated on a first-come-first-serve basis, so make sure you order as soon as you arrive to avoid disappointment.

Food comes out quickly and you get a lot for your money. Although food is exceptionally cheap, try to budget around US \$20 per day to accommodate all meals and (more importantly) drinks!

Bring your own food

With so much walking, you'll need to keep up your strength. Make sure you bring along some energy bars to snack on as you walk. These are great energy boosters and they'll get you through the long uphill grinds.

Saying that, there are a number of shops and bakeries along the major trekking routes that will supply you with plenty of snacking options if you wish.



Prathap Nair

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Mealtimes are a busy affair. Trekkers from all over the area literally descend upon tea houses *en masse*.

DEALING WITH RUBBISH

Sadly, along your trek you'll notice the lack of garbage management.

Due to the rapid westernization of Nepal, the country hasn't quite figured out a way to deal with all of the trash left by tourists – Please don't add to this problem!

Always keep your trash with you until you reach the nearest vehicle-accessible road. This includes drink bottles purchased at tea houses.

Top Trekking Routes in Nepal

Whether you're looking to challenge yourself and scale the jagged peaks into the heavens, or prefer to hop between local villages and get beneath the surface of Himalayan life, there's a trek for you in Nepal. But which route is best? Well, that depends on your choice of difficulty, number of days, budget, time of year, and trekking style.

Everest Base Camp Trek

This is by far the most popular trek in Nepal. The route receives over 30,000 trekkers every year and takes approximately 12 days to complete.

Trekkers walk along the stunning **Khumbu Valley**, taking in the authentic villages and monasteries on their way towards the tallest peak on earth.

The view of **Everest** from **Kala Pattar** is one of the best views in the world and undoubtedly, one of the best moments is getting up close to the infamous **Khumbu** Icefall.

Gokyo Lakes Trek

This is a favorite among serious trekkers. If the classic Everest trail seems a little too tame, then the **Gokyo Trek** might just be for you.

While the destination remains the same, the route deviates significantly.

Trekkers are taken on a loop into the



Mark Whitman

Gokyo valley where they visit the five holy lakes and ascend over **Cho La Pass** – one of the most stunning passes in all of Nepal.

This route is far quieter than the classic route and takes on average three more days to complete.

Annapurna Circuit

Often described as one of the greatest treks on earth, the **Annapurna Circuit** is an epic adventure over three long weeks. The trek is most notable for the sheer variety of scenery the route passes through.

You begin in sub-tropical meadows before ascending up through rhododendron forests, alpine hills, and finally into semi-arid terrain.

The highest point is at **Thorung La Pass** (5,416m), where you're greeted with 360 degree vistas that will stay with you for a lifetime.

“One of the best moments is getting up close to the infamous Khumbu Icefall.”



Manaslu Circuit

Relatively unknown, the **Manaslu Circuit** is far quieter than either the Annapurna or Everest regions.

Although it receives less than 2,000 trekkers annually, the Manaslu Circuit is quite possibly the greatest trek in Nepal.

The route winds its way up through five climatic zones and takes in eight world-famous peaks!

The highlight of this stunning trek is **Larkya La Pass**, which, at over 5,000m, is one of the most dramatic passes in the Himalayas.

Be warned though. This is a high-altitude trek which should only be attempted by experienced trekkers, with altitude sickness an important consideration. Set aside at least two weeks to complete this circuit.

Langtang Valley Trek

Described by travel writer Bill Tilman

“Although it receives less than 2,000 trekkers annually, the Manaslu Circuit is quite possibly the greatest trek in Nepal.”

as "one of the world's most beautiful valleys", the **Langtang Valley Trek** has earned an exceptional reputation among trekkers.

This is one of the easiest treks in Nepal and offers hikers the chance to see stunning mountain scenery without going too far. Accessible to adults and children, the Langtang Valley Trek offers an exceptional mix between scenery and cultural heritage.

Located near **Kathmandu**, this trek is definitely worth a try if you're short on time or just starting out.

Jomsom Muktinath Trek

If you're pushed for time, then the **Jomsom Muktinath Trek** can be completed in as little as 5 days. The altitude is fairly low, and inexperienced trekkers will find this an ideal entry-level trek. Just make sure you've packed the right gear.

TREKKING IN NEPAL

The **Mustang region** is one of the most stunning areas of Nepal and the Jomsom Muktinath Trek is actually part of the larger and far more famous **Annapurna Circuit**.

Along the route, you'll witness eight of the world's 20 tallest mountains including **Machhapuchhare, Annapurna I, and Nilgiri**.

The route follows in the footsteps of the ancient trade route along the **Kali Ghandaki river**. You'll visit ancient forts, large caves, and glorious monasteries.

Until 2008, the Mustang Region was a semi-autonomous kingdom and much of the local heritage still flourishes, making the Jomsom Muktinath Trek a great cultural experience.

Helambu Trek

The **Helmabu Trek** is ideal for families and travelers wanting a short-but-beautiful trek that isn't too strenuous.

Because of its low altitude and generally pleasant temperature, the Helambu Trek has grown in popularity in recent years and is now one of the best short-trek options in Nepal.

Despite its accessible location near **Kathmandu**, the route is incredibly tranquil. You'll get none of the crowds that swarm the more famous routes.

The trek begins an hour from Kathmandu in the town of **Sundarijal**. From there, you trek up into the local hills past forests of rhododendrons, beautiful waterfalls, and glorious peaks.

Considering the low altitude of the trek, the views along the route are spectacular. The largest peaks on offer include **Langtang** and **Ganesh**.

The Helambu Trek is also one of the most cultural treks in Nepal. Hikers visit a number of traditional villages where people's ways of life have changed little over the centuries.

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The Helmabu Trek is ideal for families and travelers wanting a short-but-beautiful trek that isn't too strenuous.

Useful Nepalese Phrases

NEPALI GREETINGS

Hi!: *Namaste*

Thank you: *Dhanyabaad*

Sorry: *Maaf pau*

How are you?: *Tapai lai kasto chha?*

All's well with me: *Malai sab thick chha*

What's your name?: *Tapai ko naam ke ho?*

My name is _____: *Mero naam _____ ho*

HANDY TREKKING PHRASES

Porter: *Bhariya*

Road/trail/path: *Baato*

Uphill way: *Ukaalo baato*

Downhill: *Oraalo*

Cliff: *Bheer*

Animal: *Janawar*

Everything's OK: *Thik cha*

Let's go: *Zoom zoom or jum jum*

Quickly, quickly: *Chito Chito*

Up, up: *Matte Matte*

I am hungry: *Malai Bhok lagyo*

I am thirsty: *Malai Pyaas Lagyo*

I feel sick: *Malai Sancho bhayena*

My leg is in pain: *Khutta Dukhyo*

I am tired: *Malai Thakai Lagyo*

Yes/OK: *Hoon chha*

No/Not OK: *Hoon na*

Which way to _____?: *_____ janey baato kun ho?*

I think I am lost!: *Ma haraye chhu*

I need a place to stay: *Malai baas basnu paryo*

Paani: *Water*

Kati paisa?: *How much money?*



Mark Whitman

For more great pro tips, go to www.kandooadventures.com

Easy Treks and Short Hikes

While Nepal is certainly famous for its epic treks like Everest Base Camp and Annapurna, these are fairly long and grueling routes that require a good level of stamina and fitness. For the less experienced hiker – or perhaps families with children – there are easier options available that still exposes you to the true spirit of the Himalayas.

Kathmandu Valley Trek

Located an hour's drive from the capital, this trek is the perfect option if you're just passing through the city. Don't think you're missing out on anything though – the valley trek offers stunning scenery, cultural heritage, and spectacular views – all rolled into just three days.

You begin in the town of **Sundarijal** before trekking up into the hills. You pass through several traditional villages, taking in the terraced rice fields and lush forests. Once you arrive at **Jhule village**, you're greeted with panoramic views of the surrounding mountains, including **Everest**. You stay overnight in the village of **Nagarkot**, famous for its incredible sunrise views over the Himalayas.

The trek ends at the stunning **Changu Narayan temple** – a UNESCO World Heritage listed site. The temple



Everest region

Mark Whitman

dates back to the 5th century AD and is considered to be the oldest temple in the Kathmandu Valley.

Ghandruk Trek

One of the best short hikes in Nepal, the **Ghandruk Trek** is a three-day hike that leads you through stunning rice paddies, beautiful villages, and ancient stone stairs. The views along the trek are simply gorgeous, including the view towards **Annapurna South**.

The trek is also ideal as it never ascends above 2,000m, making it less risky if you're prone to altitude sickness and perfect for the less-experienced hiker.

The trail begins just an hour's drive from **Pokhara**, the trekking capital of Nepal. Hikers make their way up dense forests of rhododendrons before coming upon a series of vegetable paddies on their way to the village of

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One of the best moments is getting up close to the infamous Khumbu Icefall.

TREKKING IN NEPAL

Ghandruk. The village is the highlight of the trek, with its bustling streets and cultural heritage.

From here, you'll get spectacular views of some of the giants of the Himalayas like **Annapurna**, **Hiunchuli**, and **Machapuchare**.

Ghorepani Trek

Probably Nepal's most famous short hike, the **Ghorepani Trek** takes hikers to the picturesque village of **Ghandruk**, via one of the most unforgettable views in the Himalayas – **Poon Hill**. The trek is considered fairly easy, however, there's a steep climb section on day two that consists of 3,381 stone steps.

Like the Ghandruk trek, the Ghorepani Trek is located in the Annapurna region near Pokhara. Set off from **Nayapul** and ascend through forests of rhododendrons and rice paddies.

“
Hundreds of trekking shops in Kathmandu and Pokhara will be happy to equip you.”



Mark Whitman

The highlight of the trek is the view from Poon Hill (3,210m) where some of the world's most famous peaks can be seen in one magnificent panorama. These include **Dhaulagiri**, **Annapurna I** and **Annapurna South**.

Make sure you bring your camera along – In the early morning light, this is often considered the best view in the Himalayas.

Poon Hill Trek

Conducted over four to five days, the **Poon Hill Trek** is perfectly suited to beginners and families.

Although it's one of the easier treks in Nepal, the Poon Hill Trek packs a major punch when it comes to views. The sunrise over the rugged Annapurna Himalaya range is thought to be one off the best in the world.

As you ascend into the hills, the scenery is constantly changing from lush forests, to arid terrain, to farming fields. Lovely family-run teahouses are dotted along the route, so there's no need to carry any camping gear.

After a fairly steep climb to the top of Poon Hill, you'll be rewarded with



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TREKKING IN NEPAL

one of the best mountain vistas on earth.

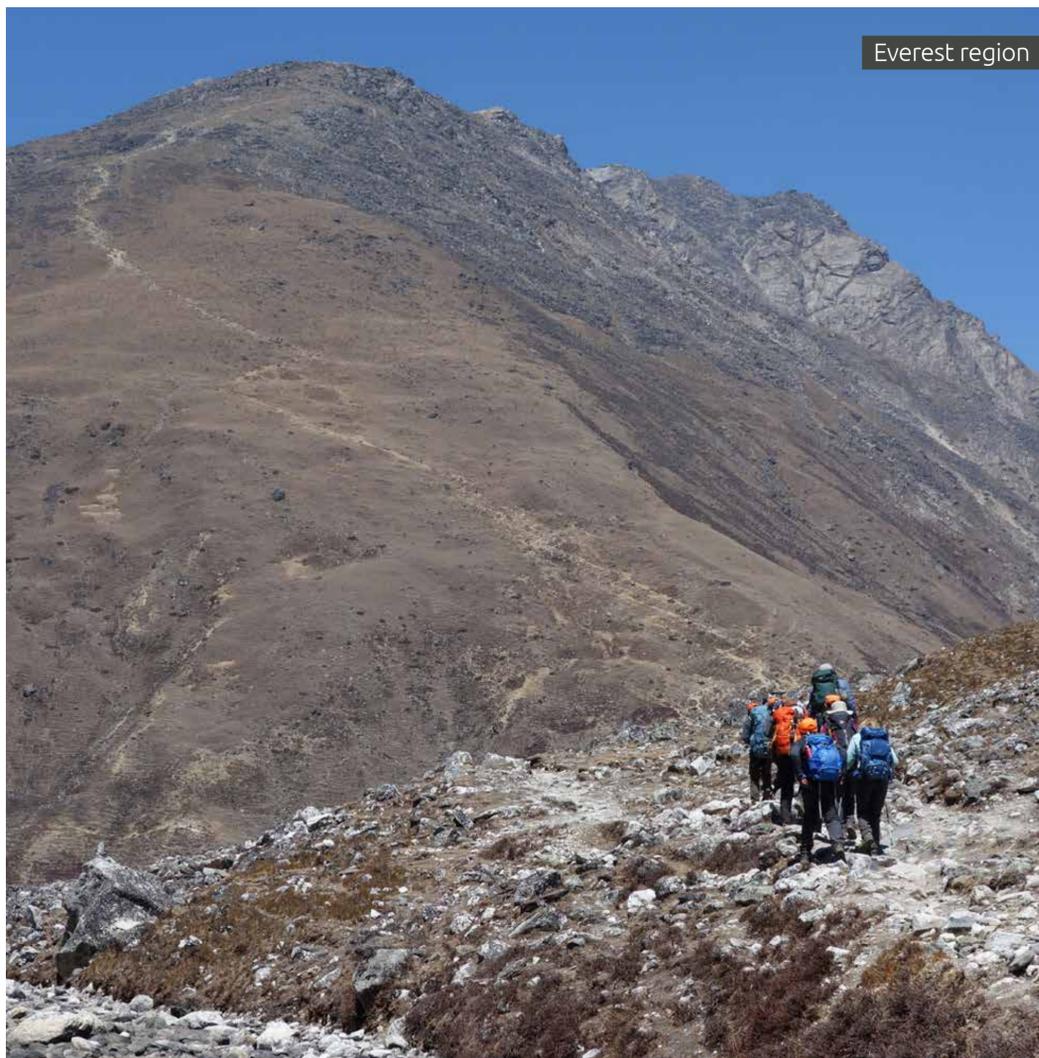
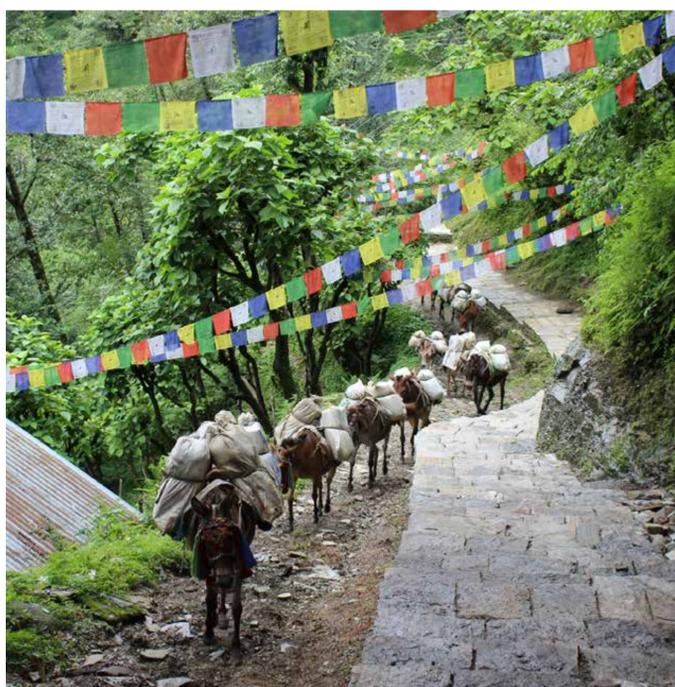
The Royal Trek

This trek was named after Prince Charles and his 90-strong crew who explored the route in 1981. It was also historically used by Nepal's royal family, adding to the namesake. This is the ideal, easy option for travelers. Because it's less well known compared to the other treks in the region, most of the time it's practically empty.

This hike takes you through terraced rice fields and lush forests, and you'll be greeted constantly with views of the **Annapurna Mountain Range**.

The route is well-maintained and trekkers stay at a relatively low altitude for the duration of the trek. This means that even the most inexperienced trekkers will be able to give it a go.

From the highest point, you'll be able to see **Machapuchhre** (fishtail) and **Langtang Mountain**. The trek concludes when you arrive at the stunning **Begnas Lake**, just in time for a nice drink!



Mark Whitman

Panchase Trek

One of the hidden gems of Nepal, the **Panchase Trek** is often looked over by travelers. With a relatively low altitude and only four days long, the Panchase trek is the perfect option for novice hikers or families with children.

Located near **Pokhara**, the journey begins in style with a boat trip across the beautiful **Phewa Lake** and is perfect for a short trip if you're based in Pokhara.

Once on the forest trail, you'll come across the **World Peace Pagoda** as you make your way down through the local villages, where the rustic way of life still holds sway.

Your final destination at **Panchase Hill** (2,500m) has absolutely epic views. Often considered the best view of **Annapurna Massif** in Nepal, you'll be blown away by the glorious panorama.

Kandoo Adventures' Top 5 Pro Tips for First-Timers:

- Always choose an operator with a good track record, particularly when it comes to safety.
- Monitor your fellow trekkers carefully for any signs of altitude sickness.
- Take trekking poles – they can reduce stress on your joints by up to 20%.
- Wear your boots in before the trek to avoid blisters.
- Never ascend quickly.

For more great pro tips, go to www.kandooadventures.com

Essential Insurance Tips

While Nepal is certainly beautiful, even the most experienced traveler can get caught by the unexpected. Medical evacuations in Nepal cost upwards of US \$6,000 – let alone the medical costs once you get to hospital. That’s where travel insurance can help. Whether you’re trekking at altitude or you succumb to a local delicacy, all World Nomads travel insurance policies have been designed to help you navigate a range of hairy experiences, and provide you with expert assistance when you need it most.

Altitude Sickness

Acute mountain sickness (AMS) can happen to anyone – even the fittest and most experienced trekkers. Don’t assume you’ll be right in a few days: not acclimatizing to altitude can be deadly.

If you find yourself suffering from nausea, breathlessness, sleep deprivation, severe headaches, vomiting or diarrhea, you should descend to a lower altitude until your symptoms improve and seek medical advice.

World Nomads travel insurance covers emergency overseas medical

expenses if you’re suffering from AMS. This includes treatments like oxygen therapy in a hospital or a medical center, or other medications prescribed by a licensed medical provider.

World Nomads policy holders can call [our emergency assistance teams](#), who can provide advice to help alleviate your symptoms, and (if medically necessary) can arrange to heli-vac you to the nearest medical center for care.

If you’re travelling with a guide and the guide insists on you taking an arranged helicopter ([see the scam on page 41](#)), contact the emergency assistance team yourself – or get someone you trust to do so – to get advice and confirm arrangements for your evacuation, if medically required.

Am I covered for hiking, mountaineering, or other adventure activities?

Most World Nomads travel insurance plans cover hiking at altitudes under 2,000 metres/6,560 feet. However, you may have to choose a particular plan, or pay for optional adventure sport cover when you buy your policy, to trek up to 6,000 metres/19,685 feet, go rock climbing, or to participate in other adventure sports we’ve mentioned in this guide.

Not all travel insurance plans cover mountaineering, paragliding, mountain biking, or other more adventurous activities, so do check the [list of covered adventure sports and activities](#) on our website carefully before you buy your policy.

Travel insurance is not designed

“”

If you’re travelling with a guide and the guide insists on you taking an arranged helicopter, contact the emergency assistance team yourself

to cover everything, and there are conditions, limitations, and exclusions to this cover. These may include waiting periods before cover can apply, exclusions to trekking at extreme altitudes (above 6,000 metres/19,685 feet), mountaineering, or using ropes, picks, and other specialist climbing equipment. So, do take the time to read your policy wording, and make sure you understand the cover so there are no assumptions or disappointments. Any questions, please ask.

Protecting your gear

Whether you're bringing your favourite tech or your own hiking boots, when it comes to your gear, you'll want to protect it. Many World Nomads plans can help cover the cost to replace your stolen items if you're mugged on the trail, or if your bags are lost or damaged by an airline on the way to Kathmandu.

When it comes to your tech, cameras, phones, or laptop, never check them in – travel insurance can't help you if you do. After all, what chance does a camera lens have against a UFC-loving bag handler?

Dealing with Gastro

Gastro can take down the hardiest of travelers – after all, it wouldn't be an

authentic trip without a few *momos* from a dirty roadside cart.

If you get to the stage where you're dehydrated and possibly in need of a hospital, make sure you call our emergency assistance teams for advice.

They'll be happy to hear your voice, whether you're calling from the bathroom floor or lucky enough to have made it to the toilet.

They can also guide you to a center of medical excellence – rather than any backyard setup that you might stumble upon – in your hour of desperation.

Got questions?

We're here to help navigate how travel insurance works, so if you have questions about what's covered, what's not covered, and how to get help, our helpdesk has answers to most insurance questions. Or, simply ask us.

All of the information we provide about travel insurance is a brief summary only. It does not include all terms, conditions, limitations, exclusions and termination provisions of the travel insurance plans described. Coverage may not be available for residents of all countries, states or provinces. Please carefully read your policy wording for a full description of coverage.

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