



2018 NEPAL ITINERARY
Sept. 29 – Oct. 13, 2018
15 Days and 14 Overnights

Pre-tour Friday, Sept. 28

Early arrivals from Bhutan

Day 1 Sat. Sept. 29

Arrival Kathmandu

Upon your arrival at Tribhuvan International airport you will be met by our guide who will take you through the cacophony that is Kathmandu to our hotel in the heart of Thamel. The afternoon is at your leisure to explore the narrow back streets or rest up for the journey ahead. You'll meet your fellow travelers at a Welcome Dinner in the evening in a charming traditional Newari setting.

Overnight Kathmandu

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Day 2 Sun. Sept. 30

Kathmandu

After breakfast at our hotel, you'll enjoy a brief orientation presentation with an opportunity for Q&A. Our exploration of Nepal will start in the ancient city state of Kathmandu with a visit to the Royal Palace, the site of the infamous 2001 massacre of the Royal Family by the then Crown Prince. It is now a museum and 19 of its 52 rooms are open to the public. Security is extremely tight - all purses and cameras must be checked at the entrance.

Lunch will be at the exquisitely restored Garden of Dreams at a lovely rana-era restaurant followed by afternoon sightseeing. We'll walk to Durbar Square, an area that -despite damage from the 2015 earthquake, continues to enthrall. Home to multiple temples, some dating back to the 12th century, we'll visit the ancient Royal Palace, (Hanuman Dhoka), the magnificent Taleju Temple and the Kumari Bahal – home to Kathmandu's "Living Goddess."

Later in the afternoon, you'll take a stroll along Durbar Marg – the street that is considered to be the heart of Kathmandu city-also known as King's Way by many tourists because of its high quality shops. You'll have the opportunity to visit one of Nepal's oldest hotels, the lovely Yak and Yedi and have a cocktail in the garden before returning to our hotel for dinner

Overnight Kathmandu

B L D

Day 3 Mon. Oct. 1

Kathmandu

You may choose to start your day today with an hour of guided meditation at a local Buddhist Meditation Center. Afterwards, the group will head out to the World Heritage site of Swayambhunath, a destination considered to be one of the holiest places in the world for Tibetan Buddhists and revered as well by Hindus. A complex frequently referred to as the 'monkey temple' because of the large number of monkeys that congregate there, Swayambhunath sustained considerable quake damage in 2014. However, the centerpiece and the oldest structure -a golden tower Buddhist

monument, known as a Stupa that dates back to the fifth century, remains intact and daily rituals by devotees continue.

Perched high on a hill - those who want to make the climb up the steep stone staircase, filled with monkeys, vendors and pilgrims – will find arriving at the Stupa to be almost a mystical experience. For those who prefer a less strenuous ascent there is the option of driving up most of the way. After lunch, you have free time for independent activities.

Overnight Kathmandu

B L D

Day 4 Tues. Oct. 2

Bhaktapur

Today we'll continue our exploration of the medieval city states of the Kathmandu Valley by visiting Bhaktapur. Long considered the best preserved Newari city in Nepal, it is also a Unesco Heritage site. Although many of the old buildings toppled in the earthquakes, particularly in the narrow back lanes, many of the ancient temples were remarkably unharmed. Most notably, the glorious Five Stove Temple still rises to the skies, its steps guarded by lions and elephants. After lunch we'll make the short journey to another World Heritage site Changu Narayan. Perched on top of a hill, it is one of Nepal's most beautiful temples. Although seriously damaged by the earthquake it still merits a visit. A leisurely hike back to Bhaktapur takes you through some charming rural villages and lovely countryside.

Overnight Bhaktapur

B L D

Day 5 Wed. Oct. 3

Bhaktapur

We depart this morning to drive to one of the three most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Kathmandu – Namobuddha, along the way stopping at the small village of Panauti to experience village life outside of Kathmandu Valley. Steeped in ancient cultural traditions, this Newari town is home to lovely architecture and hospitable villagers. Lunch will be at a lovely hill-top restaurant. We'll arrive at the ornate and stunning Namobuddha Temple in the early afternoon, timed to experience the monks at prayer.

Overnight Bhaktapur

B L D

Day 6 Thurs. Oct. 4

Bhaktapur and Patan

This morning is at your leisure to explore the charming back streets of Bhaktapur and for those who like to shop- this is a great place to purchase souvenirs. In the early afternoon we'll drive to the third great city state in the Kathmandu valley - Patan.

Jammed packed with over 1,200 monuments, Patan is a delightful small city-state that you will explore on foot. You'll marvel at the ornate architecture and incredible assemblage of Buddhist and Hindu temples in the main square – a true visual enchantment. Later in the afternoon, we'll visit a local family.

Overnight Patan

B L D

Day 7 Fri. Oct. 5

Patan

This morning we will visit the Patan Art Museum, a must for anyone interested in Asian art and its history and enjoy lunch at its café. In the afternoon, we have a private audience with Patan's "Living Goddess (Kumari)," a young girl revered by the community. Largely unknown to the outside world, devotion to this child deity is deeply embedded in the Kathmandu Valley culture. Although the Kathmandu Kumari is the best known - Patan and Bhaktapur also have their own. The residences of the Kumari's were unscathed by the earthquakes, reaffirming for many that these girls are

protected by a higher power. This evening we enjoy a cultural performance in the courtyard of our hotel.

Overnight Patan

B L D

Day 8 Sat. Oct. 6

Pokhara

This morning we take a short flight to the town of Pokhara, known for its close proximity to 3 of the 10 highest mountains in the world. Its magnificent mountain views are incomparable. After the chaotic atmosphere of the Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara also offers travelers tranquility and relaxation. For those who would like to do some hiking, there are a couple of opportunities. One can do a short 2 hour trek, or a more strenuous one. For those who want a more laid back activity, it is fun to walk through the charming lakeside town.

Overnight Pokhara

B L D

Day 9 Sun. Oct. 7

Pokhara

The sunrise is not to be missed and you'll enjoy it at Sarangkot. This ridge provides sweeping views of the Annapurna Mountain Range and an unforgettable display by Mother Nature as the sun rises over the towering peaks. After a hearty breakfast we'll visit the World Peace Pagoda and enjoy water activities on Pokhara's beautiful lake, Phewa Tal. For the adventurous – paragliding is available (but not included in the tour). In the evening the group can take the ferry over to the lovely Fishtail Resort to enjoy the sunset and cocktails.

Overnight Pokhara

B L D

Day 10 Mon. Oct. 8

Chitwan National Park

Today is departure day for the Terai Valley today, home to Nepal's Chitwan National Park – a World Heritage reserve and approximately a 4 hour drive south. In the afternoon we'll take an Ox cart to a nearby Thuru village and walk leisurely around speaking with the local residents and visiting their homes.

Overnight Sauraha

B L D

Day 11 Tues. Oct. 9

Chitwan National Park

Chitwan literally means "heart of the Jungle" and today you will explore that jungle by jeep looking for rhinos and other jungle inhabitants. In the afternoon, those brave souls who want to dive into cold water and swim with an elephant with the intent of washing it - are invited to do so.

Overnight Sauraha

B L D

Day 12 Wed. Oct. 10

Chitwan National Park

Today we will again go on safari in Chitwan, this time on the back of an elephant. In the afternoon, you'll relax on a canoe ride on the river watching for crocodiles and monkeys.

Overnight Sauraha

B L D

Day 13 Thurs. Oct. 11

Boudhanath

This morning we board our short flight back to the Kathmandu Valley and Boudhanath the thriving center of the Tibetan Buddhist community. Its town square is home to a towering Stupa, the largest in Asia and a holy Buddhist site. It sustained some damage from the quake but remains standing and is under repair. After lunch at a local roof-top café you will have some free time before we gather to visit the home of our local operator to enjoy a festive Nepali dinner with his extended family.

Overnight Boudhanath

B L D

Day 14 Fri. Oct. 12

Boudhanath

This morning you may choose to rise very early to join the monks and pilgrims circumnavigating the dome of Boudhanath Stupa. After breakfast, we will drive to Kopan Monastery, an oasis of serenity, perched high on a hill top. An English-speaking Buddhist nun will meet with the group to give a private tour of the grounds and buildings and a fascinating overview of Mahayana Buddhism

In the afternoon we'll visit the sacred Hindu Temple of Pashupatinath. Only Hindus are allowed to enter the main compound but we can watch devotees of Shiva pay homage and visit the surrounding ghats where a number of local Sadhus loiter and cremations occur.

In the evening we'll head to Nepal's renewed Dwarika's hotel. Constructed using thousands of indigenous woodcarvings that were collected and assembled by the owners, it is an absolute delight to behold. We'll enjoy a cultural show before a multi-course Nepali dinner that reflects different cultural traditions.

Overnight Boudhanath

B L D

Day 15 Sat. Oct. 13

Departures

Today is departure day.

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