



THE COMPLETE VISITOR'S GUIDE

NEPAL

Travel Plan



Everything you need to know before you fly,
and everything you'll be glad you knew once you land.

Visas • Budgets • Seasons • Trekking permits • Altitude safety • Culture • Food



CHAPTER 01

Why Nepal

Nepal is roughly the size of England, and inside it the land climbs from steaming subtropical jungle at 59 metres to the summit of Everest at 8,848.86 metres. Nowhere else compresses that much world into that little space. You can watch a one-horned rhino at breakfast and be standing in a Sherpa village under an 8,000-metre wall two days later.

It is the birthplace of the Buddha, the only country whose flag isn't a rectangle, and one of the few in Asia never colonised by a European power. It has more than 120 living languages, over a hundred ethnic groups, and a calendar that is currently running about 57 years ahead of the one on your phone. Kathmandu alone holds seven UNESCO World Heritage monument zones inside a single valley.

But the reason people come back is simpler than any of that. Nepal is a country where a stranger will walk you to the place you were looking for rather than point at it, where a guesthouse owner at 4,400 metres will refill your dal bhat until you surrender, and where the mountains are genuinely, physically overwhelming in a way photographs never manage to convey.

8 of 14 of the world's peaks above 8,000 m	4 UNESCO World Heritage sites	123+ languages spoken across the country
6% of all the world's bird species	+5:45 the world's only 45-minute time zone	59 m lowest point, to 8,848.86 m highest

This guide assumes nothing

You don't need to be a trekker. Around half of Nepal's visitors never put on a pair of boots — they come for the temples, the food, the jungle parks and the mountain views from a comfortable hotel terrace. Everything in this guide works whether you're heading to Everest Base Camp or planning a week of good coffee and old cities.

One honest warning

Nepal rewards flexibility and punishes tight schedules. Mountain flights get weather-delayed, roads get blocked, and the bus that says four hours means seven. Build slack into your plan and the country becomes delightful instead of stressful.

CHAPTER 02

Nepal at a glance

The practical facts, and then the one that shapes everything else about your trip: altitude.

Capital	Kathmandu (about 1,400 m above sea level)
Currency	Nepalese Rupee (NPR / Rs). Notes: 5 to 1,000
Languages	Nepali is official; 120+ others spoken. English is widely used in tourism and by most young people in cities
Time zone	UTC +5:45 — the only 45-minute offset in the world
Calling code	+977
Electricity	230 V, 50 Hz. Plug types C, D and M — bring a universal adapter
Working week	Sunday to Friday. Saturday is the weekend, so government offices and many shops close
Calendar	Bikram Sambat, around 56–57 years ahead of the Gregorian calendar. New Year falls in mid-April
Driving side	Left
Religion	Majority Hindu, with a large Buddhist population; the two blend closely in practice. Islam, Kirat and Christianity are also present

The country is stacked vertically

Nepal is only about 200 km from south to north, but it rises through six distinct ecological zones in that distance. Understanding where your destination sits on this ladder tells you what to pack, what you'll eat, and whether altitude is going to matter.

8,848.86 m Mount Everest / Sagarmatha**Snow & ice**
above 5,500 m

Permanent snowline · 8 of the world's
14 peaks over 8,000 m

High Himalaya
4,000 – 5,500 m

Yak pasture, glacial moraine, trekking passes
Everest Base Camp 5,364 m

High mountains
2,500 – 4,000 m

Namche 3,440 m · rhododendron & pine
Sherpa and Tamang villages

Middle hills
800 – 2,500 m

Kathmandu 1,400 m · Pokhara 820 m
terraces, temples, most of the population

Siwalik hills
300 – 1,500 m

Foothill ridges, river gorges, forest

Terai plains
60 – 300 m

Chitwan, Bardia, Lumbini · rhinos, tigers,
sal forest, hot & subtropical

59 m Kechana Kalan, Jhapa — Nepal's lowest point

CHAPTER 03

Entry & visas

For most nationalities Nepal is one of the easiest countries in Asia to enter. You can get a visa on arrival, pay cash, and be through in under half an hour.

Visa type	Duration	Fee (USD)	Notes
Tourist	15 days	30	Tight for anything beyond Kathmandu and Pokhara
Tourist	30 days	50	The sensible default for most visitors
Tourist	90 days	125	For long treks, volunteering or slow travel
Extension	15 days min.	45	Then roughly USD 3 per extra day

All tourist visas are multiple-entry by default, so you can cross into India or Tibet and return without paying again. Total stay is capped at 150 days per calendar year.

Where you can get one

- **Tribhuvan International Airport (KTM)**, Kathmandu — the main gateway
- Land borders at Kakarbhitta, Birgunj, Sunauli / Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj, Mahendranagar and Rasuwagadhi
- In advance from a Nepalese embassy or consulate

What to bring to the desk

- Passport valid **6 months** beyond entry, with a blank page
- One passport photo (bring two spares for permits)
- **Cash in clean, recent USD notes** — torn, soiled or pre-2009 bills are routinely refused
- Your completed online arrival form

Save yourself the queue

Fill in the arrival form online at nepaliport.immigration.gov.np before you fly and bring the printout or QR code. In October, November, March and April the airport queue can genuinely take an hour; with the form done it's usually twenty minutes.

Special cases

- **Indian nationals** need no visa at all
- **Other SAARC nationals** get one free 30-day visa per calendar year
- **Children under 10** are usually exempt from the fee
- A **small number of nationalities cannot use visa on arrival** and must apply at an embassy first — check your own status before booking flights

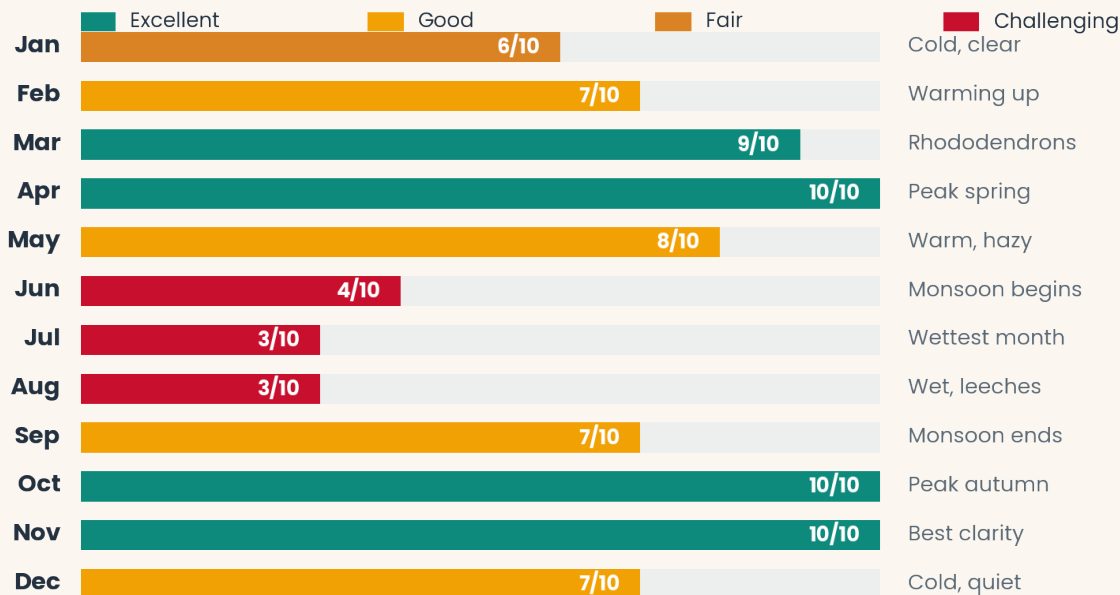
Extending your stay

Extensions are handled at the Department of Immigration in Kathmandu (Kalikasthan) or Pokhara. Apply online first, then attend in person. The minimum extension is 15 days for USD 45, with roughly USD 3 per day after that. Do it **before** your visa expires — overstaying carries a daily fine plus the visa cost, and a bad record at the border.

CHAPTER 04

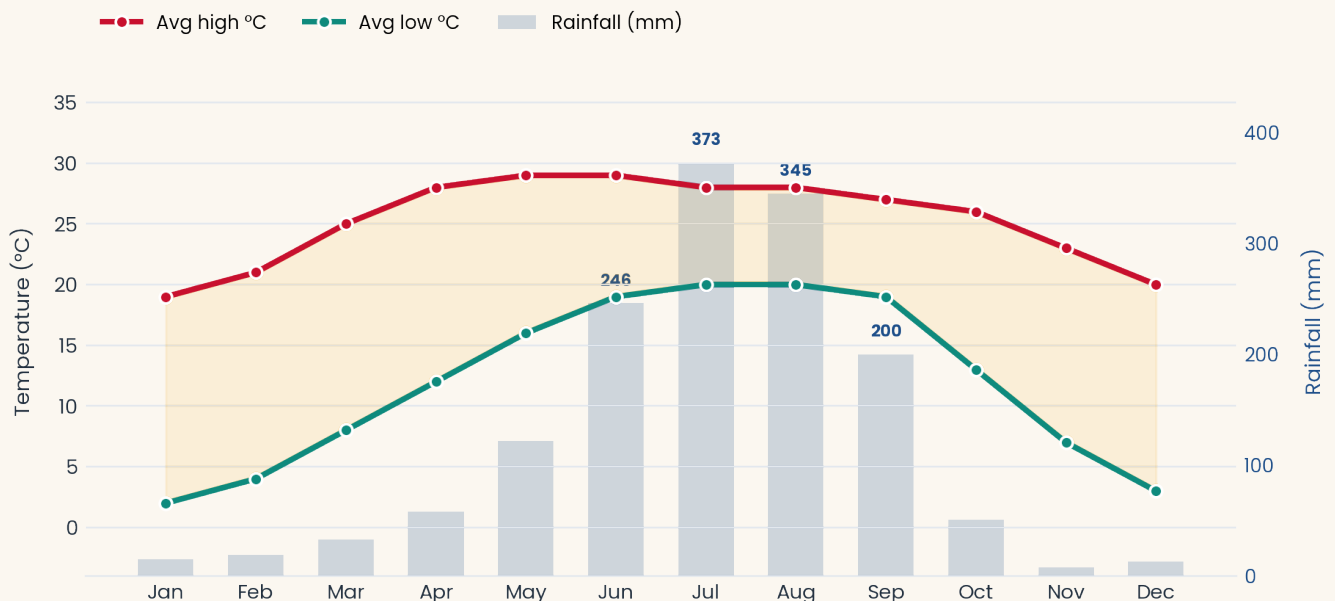
When to visit

Nepal has two headline seasons — autumn and spring — and two that most guides write off too quickly. Here is the honest month-by-month picture.



Overall suitability for sightseeing and trekking, scored on clarity, temperature, rainfall and trail conditions.

Kathmandu's climate through the year



Average high and low temperatures with monthly rainfall, Kathmandu Valley (approx. 1,400 m). Subtract roughly 6°C for every 1,000 m you climb.

CHAPTER 04 CONTINUED

Choosing your season

Autumn — late Sep to Nov ★ best overall

The monsoon has washed the air clean and the mountains are at their sharpest. Stable weather, comfortable daytime temperatures, and Dashain and Tihar both fall in this window. It is also the busiest and priciest time — book teahouses and Lukla flights well ahead.

Spring — Mar to May ★ excellent

Rhododendron forests turn red and pink across the middle hills, days are warm and the trails are lively with expedition traffic heading for Everest. Views get hazier as May heats up, but temperatures at altitude are far kinder than in autumn.

Winter — Dec to Feb underrated

Crystal-clear skies, almost empty trails and low prices. Lower treks like Poon Hill and Ghandruk are genuinely lovely. Nights below 3,000 m drop near freezing and high passes such as Thorong La and the Everest Three Passes may be closed by snow. Kathmandu's air quality is at its worst.

Monsoon — Jun to Aug for specialists

Heavy afternoon rain, landslides, leeches on forest trails and cloud where the mountains should be. But the countryside is impossibly green, prices drop, and the rain-shadow regions behind the Himalaya — Upper Mustang, Dolpo, Manang — stay largely dry and are at their best.

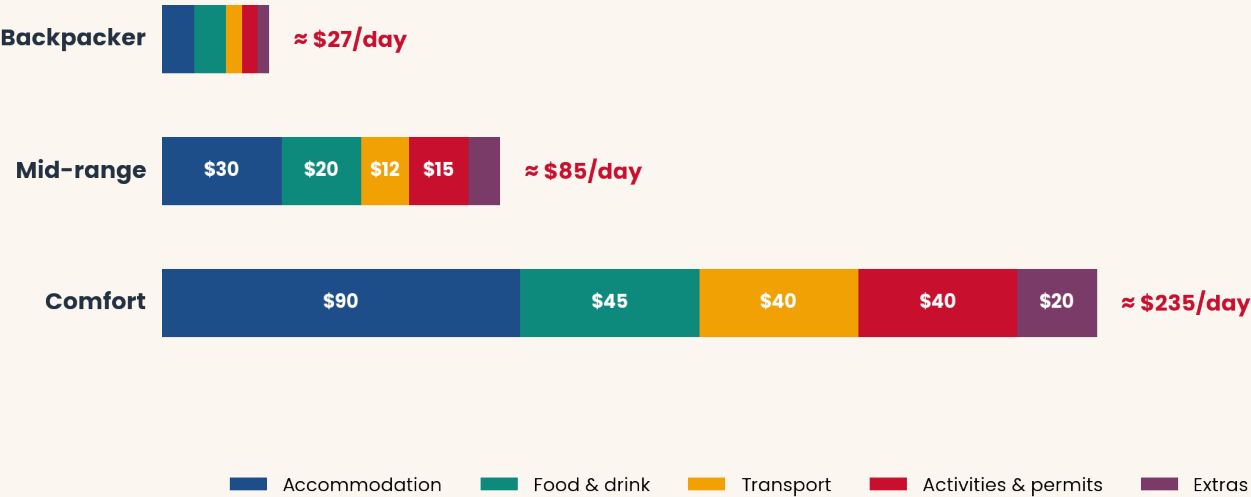
Timing tips that actually change your trip

- **Dashain (Sep/Oct) and Tihar (Oct/Nov)** are wonderful to witness, but government offices close, buses are packed with people travelling home, and some businesses shut for days. Plan around them, not into them.
- **Book Lukla flights for the first slot of the morning.** Cloud builds through the day and afternoon cancellations are common. In peak season flights often depart from Manthali (Ramechhap) instead of Kathmandu — a four to five hour pre-dawn drive that catches many people out.
- **Late September is a gamble worth taking.** The monsoon usually breaks somewhere in the last ten days of the month. Arrive then and you may get peak-season views at shoulder-season prices.
- **Avoid the first week of your trip being your hardest.** Whatever the season, give yourself a day or two in Kathmandu before heading uphill.

CHAPTER 05

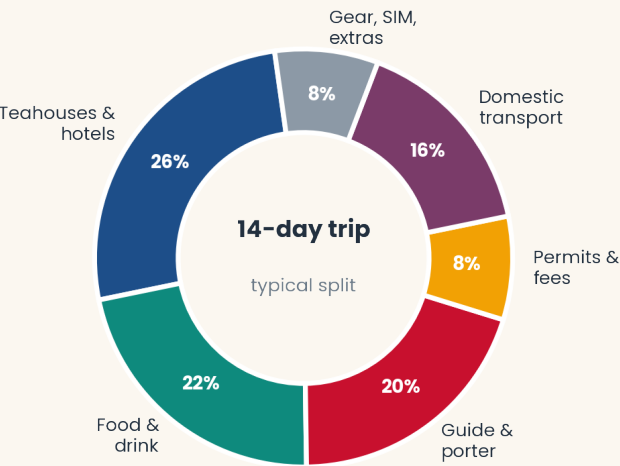
What it costs

Nepal is one of the best-value countries in the world to travel in. Your biggest single decision is whether you hire a guide and porter — that choice roughly doubles a trekking budget, and is worth every rupee for most people.



Daily spend per person, excluding international flights and insurance.

Where the money goes



Three ways to spend less

- **Eat dal bhat.** It is the best value meal in the country and usually comes with free refills.
- **Take tourist buses instead of flights** where the road is decent — Kathmandu to Pokhara costs a tenth of the flight.
- **Travel in a small group.** Guides, porters, jeeps and permits for restricted areas all split neatly across two to four people.

Don't cut these

- Travel insurance with helicopter evacuation
- A licensed, insured guide at altitude
- Decent boots and a warm sleeping bag

CHAPTER 05 CONTINUED

Price reference

Indicative 2026 prices in tourist areas. Local prices away from Thamel and Lakeside are often noticeably lower; prices on trekking routes rise steadily with altitude because everything is carried or flown in.

What	Typical price (NPR)	≈ USD
Dorm bed or basic guesthouse	700 – 1,500	5 – 11
Mid-range hotel, double room	3,500 – 8,000	26 – 60
Teahouse room on a trek	500 – 1,500	4 – 11
Dal bhat at a local place	250 – 450	2 – 3
Dal bhat high on a trek	700 – 1,400	5 – 10
Plate of momo	200 – 400	1.50 – 3
Local beer (bar price)	350 – 600	3 – 4.50
Bottled water — city / high trek	30 – 60 / 150 – 400	0.25 / 1 – 3
Tourist bus, Kathmandu – Pokhara	1,200 – 2,500	9 – 19
Flight, Kathmandu – Pokhara	10,000 – 17,000	75 – 125
Flight, Kathmandu – Lukla (one way)	27,000 – 32,000	200 – 240
Taxi across Kathmandu	400 – 800	3 – 6
Licensed trekking guide, per day	4,000 – 5,400	30 – 40
Porter, per day	3,000 – 3,800	22 – 28
Chitwan safari package, 2 nights	16,000 – 34,000	120 – 250
Paragliding in Pokhara	11,000 – 15,000	85 – 110
Everest scenic mountain flight	27,000 – 34,000	200 – 250

Why a bottle of water costs six times more at 4,900 m

Above the roadhead, every single item in a teahouse arrived on the back of a porter, a mule or a yak — or in a helicopter. A 40 % price rise between Namche and Gorak Shep isn't opportunism, it's the cost of three more days of carrying. Bring purification tablets or a filter, use the refill stations, and the same logic saves you money and keeps plastic off the trail.

CHAPTER 06

Getting there & around

Arriving

Tribhuvan International Airport (KTM) in Kathmandu handles almost all international arrivals. Pokhara (PKR) and Gautam Buddha Airport at Bhairahawa (BWA) have international terminals but very limited scheduled service. Overland entry from India is straightforward at several borders; the Rasuwagadhi crossing to Tibet requires a Chinese group visa arranged through an agency.

From the airport, use the prepaid taxi counter inside the terminal or book through **Pathao** or **InDrive** once you have data. Thamel is 20–40 minutes away depending on traffic. Agree the fare before you get in if you're taking a street taxi.

Moving between places

Option	Best for	What to know
Tourist bus	Kathmandu – Pokhara – Chitwan	Comfortable, air-conditioned, one or two departures each morning. Book a day ahead in season. Allow 7–9 hours to Pokhara.
Domestic flight	Long hops and mountain airstrips	25 minutes to Pokhara, 35 to Lukla. Weather delays are normal. Baggage limits are strict — usually 10–15 kg.
Local bus	Short hops and going off-route	Very cheap, very slow, very full. A genuine experience, but not with large luggage or a tight schedule.
Private jeep or car	Groups, families, rough roads	The most reliable way to reach trailheads. Roughly NPR 15,000–30,000 per day with driver, split between passengers.
Taxi	Getting around cities	Meters exist but are rarely used. Agree the price first, or use a ride app for a fixed fare.
Scooter or motorbike	Pokhara and the valley	Widely rented. You need an international licence, a helmet, and genuine confidence in chaotic traffic.

Road safety — the honest picture

Road accidents are the single largest risk to visitors in Nepal, far more so than altitude or crime. Mountain highways are narrow, winding and often shared with overloaded trucks. You can reduce the risk substantially: travel in daylight, choose established tourist bus operators over the cheapest local option, sit away from the front, and never board a bus whose driver appears rushed or unwell. If a road looks bad after heavy rain, wait a day. Landslides during and just after the monsoon close highways regularly.

CHAPTER 07

Where to go

Eight regions, and roughly how long each deserves. Almost every first trip is built from the first four.

Kathmandu Valley

2 – 4 DAYS

Three medieval royal cities — Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur — plus the Swayambhunath and Boudhanath stupas and the riverside temples of Pashupatinath. Newar wood carving, courtyard architecture and the best food scene in the country.

Pokhara

2 – 4 DAYS

Lakeside town under the Annapurna wall. Sunrise from Sarangkot, boating on Phewa Tal, the World Peace Pagoda, and some of the world's best paragliding. The launchpad for most Annapurna treks.

Chitwan & Bardia

2 – 3 DAYS

Lowland jungle national parks. One-horned rhino are near-guaranteed in Chitwan; Bardia is quieter, wilder and your best chance of a tiger. Tharu villages and culture are part of the experience.

Lumbini

1 – 2 DAYS

The birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, marked by the Maya Devi Temple and the Ashoka Pillar, surrounded by a monastic zone where dozens of countries have each built a temple in their own tradition.

Everest region (Khumbu)

12 – 18 DAYS

Namche Bazaar, Tengboche Monastery, the Gokyo lakes and Base Camp itself. Sherpa heartland, and the most dramatic high-mountain trekking on earth. Reached by the famous Lukla flight or a long approach walk.

Annapurna region

4 – 18 DAYS

The most varied trekking in Nepal: Poon Hill in four days, Annapurna Base Camp in a week or so, the full Circuit over Thorong La in two weeks. Excellent teahouses and the easiest logistics of any region.

Langtang

7 – 10 DAYS

The closest high trek to Kathmandu — no flight needed. A glacial valley of Tamang villages, rebuilt with remarkable resilience after the 2015 earthquake. Quieter trails and warm hospitality.

Off the usual route

VARIES

Bandipur's car-free Newar high street, the tea gardens of Ilam, Rara Lake in the far west, walled Lo Manthang in Upper Mustang, Tansen, Janakpur's Mithila art, and Gorkha, where modern Nepal began.

CHAPTER 08

Ready-made itineraries

Three plans that work. Each assumes you arrive and depart through Kathmandu, and each has a spare day built in — use it, because something will need it.

The First-Timer

7 days • no trekking • easy pace

Day 1	Arrive Kathmandu. Rest, walk Thamel, eat momo. Do nothing ambitious.
Day 2	Kathmandu Durbar Square, Swayambhunath at golden hour, evening at Boudhanath.
Day 3	Bhaktapur and Patan — the two best-preserved royal cities. Try juju dhau.
Day 4	Tourist bus or short flight to Pokhara. Sunset by Phewa Lake.
Day 5	Sarangkot for sunrise over Annapurna, then paragliding or the World Peace Pagoda.
Day 6	Drive to Chitwan. Afternoon Tharu village visit and river sunset.
Day 7	Morning jungle safari, then fly or drive back to Kathmandu.

Culture & a Taste of the Mountains

10 days • short trek • moderate fitness

Days 1–2	Kathmandu Valley — Durbar Squares, Boudhanath, Bhaktapur.
Day 3	Travel to Pokhara. Arrange permits and meet your guide.
Days 4–7	Ghorepani Poon Hill trek: Nayapul, Ulleri, Ghorepani, sunrise at Poon Hill (3,210 m), then Ghandruk and back. Teahouses throughout.
Day 8	Recover in Pokhara. Massage, lakeside, a very large dinner.
Day 9	Fly or drive to Chitwan or back to Kathmandu for last shopping.
Day 10	Buffer day, then depart.

Everest Base Camp

16 days • the classic • good fitness required

Days 1–2	Kathmandu. Final gear check in Thamel, permits arranged, briefing.
Day 3	Fly to Lukla (2,860 m). Walk to Phakding.
Days 4–5	Namche Bazaar (3,440 m), with a full acclimatisation day. This day is not optional.
Days 6–8	Tengboche monastery, Dingboche (4,410 m) and a second acclimatisation day.
Days 9–11	Lobuche, Gorak Shep, Everest Base Camp (5,364 m) and sunrise on Kala Patthar (5,545 m).
Days 12–14	Descend via Pheriche and Namche to Lukla.
Days 15–16	Fly to Kathmandu, keeping a spare day for weather delays. Depart.

How long do you actually need?

The single most common planning mistake is booking a trek that exactly fills the available days. These are realistic minimums — including travel to and from the trailhead, but not including a weather buffer.

Destination	Minimum realistic time	Comfortable
Kathmandu Valley	2 days	3 – 4 days
Pokhara	2 days	3 days
Chitwan or Bardia	2 nights, 3 days	3 nights
Lumbini	1 night	2 nights
Ghorepani Poon Hill trek	4 days walking, 6 from Pokhara	7 days
Annapurna Base Camp	7 days walking, 9 from Pokhara	11 days
Langtang Valley	7 days walking, 9 from Kathmandu	10 days
Everest Base Camp	12 days walking, 14 from Kathmandu	16 days
Annapurna Circuit	12 days walking	16 – 18 days

Adapting these plans

- **Short on time?** Cut Lumbini before you cut a rest day.
- **Not trekking?** Swap the trek for Bandipur, Nagarkot or a few days in Bhaktapur — all easy add-ons from the valley.
- **Travelling with children or older parents?** Poon Hill, Chitwan and the Kathmandu Valley work beautifully; skip anything above 4,000 m.
- **Got three weeks?** Add the Annapurna Circuit, or pair Everest Base Camp with Gokyo over the Cho La pass.

Always keep one spare day

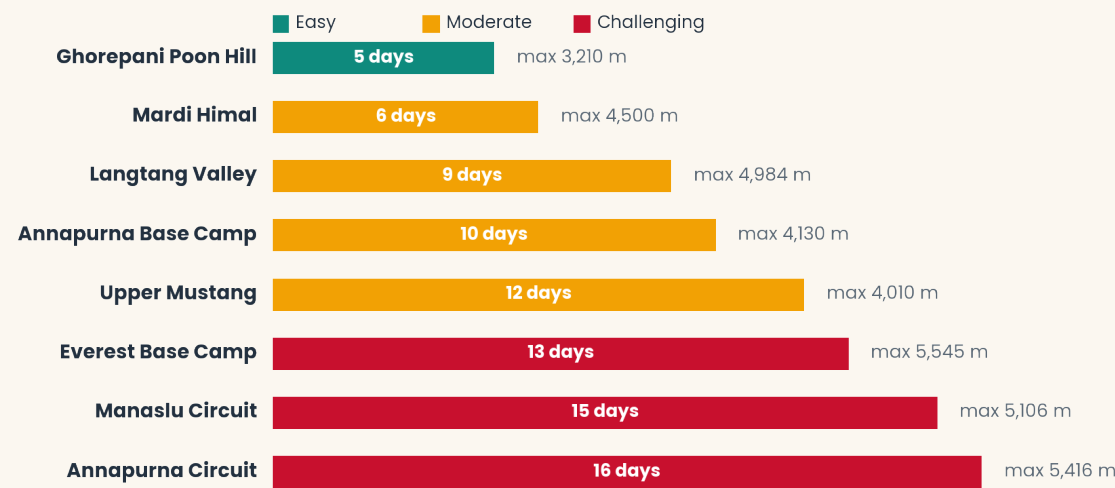
If your flight home is the day after you're due back from the mountains, you have no plan — you have a hope. Lukla flights are cancelled for weather several days most seasons, and highways close after heavy rain.

Build in **at least one buffer day** in Kathmandu at the end of any trek. If you don't need it, you get a day of shopping, a hot shower and a very large dinner. If you do need it, it saves your flight home.

CHAPTER 09

Trekking essentials

You do not need to be an athlete. The great majority of Nepal's classic treks are teahouse walks — you sleep in a lodge, eat cooked meals and carry a daypack. What they demand is patience with altitude and the ability to walk five to seven hours a day, repeatedly.



Typical duration and highest point reached on Nepal's most popular routes.

Permits, by region

Region / route	Permits required	Cost for foreign nationals
Everest — Base Camp, Gokyo, Three Passes	Sagarmatha National Park + Khumbu Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality	NPR 3,000 + NPR 3,000 = NPR 6,000 (≈ USD 45). No TIMS card needed.
Annapurna — Base Camp, Circuit, Poon Hill, Mardi Himal	ACAP + TIMS card	NPR 3,000 + NPR 2,000 = NPR 5,000 (≈ USD 38)
Langtang, Gosaikunda, Helambu	Langtang National Park + TIMS card	NPR 3,000 + NPR 2,000 = NPR 5,000 (≈ USD 38)
Manaslu Circuit (restricted)	Restricted Area Permit + MCAP + ACAP	USD 100 per week (Sep–Nov) or USD 75 (Dec–Aug), plus NPR 3,000 + NPR 3,000. Agency and a minimum of two trekkers required.
Upper Mustang (restricted)	Restricted Area Permit + ACAP	USD 500 for 10 days, then USD 50 per extra day, plus NPR 3,000

SAARC nationals pay reduced rates on most permits; children under 10 are generally exempt. Buy permits at the Nepal Tourism Board offices in Kathmandu (Bhrikutimandap) or Pokhara, or let a registered agency handle it. Bring your passport, spare photos and cash in rupees. **Fees change — confirm before you pay.**

CHAPTER 09 CONTINUED

Guides, porters and choosing well

The guide rule

Since April 2023 Nepal requires trekkers in national parks and conservation areas to be accompanied by a government-licensed guide, with permits issued through a registered agency. Enforcement varies by region and checkpoint, and the rule has been debated ever since — but plan on needing a guide, and confirm current requirements with the Nepal Tourism Board when you book.

Restricted areas — Manaslu, Upper Mustang, Dolpo, Tsum Valley, Nar Phu, Kanchenjunga — have always required an agency, a licensed guide, and usually a minimum of two trekkers.

What a guide actually gives you

- Someone who recognises altitude sickness before you do
- Language, and access to villages you'd otherwise walk past
- Bookings held in peak season when lodges are full
- A plan B when a pass closes or a flight is cancelled

Hiring fairly

A guide or porter's working conditions are your responsibility as an employer, not just the agency's. Before you commit, ask:

- Is the guide **licensed**, and insured for the altitude we're going to?
- Is the **porter insured**, and equipped with proper boots, jacket and sunglasses?
- What is the **load limit**? Twenty to twenty-five kilos is the accepted maximum — one porter should not carry two large duffels.
- Are wages, food and lodging included in what I'm paying?

Tipping

Not obligatory, but expected in trekking. As a guide: **USD 10–15 per day for a guide** and **USD 7–10 per day for a porter**, given at the end of the trek. Agree within your group how it will be pooled.

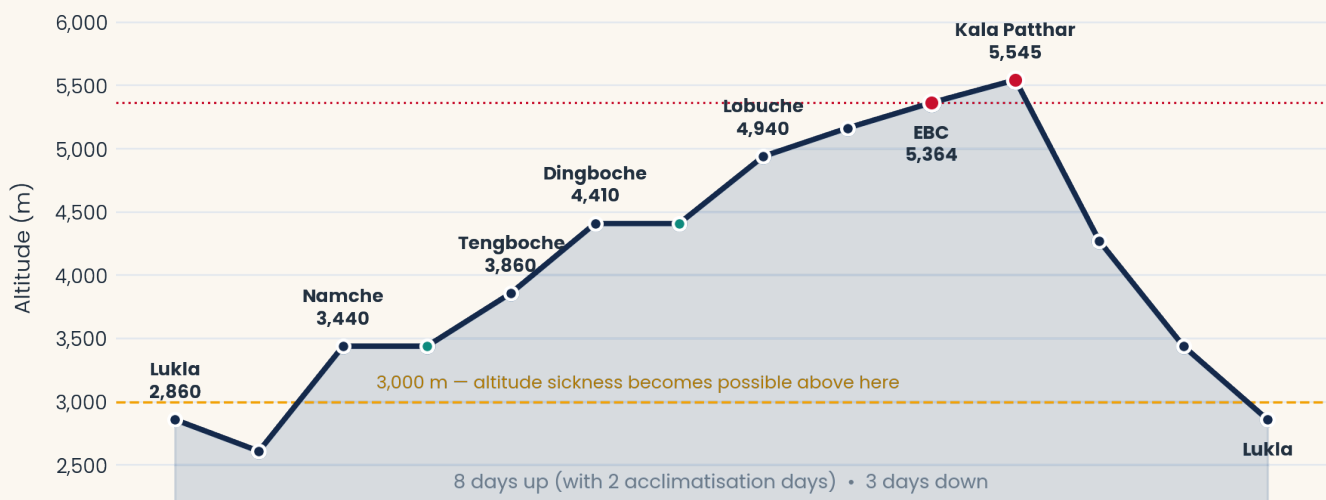
Booking an agency you can trust

- Check registration with the **Nepal Tourism Board** and membership of **TAAN** (Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal).
- Get the itinerary in writing, including what happens — and who pays — if a Lukla flight is cancelled for three days.
- Be suspicious of unusually cheap quotes. The saving almost always comes out of the porter's wages or the safety margin.
- Pay a deposit, not the full amount, and keep receipts.

CHAPTER 10

Altitude & staying safe

Altitude sickness is the one genuinely serious risk on a Nepal trek, and it has almost nothing to do with fitness. Young, strong, fast walkers get it more often than slow ones, because they climb too quickly. Read this section before you book anything above 3,000 metres.



A standard Everest Base Camp itinerary. Note the two full rest days — they are what make the route safe, and they are the first thing people cut when they are short on time.

The four rules

- Above 3,000 m, raise your **sleeping** altitude by no more than **300–500 m per day**.
- Take a **full rest day** every 3–4 days, or every 1,000 m gained.
- **Climb high, sleep low** — walk higher during the day, come back down to sleep.
- Drink **3–4 litres** daily, eat properly even without appetite, and skip alcohol.

Early warning signs (AMS)

Headache *plus* any of: nausea, dizziness, loss of appetite, unusual fatigue, or poor sleep.

What to do: stop climbing. Rest at the same altitude for 24 hours and hydrate. If symptoms improve, continue slowly. If they don't, or they worsen, go down.

Emergency signs — descend immediately, do not wait for morning

Confusion, clumsiness or an inability to walk a straight line. Severe breathlessness at rest. A wet, bubbling cough. Blue lips or fingernails. Severe headache that painkillers won't touch.

These are signs of high-altitude cerebral or pulmonary oedema (HACE / HAPE). Both can kill within hours. Descending 300–1,000 metres usually brings dramatic improvement, and descent is the only real cure — no medicine substitutes for it. Never leave someone with these symptoms alone, and never let anyone continue up because they've paid for the trip.

Medication

Acetazolamide (Diamox) can help you acclimatise and is widely used. Discuss it with a doctor before you travel — it is a prescription drug, has side effects, and interacts with sulfa allergies. It assists acclimatisation; it does not make it safe to climb faster.

Other risks worth planning for

- **Weather.** Cloud builds most afternoons and high passes can snow in unexpectedly. Start early, cross passes before midday, and accept that turning back is a normal part of mountain travel rather than a failure.
- **Exposure and cold.** Nights drop well below freezing above 4,000 m even in peak season. Hypothermia catches out people who sweat through layers during the day and then stop moving.
- **Trail hazards.** Suspension bridges, loose scree and landslide-scarred sections are all part of the route. Take them slowly, one person at a time on bridges.
- **Dogs.** Rabies exists in Nepal. Don't approach or feed village dogs. If bitten or scratched, wash the wound with soap under running water for 15 minutes and get to a clinic the same day — post-exposure treatment is effective but time-critical.
- **Theft.** Violent crime against visitors is rare, but opportunistic theft from lodge rooms happens. Use a padlock on your duffel and keep documents and cash on you.
- **Trekking alone.** Beyond the guide requirement, solo walking on quiet trails carries real risk if you turn an ankle out of phone coverage. Always tell someone your route and expected return.

Before you leave the trailhead

- Someone outside your group knows your **route and dates**
- Your **insurance details** are written on paper and shared with your guide
- You have **enough cash** for the whole trek plus an emergency margin
- Your phone has **offline maps**, and a power bank is charged
- You've agreed with your group what happens **if one person has to descend** — nobody goes down alone

CHAPTER 11

Health & insurance

Before you fly

- See a travel clinic **6–8 weeks ahead**. Commonly recommended: hepatitis A, typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis B, and rabies for long or remote trips.
- A **yellow fever certificate** is required only if you're arriving from a country where it's endemic.
- Nepal is largely **malaria-free** at altitude; low risk exists in parts of the Terai — ask your clinic about your specific route.
- Take a supply of any prescription medicine in original packaging, plus a copy of the prescription.

Build a small kit

Rehydration salts (Jeevan Jal is sold everywhere), loperamide, paracetamol and ibuprofen, antihistamine, antiseptic, blister plasters and tape, water purification tablets or a filter, high-SPF sunscreen and lip balm, and any altitude medication you've been prescribed.

Medical care

Pharmacies are plentiful and inexpensive, and many medicines available only on prescription at home are sold over the counter. For anything serious, Kathmandu has clinics used to treating travellers — **CIWEC Hospital** and the **Nepal International Clinic** are the two most often recommended, and both handle altitude-related illness. The **Himalayan Rescue Association** runs seasonal aid posts at Pheriche (Everest region) and Manang (Annapurna Circuit) staffed by volunteer doctors — they also give free daily altitude talks that are well worth attending.

While you're here

- **Never drink tap water.** Filter, purify or boil. Refill stations along the Annapurna and Everest trails are safe, cheap and keep plastic off the mountain.
- Eat food that's **freshly cooked and hot**. Dal bhat is made in volume and turned over constantly — it's usually the safest thing on the menu.
- Be careful with salads, ice and cut fruit outside good restaurants.
- **Kathmandu's air quality** is poor in the dry winter months. A decent mask genuinely helps if you have asthma.
- The sun at altitude is fierce even when it's cold. Sunglasses and sunscreen are not optional above 4,000 m.

The one thing not to skip

Travel insurance covering high-altitude trekking, helicopter evacuation and repatriation. A helicopter rescue from the Khumbu costs several thousand US dollars and is billed to you, not your government. Buy the policy before you leave home, read the altitude limit, and tell your travel companions where the details are.

One caution: there have been documented cases of unnecessary helicopter evacuations arranged for insurance payouts. Insist on a genuine medical reason, and don't agree to be flown out for mild symptoms that a rest day and a walk downhill would fix.

CHAPTER 12

Money & connectivity

Cash and cards

- The **Nepalese Rupee (NPR)** comes in notes from 5 to 1,000. Keep small notes — nobody has change for a 1,000 in a village.
- The **Indian Rupee is pegged at 1 INR = 1.60 NPR**. INR notes above 100 are not officially accepted in Nepal.
- **ATMs** are widespread in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Withdrawal limits are typically NPR 10,000–35,000 per transaction with a fee around NPR 500, so take the maximum each time.
- **Cards** work in hotels and larger restaurants, usually with a 3–4 % surcharge. Assume everywhere else is cash.
- Change money at licensed counters in Thamel or Lakeside and compare a couple — rates vary more than you'd expect.
- **Carry all your trekking cash with you.** There are no reliable ATMs beyond Namche or Jomsom.
- Nepalese Rupees are hard to exchange abroad. Spend them or convert before departure, and keep your exchange receipts.

Tipping guide

- Trekking guide: **USD 10–15 per day**
- Porter: **USD 7–10 per day**
- Restaurants: **10 %** if no service charge is on the bill (many already add 10 % service plus 13 % VAT)
- Driver: **NPR 500–1,000 per day**
- Hotel porter: **NPR 100–200**

Staying connected

- **Ncell** and **Nepal Telecom (NTC)** are the two networks. NTC generally has better coverage in remote mountain areas; Ncell is often faster in cities.
- Buy a tourist SIM at the airport or any phone shop. You need your **passport, a photo and a photocopy** — bring spares.
- Data is cheap: roughly NPR 500–1,500 for a generous monthly pack.
- **eSIMs** are available from both local networks and international providers if your phone supports them.
- Wi-Fi is standard in city hotels. On treks it is paid, slow and sold as Everest Link or AirLink cards — expect NPR 500–1,000 for a few hundred megabytes.
- **Charging on a trek costs money** — NPR 200–500 per hour at high lodges. Bring a 20,000 mAh power bank and a solar panel if you're going long.
- Download **offline maps** (Maps.me or Google offline) and your documents before you leave the city.

Bargaining, politely

Haggling is normal in markets, souvenir shops and with street taxis. It is **not** normal in restaurants, supermarkets, teahouses or anywhere with a printed price.

Start around 60–70 % of the asking price, stay cheerful, and know when to stop. The last hundred rupees you're arguing over is worth far more to the seller than to you.

CHAPTER 13

Culture & etiquette

Nepalis are generous with visitors and forgiving of honest mistakes. Still, a handful of small courtesies will change how you're received almost everywhere you go.

Please do

- ✓ Greet people with **Namaste**, palms together at the chest. **Namaskar** is the more respectful form for elders.
- ✓ **Remove your shoes** before entering homes, temples and monasteries. Watch what everyone else does.
- ✓ Walk **clockwise** around stupas, mani walls and prayer wheels — keep them on your right.
- ✓ **Ask before photographing people**, especially at cremation ghats, in monasteries and during rituals.
- ✓ Dress modestly at religious sites — shoulders and knees covered.
- ✓ Use your **right hand** to give, receive and eat.
- ✓ Accept tea when it's offered. It's a real welcome, and refusing feels cold.
- ✓ Learn a few words of Nepali. Even a bad *dhanyabaad* is warmly received.

Please don't

- ✗ Point the **soles of your feet** at people, shrines or food, or step over someone's outstretched legs.
- ✗ **Touch anyone's head** — including children's. It's the most sacred part of the body.
- ✗ Share food from your plate or drink by putting your lips to a shared bottle. Food touched by the mouth becomes *jutho* — ritually impure — and can't be offered to others.
- ✗ Walk into a traditional kitchen or touch water vessels unless you're invited.
- ✗ Take leather goods into some Hindu temples.
- ✗ Expect to enter the main courtyard of **Pashupatinath** if you are not Hindu — the surrounding complex is open, and it's extraordinary.
- ✗ Show much public affection — hand-holding between couples reads as forward in most settings.
- ✗ Photograph military installations, police posts or airport security areas.

On the trail

- Give way to **yaks, mules and porters** — and always stand on the **inside** of the trail, away from the drop. Loaded animals will not go around you.
- Greet everyone you pass. *Namaste* costs nothing and the trail runs on it.
- Ask before entering a monastery, and leave a small donation in the box.
- Don't play music out loud. Someone walked three weeks to build the silence you're standing in.

CHAPTER 14

What to eat

Nepali food is its own thing — lighter than North Indian, with Tibetan influence in the north and a distinct Newar tradition in the Kathmandu Valley. Eating well here costs very little.

Dal bhat	Lentil soup, rice, seasonal vegetable curry, pickle and often greens. The national meal, eaten twice a day by most Nepalis, and refills are usually free. There is a reason the trekking slogan is <i>dal bhat power, 24 hour</i> .
Momo	Steamed or fried dumplings with buff, chicken or vegetable filling. Order them <i>jhol</i> — swimming in a spiced tomato-sesame soup — and you'll understand the obsession.
Newari khaja set	The Kathmandu Valley's own cuisine: beaten rice with <i>choila</i> (spiced grilled buff), <i>bara</i> lentil patties, <i>chatamari</i> rice crepes and pickles. Sharp, smoky and completely distinct from Indian food.
Thukpa & thenthuk	Tibetan-influenced noodle soups from the high country. Exactly what you want at 4,000 metres in the dark.
Sel roti	A sweet, crisp ring of fermented rice batter, fried fresh. Everywhere during Tihar and Dashain.
Juju dhau	The 'king of yoghurt' from Bhaktapur — set in clay pots, thick enough to stand a spoon in. Non-negotiable.
Gundruk & dhido	Fermented leafy greens with a stiff millet or buckwheat porridge. Deeply traditional hill food, and an acquired taste worth acquiring.
Chatpate & pani puri	Street snacks — puffed rice with lime, chilli and onion, or crisp shells filled with spiced water. Cheap, addictive, best from a busy stall.
Tongba	Hot millet beer drunk through a bamboo straw from a wooden pot, topped up with boiling water. A Limbu and eastern-hills speciality.

Good to know

- **Vegetarians and vegans do very well.** A large share of the population is vegetarian and every menu has options.
- **Beef is not eaten** by most Hindus — the cow is sacred and protected by law. *Buff* (water buffalo) is common and is what's in most momo.
- Nepalis traditionally eat with the right hand. Cutlery is always available; using your hand is welcomed, not required.
- **Masala chiya** — spiced milk tea — is the national fuel. **Raksi** is the local distilled spirit.

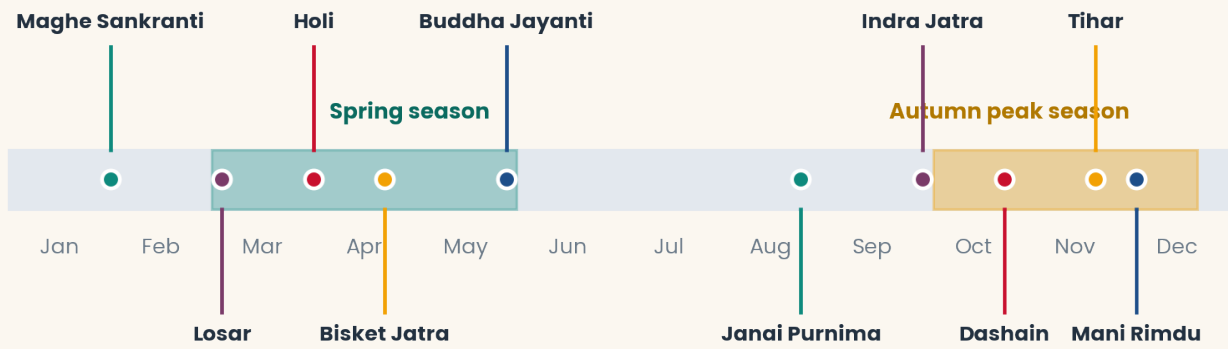
Eating on a trek

- Teahouse menus are near-identical across a whole route and get shorter and pricier as you climb. Some practical advice:
- Order the **dal bhat**. It's cooked fresh in volume, it's the best value on the menu, and refills are free.
 - Be cautious with **meat above Namche** — it has been carried up unrefrigerated for days.
 - Eat where you sleep. Lodges price rooms low expecting you to take meals there, and eating elsewhere is poor form.
 - Appetite drops at altitude. Eat anyway — you need the calories.

CHAPTER 15

Festivals

Nepal runs on a lunar calendar, so festival dates shift by weeks from one year to the next. Check the current year’s dates before you fix flights — and if your trip overlaps one, treat it as a gift rather than an obstacle.



Festival	When	What happens
Maghe Sankranti	mid-January	Midwinter feast marking longer days — sesame sweets, yam and ghee.
Losar	Feb – Mar	Tibetan and Sherpa New Year. Best seen at Boudhanath or in the Khumbu.
Holi	March	The festival of colours. Joyous and very messy — wear clothes you’ll bin.
Bisket Jatra	mid-April	Bhaktapur’s spectacular New Year chariot festival. A huge crowd-hauled chariot and a towering ceremonial pole.
Buddha Jayanti	April – May	The Buddha’s birth, enlightenment and death. Lumbini, Boudhanath and Swayambhunath fill with pilgrims.
Janai Purnima	Aug – Sep	Sacred thread renewal, and the pilgrimage to the lake at Gosaikunda.
Teej	Aug – Sep	Women in red gather to fast, sing and dance, notably at Pashupatinath.
Indra Jatra	September	Eight days of masked dancing in Kathmandu Durbar Square, and the chariot procession of the living goddess, the Kumari.
Dashain	Sep – Oct	The biggest festival of the year — fifteen days of family, feasting, kite-flying and swings. Much of the country closes.
Tihar	Oct – Nov	Five days of lights, marigold garlands and oil lamps. Crows, dogs and cows are each honoured on their own day. Kathmandu is beautiful.
Mani Rimdu	Oct – Nov	Nineteen days of ritual at Tengboche Monastery in the Everest region, with masked dances over the final three.

Travelling during Dashain and Tihar

These weeks are extraordinary to witness, but be realistic: government offices and many businesses close, long-distance buses sell out as people travel home to their villages, and prices rise. Book transport well in advance, expect some museums and offices to be shut, and lean into it — you'll be invited to more meals than you can eat.

Joining in, respectfully

Nepali festivals are religious observances before they are spectacles, and visitors are almost always welcome to watch and often to take part. A few things make the difference between a guest and an intrusion.

- ✓ **Ask before photographing rituals**, and put the camera down entirely where signs ask you to.
- ✓ **Accept prasad** — blessed food offered at temples — with your right hand, and eat it rather than discarding it.
- ✓ **Stand back from processions**. Chariots and masked dancers need room, and crowds move fast and unpredictably.
- ✓ **Dress modestly** and remove shoes where everyone else does.
- ✗ Climb on chariots, shrine platforms or temple statues for a photo.
- ✗ Push to the front of a queue of pilgrims.
- ✗ Assume Holi is a free-for-all — keep phones and passports in a sealed bag, and if you'd rather not be covered in colour by strangers, stay off the street or join an organised event.
- ✗ Feel obliged to attend animal sacrifices, which take place at some temples during Dashain. It is entirely acceptable to visit elsewhere that day.

CHAPTER 16

Travelling responsibly

Tourism is one of Nepal's largest sources of foreign income and employs hundreds of thousands of people directly. How you spend here matters more than it does in most places — and so does how you tread.

People

- **Hire locally.** Local guides, locally owned teahouses and family-run lodges keep money in the villages you're walking through.
- **Check that porters are insured and equipped.** Proper boots, a warm jacket and sunglasses are the minimum, and a load limit of 20–25 kg is the accepted standard.
- **Don't give money or sweets to children.** It encourages begging and pulls kids out of school. Donate to a school, a health post or a registered organisation instead.
- **Buy handicrafts from the maker** where you can — fair-trade cooperatives in Kathmandu and Patan are excellent.
- **Ask before photographing**, and if you promise to send a photo, actually send it.

Place

- **Refill, don't buy.** Single-use plastic bottles are restricted in the Khumbu and parts of the Annapurna region. Carry a bottle and purification, and use the refill stations.
- **Carry out everything**, including batteries, wrappers and used tissues. Waste at altitude does not decompose.
- **Stay on the trail.** Shortcutting switchbacks accelerates erosion badly on steep hillsides.
- **Use toilets where they exist.** Where they don't, go at least 50 m from water and bury it.
- **Refuse elephant rides.** Choose jeep safaris, canoe trips and guided walks in Chitwan and Bardia instead, and keep a respectful distance from wildlife.

Why it matters here in particular

Nepal has absorbed a devastating earthquake in 2015, a near-total collapse of tourism during the pandemic, and the accelerating retreat of the glaciers that feed its rivers. Every one of those shocks was felt hardest in exactly the mountain villages that trekkers walk through. A visitor who hires locally, pays fairly, carries their rubbish out and comes back again is doing something genuinely useful — not as charity, but as ordinary decent business with people who have earned it.

CHAPTER 17

Packing checklist

Print this page, or screenshot it. Trekking gear can be bought or hired cheaply in Thamel and Lakeside — down jackets and sleeping bags in particular are far cheaper to rent here than to fly in with. Boots are the exception: bring your own, already broken in.

Documents & money

- ☐ Passport, valid 6 months beyond entry
- ☐ Printed online arrival form / QR code
- ☐ 4–6 passport photos (visa and permits)
- ☐ Clean USD cash for the visa fee
- ☐ Travel insurance certificate — printed and on your phone
- ☐ Photocopies of passport and insurance, kept separately
- ☐ Emergency contacts written on paper
- ☐ Debit and credit cards, bank notified of travel

Everyday essentials

- ☐ Universal power adapter (types C, D, M)
- ☐ Power bank, 20,000 mAh
- ☐ Reusable water bottle plus filter or purification tablets
- ☐ Head torch with spare batteries
- ☐ High-SPF sunscreen and lip balm
- ☐ Quality sunglasses (category 3 or 4 for altitude)
- ☐ Modest clothing for temples
- ☐ Small daypack with a rain cover
- ☐ Earplugs — buses, dogs, roosters, thin lodge walls
- ☐ Quick-dry towel and hand sanitiser

Trekking kit

- ☐ Broken-in waterproof boots with ankle support
- ☐ Sleeping bag rated to -10°C (rent in Kathmandu)
- ☐ Down jacket (rent in Kathmandu)
- ☐ Waterproof shell jacket and trousers
- ☐ Thermal base layers, top and bottom
- ☐ Fleece or mid-layer
- ☐ Trekking trousers and quick-dry shirts
- ☐ Warm hat, sun hat, gloves, buff or neck gaiter
- ☐ Wool trekking socks, three or four pairs
- ☐ Trekking poles — your knees will thank you on the descent
- ☐ Dry bags or stuff sacks
- ☐ Duffel bag for a porter, plus a padlock

Health kit

- ☐ Personal prescriptions in original packaging
- ☐ Oral rehydration salts
- ☐ Loperamide and general painkillers
- ☐ Blister plasters and zinc oxide tape
- ☐ Antiseptic cream and plasters
- ☐ Antihistamine
- ☐ Altitude medication, if prescribed
- ☐ Any spare glasses or contact lenses

CHAPTER 18

Emergencies & Nepali phrases

Numbers to save now

Police	100
Ambulance	102
Fire	101
Traffic Police	103
Tourist Police	1144
Tourist Police, Kathmandu	+977 1 4247041
Nepal Tourism Board	+977 1 4256909
Dept. of Immigration	+977 1 4529659

Also save

- Your **insurer's 24-hour emergency line** and policy number
- Your **embassy or consulate** in Kathmandu
- Your **trekking agency's** office and your guide's mobile
- Your **hotel's** address written in Nepali script for taxis

Himalayan Rescue Association aid posts operate seasonally at Pheriche in the Everest region and Manang on the Annapurna Circuit, staffed by volunteer doctors. Their free daily altitude talks are among the most useful hours you'll spend on a trek.

Sixteen useful phrases

Nepali	Say it	Meaning
Namaste	na-mas-TAY	Hello / goodbye
Dhanyabaad	dhan-ya-BAAD	Thank you
Kripaya	kri-pa-YA	Please
Hunchha	HUN-cha	Okay / sure
Sanchai hunuhunchha?	san-CHAI hu-n u-HUN-cha	How are you?
Ma sanchai chhu	ma san-CHAI chu	I'm fine
Kati ho?	KA-ti ho	How much is it?
Mahango bhayo	ma-HAN-go BHA-yo	That's expensive
Mitho chha	MI-tho cha	It's delicious
Pugyo	PUG-yo	That's enough
Pani	PA-ni	Water
Charpi kata chha?	CHAR-pi KA-ta cha	Where's the toilet?
Bistarai	bis-ta-RAI	Slowly
Maaph garnuhos	MAAF gar-nu-hos	Sorry / excuse me
Malai maddat chahiyo	ma-LAI mad-DAT cha-hi-yo	I need help
Feri bhetaunla	FE-ri bhe-TAUN-la	See you again

Nepali uses *tapai* for 'you' when speaking respectfully — which, as a visitor, is nearly always. Adding *-hos* or *-nus* to a verb makes a request polite.



Ramro yatra!

Have a good journey.

This guide is free to download, print and share.
For deeper guides to trekking, culture, costs and travel across Nepal, visit:

nepalfacts.com

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Visa rules, permit fees and prices change — always reconfirm with the Department of Immigration,
the Nepal Tourism Board or a registered agency before you travel.

