



# **Nepal Express**

Country(ies): Nepal

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C car or minibus

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 6 days

Start Location: Kathmandu, Nepal

End Location: Kathmandu, Nepal

Meals: Breakfasts - 5, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 1

## **Highlights:**

Streets & temples of Kathmandu, Rickshaw Ride, Local towns of Patan, Kirtipur and Bhaktapur with pottery class, Sunrise mountain views from Nagarkot, Village homestay in Panauti, visits to Pasupatinath and Boudhnath.



# **Itinerary**

## Day 1: Arrive into Kathmandu

We greet you on your arrival in Kathmandu airport today and transfer you to your hotel in the Thamel tourist disctrict of the city. Our rep will help you settle in and familiarise you with the local area before the rest of your day is free. In the evening our rep will take you on an evening walk through Thamel to check out the numerous bars, restaurants and nightlife on offer. You may have your first taste of Nepal's traditional dish tonight - Dal Bhat (rice and lentil curry).

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel

**MEALS:** None

EXTRAS: Single room supplement (NPSHSH) Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour

# Day 2: Thamel Rickshaw Ride. Walk around Durbar Square, visit Swayambunath Stupa

Our Nepal tour starts with an exciting Rickshaw ride through the backstreets of Thamel, to Durbar Square. We'll pass through small back streets full of numerous tiny shops, workshops, temples, and stupas to Durbar Square with its array of wooden and stone carved temples and palaces, where we'll have plenty of time to walk around and explore. After lunch at a rooftop restaurant overlooking the square, we drive to the important Swayambunath Stupa which sits on a hilltop overlooking the city, visible from miles around. Also known locally as the 'monkey temple', we'll see these nimble inhabitants scampering in and around the trees and temple.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Everest Mountain Flight

# Day 3: Visit the ancient towns of Patan, Kirtipur and Bhaktapur, Partake in a pottery class before heading to Nagarkot

Wake up today in Kathmandu before embarking on a tour to visit the nearby towns of Patan, Kirtipur and Bhaktapur.

Patan is often referred to as Lalitpur, the "City of Beauty", Patan is renowned for its rich artistic heritage and architectural marvels. The heart of Patan is its Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here, you'll find an exquisite collection of temples, palaces, and courtyards showcasing the intricate artistry of the Newar people. Our next stop is Kirtipur which is located on a hilltop, overlooking the Kathmandu valley, here you'll be offered a glimpse into traditional local life.

Next we'll visit the centre of Bhaktapur, which has been designated a World Heritage Site, and hosts the best preserved ancient buildings and temples in the Kathmandu valley, with some great examples of traditional wooden architecture to be seen. Our tour here will really give you a taste for how life has been led in the valley for centuries, and you'll see several traditional crafts still taking place, including a whole square dedicated to pottery where you'll have the opportunity to join an included pottery class.

Later, we head into the hills surrounding the valley and spend the night in the village of Nagarkot. The village is perched on a ridge and is known for having some of the best views in the Kathmandu Valley.

**OVERNIGHT:** Nagarkot hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS**:

# Day 4: Walk to Changu Narayan Temple. Head to Panauti for your community homestay experience

This morning we hope for spectacular sunrise views from Nagarkot before walking downhill through the Tilkot Forest Reserve and along a ridge with classic terraced farmland on either side to Changu Narayan Temple, perched on a hilltop east of Kathmandu. This is Nepal's oldest temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Revered by Hindus and Buddhists alike, it boasts a rich history dating back to the 4th century.

From here we travel to nearby Panauti, nestled amidst the picturesque landscapes of Nepal, our homestay offers a unique and immersive cultural experience. Located in the historic town of Panauti, this experience allows you to step back in time and embrace the authentic Newari way of life. You'll reside in a traditional Newari house, have a tour of the local village, savour home-cooked meals (with the option to participate in cooking), and have lots of opportunities to interact with the warm and welcoming locals.

**OVERNIGHT:** Panauti homestay **MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

# Day 5: Breakfast in Panauti before visiting Pasupatinath and Boudhanath

After breakfast in the village, we leave Panauti and drive back to Kathmandu, stopping en-route at two of the cities most important, and contrasting religious pilgrimage sites. Our first stop is at Pasupatinath temple, the most sacred Hindu temple in Nepal, which sits on the banks of the Bagmati River, where pilgrims come to pay homage to Lord Shiva. Witnessing the sacred rituals and cremation ceremonies can be a powerful experience, providing a glimpse into the cycle of life and death.

Nearby, Boudhanath, one of the largest stupas in the world, stands as a beacon of Tibetan Buddhism, its massive white dome and all-seeing eyes radiating peace and tranquility. The constant hum of prayers, the colorful prayer flags fluttering in the wind, and the devout pilgrims circumambulating the stupa create a mesmerizing atmosphere.

The evening is free for you to explore Kathmandu and Thamel one last time and enjoy a farewell meal together.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kathmandu hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

# Day 6: Kathmandu, tour ends, transfer to airport for departure

Your tour ends after breakfast this morning, and your time is free until we transfer you to the airport for your departure flight. If you will be staying on in Nepal, then our local rep will be happy to help you with information, advice and any onward arrangements.

OVERNIGHT: N/A MEALS: Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

### Included:

- 3-star hotels in Kathmandu and Nagarkot
- Community homestay experience in Panauti
- All transfers, including 24-hour airport arrival transfer service vehicle transport
- Services of a local escort throughout the tour
- Specialist city guides in and around Kathmandu
- All national park entry and activity fees
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- All entrance fees to sites visited in the itinerary
- Added Experiences: Kathamandu Rickshaw Ride, Pottery class, Community Experience and stay in Panauti

## **Excluded:**

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees (available on arrival for most nationalities)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for guides, drivers & tour leader
- Any other items not mentioned above

# **Options**

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## **Everest Mountain Flight**

Min numbers: 1

This short but spectacular flight takes you from Kathmandu up towards and around Everest and the surrounding high peaks and Tibetan plateau. The planes have good sized clear windows, and window seats are guaranteed. The flight takes around 1 hour and we aim to book one of the first flights of the morning when the views tend to be better and the flights are less liable to delays or cancellations. Transfers to and from your hotel are included. If the flight does not run due to poor weather, we will aim to reschedule it for later in your tour. If that is not possible then you will be refunded.

## **Bardia National Park Extension**

Min numbers: 1

#### Day 1

You are picked up from your hotel in Kathmandu and transferred to the airport for a domestic flight to Nepalganj. Aim to sit on the right side of the plane for great mountain views of Langtang and the Annapurnas.

On arrival in Nepalganj, you are met and transferred by jeep through the lowland Terai region of Nepal, passing several small villages before you reach the park. We'll stop at a bridge over a river as we enter the park which has sandbanks popular with resting gharial and mugger crocodiles.

We leave the main road through the park and drive through more tiny Tharu villages to the park entrance and our lodge accommodation for the next few days, Bardia Eco Lodge. The journey takes around 2 1/2 hours. Bardia Eco Lodge is located directly on the banks of a tributary of the Karnali river, with the park on the far bank. Monkeys, deer, peacocks, eagles and other wildlife are common sightings from the lodge. You'll also see the park elephants passing in front of the lodge in the morning and evening as they head to and from their stables. After checking in, take a guided walk from the lodge through neighbouring fields, villages and farmland to see and learn more about rural Tharu life.

Meals - Dinner

## Days 2 & 3

These two days are available for a range of activities in and around the park (see list below). Activities are payable locally. If you wish to take a jeep safari or take a rafting trip please advise us in advance so we can confirm availability for you. In the evenings enjoy a relaxing beer or soft drink on the lodge balcony overlooking the river and the park.

Meals - Breakfast, lunch & dinner

#### Day 4

You have a final morning available for a last activity in the park today before we leave the lodge and head back to Nepalganj for your flight back to Kathmandu. On arrival you are met and transferred back to your hotel in the city.

Meals - Breakfast

#### Includes:

- Return flights between Kathmandu and Nepalganj
- Airport/hotel transfers in Kathmandu
- Nepalganj-Bardia transfers
- 3 nights accom
- All meals

#### **Excludes:**

- National Park entry fees and activities
- Drinks and snacks
- Tips

#### Park activities:

The following activities are available from the lodge. Please advise us in advance if you would like to do a jeep or rafting trip so that we can confirm availability.

- Half day jungle walk with guide = US\$30 p/p
- Full day jungle walk with guide = US\$50 p/p
- Half day jeep safari with guide = US\$80 p/p (min 2)
- Full day jeep safari with guide = US\$100 p/p (min 2)
- Full day easy rafting (no fast rapids) & jungle walks = US\$90 p/p (min 2)

The main package price is based on 2 people travelling and sharing a twin or double room at the lodge. A supplement will apply for solo travellers or if you are travelling with other people but require a single room.

## Single room supplement (NPSHSH)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

**Note:** Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

## Extra day in Kathmandu - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note**: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

## Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people

sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

#### 1. Accommodation

We use comfortable but simple hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara (approx. 2 star), while at Chitwan National Park, we use safari lodges with comfortable clean rooms and en-suite bathrooms. We normally use hotels and lodges in and around the village of Sauraha on the edge of the park, which increases the number of activities you can do while at the park.

Kathmandu – Hotel Moonlight

Pokhara - Hotel Orchid or Hotel Lake Star or Hotel Grand Holiday

Chitwan - Hotel Monalisa or Chitwan Safari Club or Chitwan Village Resort or Rhino Lodge

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

### 2. Transport

We use public tourist buses for the journey from Kathmandu to Chitwan and Chitwan to Pokhara. A variety of transport including jeeps, elephants & canoes is used when you visit Chitwan.

#### 3. Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour airport arrival transfer from Kathmandu airport to your hotel, and all other transfers.

### 4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we set our Nepal group departures to have a maximum of 18 travellers.

Fully trained English-speaking Nepalese trekking and rafting guides are provided where required, and many of our travellers consider them a highlight of their tour. We also provide a fully trained English-speaking guide for any sightseeing tours. A tour leader (often also a trekking guide) will accompany you throughout the trip.

At Encounters Travel we only use local Nepali guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

### 5. Rafting

It is a popular myth that white-water rafting is only for the young and super fit. However, you must be a competent swimmer and be unafraid of the water and to this end we are unable to accept bookings from non-swimmers. So, whether you are male or female, young or old, if you are prepared to honestly assess your physical abilities and accept the challenge then rafting is right for you.

You need to bring swimming gear, some trainers or sandals you don't mind getting wet, and a towel. We will provide wetsuits, and all the rafting equipment. All the Nepalese rafting guides we use are fully trained and experienced on the river, and we carry a first aid kit and use safety kayakers.

This tour offers optional white water rafting on the Trisuli River on the day that you travel from Kathmandu to Chitwan National Park. There are Class II, III and IV rapids (Grades run from I to V), and you only need to be relatively fit. You don't need any previous rafting experience, and the start of your time on the river will be spent

learning the skills and teamwork required. We consider the Trisuli river ideal for beginner rafters.

Class II: mild rapids, suitable for children and anyone seeking an enjoyable experience

Class III: larger rapids, requiring a little more skill but with little real danger

Class IV: powerful rapids, needing more advanced techniques

You can also choose to finish the tour in Pokhara and add a multi-day rafting trip on the Kali Gandaki or Seti rivers, or add an extension from Kathmandu at the end to raft on the exciting Bhote Khosi river.

#### 6. Entrance Fees

All your entry fees and permits are included (to cover entry into the trekking conservation areas, and sites on the city tour).

In Chitwan, all National Park activity costs are included, to cover one of each of the following: Jungle Walk, Village Walk, River canoe trip, Elephant Ride.

#### 7. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on a Sunday throughout the year. All departures are guaranteed to run. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request.

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**Note:** Please <u>download an up-to-date copy</u> of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.