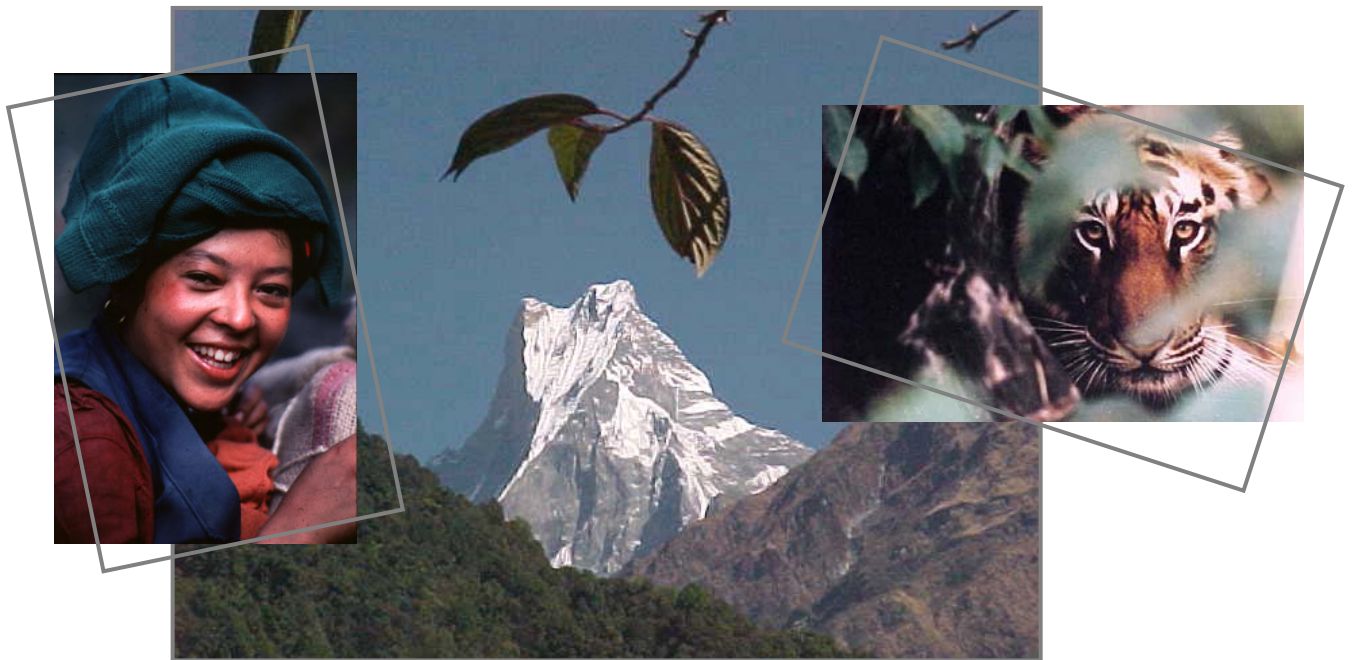


*BIG FIVE*  
TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

# NEPAL

## Travel Guide



The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions, and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip. Be sure to check the reading listing included here for more information.



*Through travel I first became aware of the outside world; it was through travel that I found my own introspective way into becoming a part of it.*

-- Eudora Welty

**KATHMANDU ~ Elevation: 4385 feet Latitude: 27 42N Longitude: 085 22E****Average Temperature**

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	50	54	60	67	71	75	75	75	72	67	59	52

**Average Precipitation**

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	0.7	0.6	1.2	1.5	4	7.9	14.8	12.8	7.4	2.2	0.1	0.4

**WEATHER**

Nepal's climate varies greatly according to altitude and topography. It ranges from tropical to arctic. Terai region, which lies in the tropical southern part of the country, for instance, is hot and humid. Mid-land regions are pleasant almost all year round, although winter nights are cool. Northern mountain region, with an average altitude above 10,827 ft, has an alpine climate with considerably lower temperatures in winter. Nepal has four seasons: Spring (Mar-May), Summer (Jun-Aug : Monsoon), Autumn (Sep-Nov) and Winter (Dec-Feb). Nepal's busiest tourist season is September to May, with October and November peak months for trekking as mountain views are guaranteed.

Kathmandu has moderate weather, warm days, and cool nights. At elevations of 10,000 feet or less, it is usually possible to walk in shorts as temperatures rarely drop below 60 F. At night, freezing temperatures are common above 10,000 feet, and they plummet into single digits above 15,000 feet from mid-December through February. While there should be little or no snow below 14,000 feet, you are in the highest mountains in the world and **must be prepared for all climatic conditions**. Temperatures in Kathmandu range between 52F and 83F in April, and between 66F and 86F in June with maximum temperatures of 97F. From October to March, the daily temperatures range from 50F to 77F, although the evenings are extremely cool.

**Travel Tip:** Monsoon in Nepal is not the typical monsoon of Asia. Rains usually occur during the night, and early morning mountain views are possible even in this season. Some parts of the Himalayas are in Rain-Shadow; the mountains are high enough to block the clouds.

**TIME ZONES & FLIGHT TIMES**

Standard Time in Nepal is 5½ hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, which makes Nepal 10 ¾ hours ahead of New York and Eastern Standard Time. Subtract an hour for summer daylight savings time. Flying time to Nepal is approximately 20-22 hours, which depends on routes and flight schedules. Some itineraries overnight in Delhi.

**PASSPORTS & VISAS**

**Passports:** For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least two blank pages is necessary.

**Visas:** You can obtain your visa for Nepal upon arrival. You will need to provide 2 passport sized photos and \$20US.

**Important:** Please look at your passport before you travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

**Please note:** Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

**AIRPORT FORMALITIES**

**Airport Tax:** Passengers departing from the Tribhuvan International Airport are required to pay an airport tax of Rs. 900 if going to SAARC countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and Rs. 1100.00 to all other international destinations. Domestic airport tax is Rs. 165. **Note that these fees are subject to change without notice.**

**Duty Free:** Visitors are allowed to bring in consumable articles such as one 1.5 liter of alcohol, 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars, 15 rolls of film and 12 rolls of movie camera film. Visitors are also allowed to bring in **one** of each of the following, on condition that they are declared and taken out with you when you depart: binoculars, camera, movie camera, video camera, radio, tape recorder, wrist watch, one set of fountain pens, 1 stroller, 15 radio cassettes and 10 disk records. **Narcotics, arms and ammunitions are strictly prohibited.**

**Green Channel:** Passengers arriving at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) without any dutiable goods can proceed through the Green Channel for quick clearance without a baggage check. If you are carrying dutiable articles, you have to pass through the **Red Channel** for detailed customs clearance.

**Export:** The export of antiques requires special certificate from the Department of Archaeology, National Archive Building, Ram Shah Path, Kathmandu. It is illegal to export objects over 100 years old – sacred images, manuscripts, paintings, etc. – that are valued as culture and religious pieces. Gold, silver, precious stones, wild animals and their skins, horns, etc, and all drugs, whether processed or in their natural state, are prohibited from export.

Visitors are advised not to purchase such items. For more information on customs matters, contact the Chief Customs Administrator, TIA Customs Office; Ph:470110, 472266.

**US Customs:** US Citizens are allowed to bring home \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items, contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

**Note:** To avoid problems with customs officials, carry medications in original packaging. Don't forget the addresses of offices that handle refunds of lost travelers' checks.

**LUGGAGE**

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-

sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Banks are generally open from 9 am to 3 pm Monday through Thursday (a few until 3:30); but only until about noon on Friday; Saturday from 9 am to 1 pm. Closed on Sunday.

Government offices are open from 10 am to 5 pm from Sunday through Thursday; Fridays, 10 to 3 pm. Business offices are open from 10 am to 5 pm Sunday through Friday.

Embassies and international organizations are open from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday. Most shops open after 10 am and close at about 8 pm, and are usually closed on Saturdays.

Although Nepal works seven days a week, it observes numerous holidays, an average of two or three a month. So check with your guide or Big Five. Government offices observe all holidays and banks observe most of them. Businesses observe the major holidays.

## CURRENCY

Exchange rates are published in English daily newspapers such as *The Rising Nepal* and *The Kathmandu Post*. Nepalese Rupees (Rs) are found in denominations of 1000, 500, 250, 100, 50, 25, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are found in denominations of 10, 25 and 50 paisa. One rupee equals 100 paisa.

Nepal has modern banking facilities and some of the International Banks have their own offices in Kathmandu. Almost all foreign currencies along with credit cards such as

American Express, Visa and Master Card, etc., are accepted in Nepal at major hotels, shops and restaurants.

Remember to check your credit card expiration dates if you are leaving for an extended journey.

All visitors are required to exchange their money through banks or authorized agents. In Kathmandu, banks have money exchange counters. These facilities to change money are quick and convenient. Ask for receipts when money is changed. On departure at the airport, if you are left with Nepalese rupees, you can get about 10% of the amount of your exchange receipts returned.

Major banks, hotels and exchange counters at Tribhuvan Airport provide services for exchanging foreign currency. US dollar traveler's checks can be purchased from American Express at Durbar Marg and other major banks in Kathmandu. Banks typically charge 1% of the face value to cash traveler's checks.

*Note that when traveling around Nepal, change large bills whenever you can.* Taxis, bicycle rickshaws and small shops seldom have small bills. Do not be afraid to ask local shops for change, but expect to ask three or four before someone can/will change your large bill.

## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required of travelers coming from infected areas such as parts of South America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Following World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to Nepal. However, cholera is a serious risk in this country and precautions are essential. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination, as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness.

Malaria risk, mainly in the benign vivax form, exists throughout the year in rural areas of the Terai districts of Bara, Dhanukha, Kapilvastu, Mahotari, Parsa, Rautahat, Rupendehi, Sarlahi and especially along the Indian border. The malignant falciparum form resistant to chloroquine has been reported. Japanese encephalitis occurs in southern lowland, rural areas. Hepatitis A, B and E occur. Meningitis has been reported in some areas. There has been a sharp rise in visceral leishmaniasis, and trachoma is fairly common. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. Typhoid is common.

Any inoculations should be recorded in an official Vaccination Certificate and carried with you at all times. Keep a copy of it as well as other important documents in a safe place. Also, it's a good idea to leave copies of all important information with a friend or relative at home.

**Altitude Sickness:** If you visit the Himalayan Mountains, ascend gradually to allow time for your body to adjust to the high altitude, which can cause insomnia, headaches, nausea, and altitude sickness. In addition, use sun block rated at least 24 SPF. Nepal's sun can be intense due to elevation. Be aware of overexposure even in cloudy days. Avoid sunburn. If traveling higher than 10,000 feet, use zinc oxide or lip balm with sun block and keep your eyes protected behind sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays. When you're in snow, remember that UV rays reflect from below.

**Health care:** The most convenient hospital for visitor care is Patan Hospital in Lagankhel. Other hospitals include the Western Regional Hospital and the Manipal Hospital in

Pokhara and the Mission Hospital in Tansen. Most hospitals have English-speaking staff and big hotels have doctors. Pharmacies in Kathmandu, mainly along New Road, offer a wide range of Western drugs at low prices. In Kathmandu, you can get certain vaccinations free of charge at the Infectious Diseases Clinic. Full medical insurance is essential. It is always best to check with your local county health department or a doctor specializing in travel medicine for their recommendations. Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta has a fax information service with updated travel information. To receive these documents, call 404-332-4565. You can also visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more information.

## STAY HEALTHY

Sensible precautions can help you avoid most of these risks. Visitors should be in generally good health. It is strongly recommended that you consult with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended, depending on your personal health profile.

Travelers' diarrhea and stomach upsets are the most common complaints. To prevent these, be careful what you eat. Stay away from ice, uncooked food, food such as salads that has been washed in tap water, and unpasteurized milk and milk products. It is advisable to drink only bottled mineral water, soft drinks, bottled beer, coffee or tea. Drink only bottled water from reputable hotels or shops and make sure the cap has not been tampered with.

A little bit of personal hygiene can also go a long way in preventing stomach upset. Remember to wash your hands frequently or carry along a supply of pre-moistened towelettes.

You may wish to talk to your doctor about a general antibiotic to take to treat travelers' diarrhea or take one of the many medications on the market such as Pepto-Bismol. Bring tablets or medicine for stomach ailments. Keep medications in their original containers for customs inspection.

## SAFETY

Common-sense safety precautions you normally observe should be followed when traveling to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss. Don't put valuables or prescription drugs in checked luggage. Carry them with you. Carry passports, exchange vouchers, itinerary, air tickets, travelers' checks, visas and permits, and insurance policies with you in your carry on baggage.

Never leave an unlocked suitcase in a hotel room. Never leave suitcases unattended in airports or train stations. Women traveling alone should never get into a taxi or rickshaw if there's a second man accompanying the driver. Women should also chain-lock their door when they are in their hotel room. Everyone should be alert in crowds for pickpockets. Wear a money belt. Women should keep their purses close to their body and securely closed. Be careful when you use your credit cards for payment. Make certain that the card isn't used to make an impression on more than one credit card charge form. Do not accept food or drink from a stranger.

Leave your jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, travelers' checks, airline tickets, etc., in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase – keep them with you or in hotel safe. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Common sense is your best defense.

## COMMUNICATION

**Language:** In Nepal, most people, especially in the Kathmandu Valley, speak some English.

**Telephone** IDD is available to all major cities. Country code: 977. Outgoing international code: 00. Hotels and private communication centers provide long-distance telephone services

**Fax** Services are available in most hotels, travel agencies and communications centers. At the airport The Nepal Telecommunications Corporation booth has fax facilities.

**Telegram** Central Telegraph Office offers a 24-hour international telephone and telegram service seven days a week.

**Internet** There are Internet cafes in Kathmandu, Patan and Pokhara as well as in larger hotels.

**Post** Postal services are available in most centers. Make sure that letters are hand-cancelled at the post office. Main hotels will also handle post.

## ELECTRICITY

In Nepal, major towns have 220V, 50 Hz when available. Rural areas have no electricity.

## CAMERAS & FILM

Always ask permission before taking photographs of people. Remember that photography is **not** permitted in airports or at sensitive military sites, including some bridges and at some religious sites and events. **Filming in restricted areas or notified areas without permission is strictly prohibited.**

Respect local traditions, customs, values and sentiments to help them protect local cultures and maintain local pride. Carry some change for people who demand money for the privilege of taking their picture. If someone asks you to send a copy of the photo, don't say yes unless you intend to keep that promise. Some women and tribal people may object to being photographed -- Ask first.

**Equipment:** Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. Cameras should be packed with good cushioning. The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible.

Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean equipment frequently. Bring a blower brush and lens-cleaning tissues.

**Lenses:** A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is a good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired when photographing scenics, close-ups, or animals. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

**Film:** Bring whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

X-rays are cumulative, and today's more powerful machines will ruin undeveloped film. Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible, and request a hand search of your film only. Requests are honored most of the time at US airports (allow a little extra time), but not necessarily in other countries. **Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are well worth the small investment.** Even those are not guaranteed to protect film, but they do help. Never leave film in your camera when you are traveling through airports as the camera will be x-rayed and/or opened for inspection.

**Video:** If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Videotape is not affected by airport x-rays; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts.

**Batteries:** Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them. Batteries tend to be expensive and hard to find.

## FOOD & DRINK

**Considerations:** All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Milk is unpasteurized and should be boiled or avoided. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products, which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

**Local Food:** some of the main dishes of Nepal include:

*Aloo Tama:* Bamboo shoots and potato curry made with a variety of spices and herbs.

*Beans:* A curry preparation of large and small beans are served with main rice course.

*Dal:* Lentil soup eaten with plain rice or served as part of dal-bhat-tarkari. Black, green and yellow lentils are popular.

*Green Vegetables:* Spinach, mustard greens or broad-leaved mustard are a standard accompaniment to plain rice for lunch or dinner.

*Meat Curries:* Curried meat with lots of spices and gravy served with the main course of rice. Buff, mutton, chicken or fish varieties.

*Bhat (Plain Rice):* Boiled rice, the staple Nepalese nourishment and the central ingredient of the dal-bhat-tarkari diet.

*Tarkari:* vegetable curry in a rich spicy broth, the third element of the *dal-bhat-tarkari* staple meal.

## CLOTHING CONSIDERATIONS

During mid-September to March, light clothing is fine in Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. Evenings and early mornings, a heavy woolen sweater or jacket will be necessary. From April to September, only light clothes, preferably cotton, are needed in Nepal.

Cold lowland nights in December and January make a sweater and jacket essential. Special gear for trekking can be hired or bought in Kathmandu in standard Western sizes. The same applies for sweaters, ponchos, caps, and other woolen or down clothing. **Good-quality walking shoes are a must!**

The Himalayas can be cold in extreme altitudes. The trick to assembling your wardrobe is triple layering. The layer next to your skin should be made of synthetic fibers that carry moisture away from your skin. Cotton soaks up perspiration and makes you wet. The second layer, should be wool, fleece or a synthetic fabric knitted into thick pile. The third layer can be a well-made, generously sized windbreaker or lightweight, insulated parka that not only allows moisture to escape but is waterproof, not merely water-repellent.

In winter, you need light wool clothes. A high-altitude trekker needs down jacket, windproof jacket, wool shirts & trousers, lightweight trekking boots (plastic boots for peak climbing), wool or wool-blend socks, sun & snow goggles, sun hat and glasses, light rain coat (for monsoon season), gloves, scarves, and water bottle. For all treks, hikers need sleeping bags that fit the altitude as well as the season. We also recommend a personalized, small medical kit containing items such as aspirin, motion sickness medication, antibiotics, antacid tablets, diarrhea medication, lip salve, Band-Aids, insect repellent, and hydrocortisone cream. A list of suggested extras to bring is below:

- Strong sun block
- Sewing kit
- Non-electric shaving equipment
- Travel alarm
- A good book or deck of cards
- Pre-moistened towelettes
- Lock and key for each duffel or bag,
- High-power, impact-resistant flashlight and spare batteries
- Good sanitary napkins are now available, but tampons are substandard.
- An extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses in your carry-on luggage
- If you have medications, bring enough to last the entire trip.
- A small notebook or journal to jot down information and observations.
- Plastic bags for toiletries and small items.
- A pair of good quality, lightweight binoculars is essential.

- A daypack for things you need during the day, and a duffel bag for everything else.

Remember that what is appropriate in the West isn't necessarily acceptable in the East. Only children can get away with short shorts. Men should dress in comfortable jeans or long shorts. Tee shirts are okay. If it's warm, women should stick to skirts and lightweight slacks. To enter a holy shrine, women should wear a below-the-knee skirt, dress, or neat pants. Do not wear tops with scooped or plunging necklines. While many women wear shorts in the mountains or coastal areas, women in cities who reveal any bare legs will attract undesired attention. Bathing suits should be conservative.

## TIPPING

Tipping is a newly accepted custom in Nepal. Hotel, restaurant, touring and trekking organization staff members often make up for relatively meager wages with tips. But, it should only reward good work. Don't tip for short taxi rides in town or any service person you've bargain with. Groups might give a reasonable amount per day to a tip pool to be divided among the staff, generally relative to rank, for good service. Tipping is a personal expense and is up to each individual. Amounts should be based on the quality of service. Below is a general guide.

**Hotel / Restaurant staff:** All hotel taxes and service charges have been included in the cost of your tour. You need not tip unless someone provides an extra service such as room service. Always check your bill first to see if a service charge has been already added. We suggest Rs.10-Rs.20 for room service. Restaurant service is generally 7 to 10 percent of total bill.

**Baggage Handling:** Porters at airports or hotels generally receive Rs.5 per bag; railway porters Rs.5-Rs.10 per bag, depending on weight. Set the rate before he takes your bags.

**Driver / guides:** Taxi drivers don't expect tips unless they go through a great deal of trouble to get to your destination. For a car and driver, tip him Rs.50 for half day and Rs.100 for a full day. For out of town trips, calculate around Rs. 150 to Rs.200 per day. Local Guides receive Rs.40 for half day and Rs.80 for full day.

**Escorts:** An average gratuity to an escort is USD\$10.00 per person per day.

## SHOPPING

Leave plenty of space in your luggage for items you are sure to buy. Look around before you buy. Shopping is recommended at the Government Emporia and shops on the approved list of the Department of Tourism. It is worth buying the best and avoiding junk produced for tourists and sold from stalls besides monuments.

Handicrafts are beautiful and include top-quality silk, cotton, and leather goods as well as wood and horn carvings, brass, marble, and ceramic items. Birdi" work, a metal craft exclusively Indian, has a jet-black surface streaked with silver. Handloom fabrics include cotton, silk, wool, lace, and brocades. Gauze scarves and saris from Kashmir, Varanasi, Kanchipuram and Mysore as available as are exquisite "Chikan" work and delicate hand embroidery from Lucknow. Carpets from Kashmir and traditional as well as modern jewelry set in both gold and silver can be found at irresistible

prices. Rosewood and walnut carvings and paper mache objects are also readily available.

You may ship goods directly to your home by paying a deposit (usually 50 percent of the cost), and balance payable upon receipt (COD) back home. **Do not buy wild animal skins or ivory; it is illegal.**

Before purchasing any item that a shopkeeper claims is 100 years old or older, ask for an export permit. A reputable shopkeeper will have the permit or help you secure one. Otherwise, the item is either a fake or has not been approved by the government for export.

In bazaars, bargaining is expected. Try offering a third of the price, and settle for 60%.

## TRAVELERS' ETIQUETTE

You are guaranteed to come up against cultural differences between our modern society and that of Nepal. People of different cultures think and act differently that we do. Attitudes toward time, business, and politics are governed by traditions and philosophies quite different from Western ideas, some of which are very old indeed. But experiencing different cultures is what international travel is all about.

When traveling, approach people as you would at home -- with an attitude of respect. When visiting national parks, abide by all regulations. This is for your safety as well as the safety of the animals and the habitat. Be considerate of the environment: Never litter!

## NOTES ON VISITING HOLY SITES

Visiting religious monuments demands respect. **Please be aware that you will have to remove your shoes to enter the sanctorum when visiting temples, even if it seems in ruins.** In some places, cloth overshoes may be provided for a small charge. All religions ask that you do not smoke or drink alcoholic beverages on the premises or speak in raised voices. Some structures are off-limits to visitors who do not practice the faith. Please respect this.

Women should always be dressed properly, and should cover their heads before entering a temple or mosque.

When you enter a mosque, you are supposed to step right foot first over the threshold into the courtyard. Some Hindu and Jain temples prohibit all leather products inside a shrine -- shoes, belts, handbags, camera cases. Many temples also expect you to purify yourself by washing your hands and feet in a nearby tap or tank before you enter.

No visitor in a temple should point his or her feet toward the Holy Book or step over any one sitting in prayer or meditation. In general, play it safe. If you decide to sit on the floor of a Hindu or Sikh temple, sit cross-legged or with your feet tucked beneath you. In some religious shrines, sexes are separated. Look around before you sit, and let the situation govern what you do.

Many unthinking tourists commit an **unforgivable sacrilege** when they visit a Buddhist monastery. You are welcome to spin any prayer wheel, but be aware that just as you must circumambulate the interior and exterior of a monastery, stupa, or mani wall in a clockwise direction, you **must** follow this rule when you spin a prayer wheel.

Inside the monastery, interior cushions and chairs are reserved for lamas (monks). Sit on the steps outside or on the floor. If you have the opportunity to meet a rimpoche (head lama), or a respected monk, it's polite not to turn your back on him when you leave. Also remove your hat and lower an umbrella within the confines of a monastery.

A journey to an exotic country is a very spiritually enriching and emotionally stimulating experience. This kind of travel necessitates that travelers be good-natured realists as well as romantics, who can appreciate the very differences they encounter. Travelers who possess positive attitudes and eagerness to learn make for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone. Please observe simple rules of common courtesy to better insure the success of the journey.

## BIRD WATCHING IN NEPAL

Nepal is a bird watcher's paradise with over 800 species (almost 10% of the world total) of birds. And among them, almost 600 are found in the Kathmandu Valley alone. The surrounding hills offer a varied ecology ranging from primary and secondary forests to rhododendron, oak and pine forests. In addition, the wetlands and open fields inside the Valley make up a diverse habitat for many species of birds.

The most popular bird watching spot is the Phulchoki hill, the highest peak on the Valley rim situated 20 km southeast of Kathmandu, with some 265 species recorded till date. The birds seen here include babblers, warblers, tits, thrushes, minivets, woodpeckers, eagles and many migrant birds. Godavari, at the foot of Phulchoki hill where the Royal Botanical Garden is situated, records over 100 species of birds including the lesser Racket-tailed drongo, Tibetan siskin and the spotted forktail.

The Shivapuri Watershed and Wildlife Reserve (Ph: 977-1-371644), situated 11 km to the north of Kathmandu, is another exciting location. Entrance fee is Rs. 250 for foreign visitors. Nagarjun Royal Forest, also known as Jamacho or Rani Ban, is situated 5 km from Kathmandu on the way to Kakani from Balaju. It delights bird enthusiasts with Blue magpies, kalij pheasants, Bonelli's eagles, Great Himalayan barbets and other exotic birds. Entrance fee is Rs. 10. Gokarna forest, 7 km to the northeast of Kathmandu, boasts the speckled Mountain thrush, orange-headed ground-thrush, brown wood owl and the white-bellied yuhina among other colorful varieties.

As for the wetlands in the Valley, the banks of the Manohara River on the way to Bhaktapur, and the Bagmati River, are good places for watching waders and waterfowls. Harboring 40 species of birds mostly dependent on wetlands, Taudaha, a lake on the way to Dakshinkali, attracts flocks of migrant birds.

## OVERVIEW OF NEPAL

In 1951, the Nepalese monarch ended the century-old system of rule by hereditary premiers, and instituted a cabinet system of government. Reforms in 1990 established a multiparty democracy within a framework of a constitutional monarchy.

Nepal, a tiny exotic kingdom, lies nestled in the majestic Himalayas. This mountain range stretches uninterrupted for 1,500 miles along the northern border of India, extending from Afghanistan to Burma. According to the theory of continental drift, the Indian peninsula was once part of the prehistoric supercontinent Gondwanaland. This vast territory drifted away from the supercontinent and impacted with the Asian landmass. When the two continental plates collided about 50 million years ago, a violent upward thrust along the edge of the Central Asian Tableland created the Himalaya Mountains. This unbroken chain of mountains has more than thirty summits that rise to heights exceeding 24,000 feet. The vast permanent snowfields on its peaks attest to its name, Himalaya or "snowy abode."

No other country on earth has a greater variation in altitude than Nepal. Near the Indian border, Nepal has a fertile tropical jungle known as the Terai that is close to sea level. Near the country's northern border lies the extraordinary peak of Mount Everest -- the highest point on Earth.

More than one-fourth of Nepal's land is above 10,000 feet. Steep slopes prevent large glacial formations and cause deep gorges to be cut by torrential run-offs. During summer, terraces of emerald agricultural fields dominate the landscape. Potatoes and barley are farmed at heights exceeding 13,000 feet.

Nepal has more than 24 million people, who are as diverse as its geography. Mountain people called "Sherpas" live mostly in eastern Nepal and are renowned for the services they provide to mountaineers. The temperate middle hills are inhabited by many different tribes, but most of them are farmers. Farming is also the main livelihood of the Terai people, whose rigid system of values and attitudes make them more conservative than the hill people.

Nepal has a wide variety of spoken languages. Many religious rites are still practiced as they have been for the last 2,000 years. In the north, Buddhism is influential but Hinduism predominates in the middle hills and the south. In the Kathmandu Valley, festivals and places of worship are shared by both religions and many of the people profess both faiths.

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 11 -----National Unity Day  
Jan 26 -----Vasant Panchami  
Jan 29 -----Martyrs' Day  
Feb 18 -----Shivaratri (in honour of Lord Shiva)  
Feb 19 -----Rashtriya Prajatantra Divas (Democracy Day)  
Mar 6 -----Holi  
Mar 8 -----Nepalese Women's Day  
Mar 20 -----Ghode Jatra (Festival of Horses)  
Mar 29 -----Chaite Dashain  
Mar 30 -----Ram Nawami (Birthday of Lord Ram)  
Apr 14 -----Navabarsha (New Year's Day)  
May 2 -----Buddha Jayanti (Birthday of Lord Buddha)  
Aug 30 -----Rakshya Bandhan (Janai Purnima)  
Sep 1 -----Gai Jatra (Procession of Cows)  
Sep 6 -----Krishna Asthami (Birthday of Lord Krishna)  
Sep 17 -----Teej (Festival of Women)  
Sep 27 -----Indra Jatra (Festival of Rain God)  
Oct 22 -----Dasain (Durga Puja Festival)  
Nov 9 -----Constitution Day  
Nov 12 -----Deepawali (Festival of Lights)  
Dec 29 -----King Birendra's Birthday

## DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness,

fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects. Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- **Avoid** alcohol and caffeine, however, just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to sluggish.
- Once comfortably onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment on the plane. Bright lights have been shown to have a strong effect on individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eye shades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Get adequate rest before starting on your journey to help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

*In addition to the many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, and others, there are many books relating to Nepal. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. These books may be obtained through most bookstores or on the World Wide Web.*

### ARRESTING GOD IN KATHMANDU

#### Samrat Upadhyay

From the first Nepali author writing in English to be published in the West, *Arresting God in Kathmandu* brilliantly explores the nature of desire and spirituality in a changing society. With the assurance and unsentimental wisdom of a long-established writer, Upadhyay records the echoes of modernization throughout love and family. Here are husbands and wives bound together by arranged marriages but sometimes driven elsewhere by an intense desire for connection and transcendence. In a city where gods are omnipresent, where privacy is elusive and family defines identity, these men and women find themselves at the mercy of their desires but at the will of their society. Psychologically rich and astonishingly acute, *Arresting God in Kathmandu* introduces a potent new voice in contemporary fiction.

### HIGH EXPOSURE: AN ENDURING PASSION FOR EVEREST AND UNFORGIVING PLACES

#### David Breashears, Foreword by Jon Krakauer

For generations of resolute adventurers, from George Mallory to Sir Edmund Hillary to Jon Krakauer, Mount Everest and the world's other greatest peaks have provided the ultimate testing ground. But the question remains: Why climb? In *High Exposure*, elite mountaineer and acclaimed Everest filmmaker David Breashears answers with an intimate and captivating look at his life. For Breashears, climbing has never been a question of risk taking: Rather, it is the pursuit of excellence and a quest for self-knowledge. Danger comes, he argues, when ambition blinds reason. The stories this world-class climber and great adventurer tells will surprise you -- from discussions of competitiveness on the heights to a frank description of the 1996 Everest tragedy.

### CARAVANS OF THE HIMALAYA

#### Eric Valli, Tenzing Norbu (Illustrator), Diane Summers

Frenchman Eric Valli and Australian Diane Summer met on a bus in Nepal ten years ago. Since then, the country has become their home, and they have traveled extensively with their two young daughters in the Himalaya and in Asia as a whole, making a living by photographing and recording the region's threatened traditional cultures. *Caravan of the Himalaya* is an account of the author's latest foray: a brilliant record of the two years they spent with the Dolpo-pa, a nomadic people who live between the high peaks of the Himalaya and the Tibetan plateau Chang Tang. In a vivid and highly readable text, the authors recount their adventures with the Dolpo-pa. They explain how they learned the language and how they traveled the grueling route through the mountains to Tibet. They explore the history and traditions of his remarkable civilization, rich in myth and legend. And they describe the bonds of friendship that they developed with the people. The photographs they took during their time there, reproduced here in stunning color enhance their story. Taking us into an unknown realm, they capture the very essence of a land and people so remote from Western imagination.

### THE VIOLET SHYNESS OF THEIR EYES: NOTES FROM NEPAL

**Barbara J. Scot**

A sudden mid-life crisis in 1990 prompted high school social studies teacher Scot to leave Portland, Ore., for a stint teaching English in Nepal. The brief entries in this diary interweave her experience of Nepalese society, including the inferior status of Nepali women, with memories of what she describes as "a male-dominated childhood with no men," her father having left home when she was an infant. Although occasionally the analogies Scot draws are forced or disjointed, a sincere and generous tone strengthens the writing, and sometimes her observations are uncommonly just, as when she notes how her difficulties with the Nepali language have brought greater understanding of her son's struggle with dyslexia. Stories of culture shock are less revealing, such as the stilted dinner party at which Scot's roommate served spaghetti for their native neighbors. The most amusing anecdotes come out of Scot's attempts to assist a Nepali man in studying for the standardized Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which involves listening comprehension of passages on topics like ordering the house dressing in a restaurant and the uses of Muzak. Photos.

**PLANTS AND PEOPLE OF NEPAL****Narayan P. Manandhar, Sanjay Manandhar**

"Ranging in elevation from just above sea level to the peak of the world's highest mountain, Nepal embraces a profusion of habitats for plants and people. The author of *Plants and People of Nepal*, Narayan P. Manandhar, has spent decades in a firsthand study of the ethnobotanical riches of Nepal's flora. He has conducted field research in all 75 districts of Nepal, on foot, in a lifelong effort to identify the plants and record their traditional roles in Nepalese society. The result is this book, his magnum opus, in which he describes the uses of an astonishing 1517 kinds of plants belonging to 858 genera and 195 families, equal to perhaps one-fifth of the entire Nepalese flora. Many of the plants have more than one application, and 1002 medicinal plants, 651 food plants, and

696 plants used for a rich variety of other purposes are recorded here. This indigenous wisdom is dying with the older generation, so we are fortunate that Dr. Manandhar has rescued this heritage for his fellow Nepalese and, indeed, all who are concerned about the wealth of knowledge to be obtained from this fascinating country." Nepal's many ethnic groups make their own distinctive uses of the plants. A chapter describes 14 of the most important groups, including details on festivals, marriage customs, burial ceremonies, and other aspects of their cultures. An appendix organizes the plants by usage and serves as a practical cross-reference to the core of the book, the alphabetically arranged compilation. The author has provided an index to more than 6800 vernacular plant names as well as a bibliography, glossary, and index of scientific names. More than 830 drawings and 48 color photographs by the author illustrate the text.

**SHERPAS: REFLECTIONS ON CHANGE IN HIMALAYAN NEPAL****James F. Fisher, Foreword by Edmund Hillary**

James Fisher combines the strengths of technical anthropology, literary memoir, and striking photography in this telling study of rapid social change in Himalayan Nepal. The author first visited the Sherpas of Nepal when he accompanied Sir Edmund Hillary on the Himalayan Schoolhouse Expedition of 1964. Returning to the Everest region several times during the 1970s and 1980s, he discovered that the construction of the schools had far less impact than one of the by-products of their building: a short-take-off-and-landing airstrip. By reducing the time it took to travel between Kathmandu and the Everest region from a hike of several days to a 45-minute flight, the airstrip made a rapid increase in tourism possible. Beginning with his impressions of Sherpa society in pre-tourist days, Fisher traces the trajectory of contemporary Sherpa society reeling under the impact of modern education and mass tourism, and assesses the Sherpa's concerns for their future and how they believe these problems should be and eventually will be resolved.

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**NOTES:**

# CLOTHING / PACKING CHECKLIST

Check the items below to be taken with you on your trip. Additional items may be added in the blank spaces provided. This is not intended as an all-inclusive list, but only as a suggested packing guide.

## CLOTHING – WOMEN

- Comfortable outfit for air travel
  - Sandals or casual shoes
  - Walking shoes or tennis shoes
  - Rubber thongs (shower)
  - Hat
  - Windbreaker or jacket
  - Pullover sweater or sweatshirt
  - Long pants \*
  - Shorts \*
  - Socks
  - Short sleeve shirts \*
  - Long sleeve shirts \*
  - T-shirts
  - Pajamas
  - Light-weight robe/cover-up
  - Swim-suit/cover-up
  - Casual slacks/skirt
  - Blouses
  - Belt(s)
  - Underwear
  - Scarves
  - Costume Jewelry
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## CLOTHING - MEN

- Comfortable outfit for air travel
  - Sandals or casual shoes
  - Walking shoes or tennis shoes
  - Rubber thongs (showers)
  - Hat
  - Windbreaker or jacket
  - Pullover sweater or sweatshirt
  - Long pants \*
  - Shorts \*
  - Socks
  - Short sleeve shirts \*
  - Long sleeve shirts \*
  - T-Shirts
  - Pajamas
  - Light weight robe/cover-up
  - Swim trunks
  - Casual slacks
  - Shirts
  - Belt(s)
  - Underwear
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## TOILETRIES

- Anti-malarial pills
  - Vitamins
  - Aspirin/Tylenol
  - Motion sickness pills
  - Short-acting sleeping pills
  - Decongestant
  - Antibiotic
  - Lomotil / Pepto-Bismol
  - Antacid
  - Antibiotic ointment
  - Insect repellent
  - Sun screen/Sun block
  - Lip balm
  - Shampoo & Conditioner
  - Prescription medications
  - Band-Aids
  - Deodorant
  - Toothpaste & toothbrush
  - Feminine Hygiene supplies
  - Dental floss
  - Mouthwash
  - Hairbrush/comb
  - Razor
  - Q-Tips/cotton balls
  - Nail clippers
  - Nail file
  - Tweezers
  - Make-up
  - Hand lotion
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## CAMERA EQUIPMENT

- Camera/Lenses
- Plenty of film
- Lead Protective Film Bags
- Camera bag
- Lens filters
- Cleaning Fluid/Tissues
- Lens Brush/Puffer
- Extra Batteries/Charger
- Flash & Flash batteries
- Zip-lock bags
- Camera instruction book
- Stick-on labels for film
- Video Camera/Charger
- Blank video tapes

## SUNDRIES

- Passport
- International Certificate
- Vaccinations-Health Card
- Airline tickets/vouchers
- Money Pouch
- Credit Cards
- Travelers Checks
- Small calculator
- Sunglasses
- Prescription glasses
- Eyeglass case
- Small Alarm Clock
- Converter/plug set
- Binoculars
- Small flashlight
- Sewing kit
- Small scissors
- Kleenex
- Handi-wipes
- Zip-lock bags
- Travel clothes line
- Pillowcase for dirty clothes
- Small notebook or journal
- Pen
- Deck of cards
- Books/Magazines
- Address book for postcards
- Photocopy of passport and airline tickets
- Hard candy
- Bandana
- Extra sm. Collapsible bag
- Neck pillow for airline travel

## OTHER

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\*Clothing should be comfortable