

NEPAL

COUNTRY INFORMATION

NEPAL lies in the lap of the Himalayas, bordering India in the east, south, and west, and China in the north. Nepal is a landlocked country with three geographical regions: the northern range containing the Himalaya Mountains is known as the Mountain region; the middle range, known as the Hill region, contains mountains, high peaks, hills, valleys, and lakes; the southern range known as the Terai region consists of dense forest area, national parks, wildlife reserves, and conservation areas.

The government is a constitutional monarchy where people exercise the right of adult franchise. The executive, legislative, and judiciary bodies function and exercise their rights independently. The elected Prime Minister heads the government.

Passport and Visa Requirements:

- There is a fee of \$25.00 for a 15 day multiple entry visa, \$40.00 for a one month multiple entry visa, or \$100 for a three month multiple entry visa. For a stay of 3 days or less the visa fee is free of charge.
- A valid passport is required and **must be valid for six months beyond** your expected date of **entry** into Nepal. Also one passport size photo is required.

Note: Please be aware that although Ker & Downey will advise you of the current information concerning visas and other requirements, it is your responsibility to reconfirm the information and obtain all necessary documents for entry to countries listed on your itinerary. Visa requirements change frequently.

Health Requirements and Information:

Immunizations:

Although yellow fever is not a disease risk in Nepal, the government requires travelers arriving from countries where yellow fever is present to present proof of yellow fever vaccination.

Malaria:

There is risk of malaria at altitudes below 3,937ft in the Tarai and Hill districts bordering India and in the areas of the inner Tarai valley areas of Udaypur Sindhupalchowk, Makwanpur, Chitwan, and Dang. If your travel plans include these areas, malaria prophylaxis is recommended. There is no risk of malaria in Kathmandu or on typical Himalayan treks.

Other concerns:

- Dengue fever, chikungunya, and other insect-borne diseases are found in the region. Take appropriate precautions against insect bites such as using insect repellent and wearing long sleeves and pants.
- If you do get an upset stomach, do not panic. It will go away in a few days, but try the following tips:
 - Drink lassi - a yogurt drink. It will help tone down the bacteria.
 - Eat plain rice, or try a simple khichdi - an easily digestible mixture of rice and lentils.
 - Drink plenty of coconut water. It's cooling, and naturally sterilized.
 - Drink plenty of fluids and take some electrolyte salts if the ailment persists.

Airport Information

The airport for Nepal is the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. It offers currency exchange facilities in the arrival lounge as well as internet access and a duty free shop.

Airport Departure Tax

- There is an international airport departure tax of 1,130 Nepalese Rupees for departing out of Kathmandu.
- The international airport departure tax is reduced to 791 Nepalese Rupees if departing to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan or Sri Lanka.
- There is a domestic departure tax of 169.50 Nepalese Rupees if departing to Bhadrapur, Bhairahawa, Biratnagar, Jomsom, Kathmandu, Lukla, Meghauly, Nepalgunj, Pokhara and Simara.
- The tax is 141.25 Nepalese Rupees if departing to Bharatpur, Dang, Dhangadhi, Janakpur, Mahendra Nagar, Rajbiraj, Surkhet and Tikapur.
- All other domestic destinations the tax is 56.50 Nepalese Rupees.

Note: Airport departure taxes may or may not be included in the price of your ticket and are subject to change at any time without notice. Please set aside money in advance to avoid delays and frustrations.

Domestic Baggage Restrictions

- In general the baggage restriction is 44 lbs including carry-on baggage.

Customs

You can bring the following into Nepal duty free.

- 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars an equivalent of other tobacco articles
- 1 L of alcohol
- Perfume for personal use

You may import any amount of Indian or Nepalese currency and any amount of foreign currency provided you declare it on arrival. You may export any amount of currency up to the amount declared on arrival. If you wish to re-exchange currency that you exchanged into local currency on arrival, please be aware that only 10% of exchanged currency can be re-exchanged at the airport.

There are limitations on importing certain electronic goods, including 16mm video cameras, for which a special permit is required. Still cameras and 8 mm video cameras for your personal use may be imported duty-free, though you may be asked to declare them on arrival.

There are limitations on the export of Nepalese antiques and items of archaeological or historical value. If you purchase any such item, ask the shopkeeper to assist you in obtaining an export license from the Department of Archaeology; reputable dealers are usually willing to assist. Antique carpets, brass metal statues, and Thankas (finely detailed paintings depicting Buddhist themes) are among the items in this category.

Safety

Nepal is currently under a travel warning. Please see [<http://travel.state.gov>] for more information. Due to Maoist extortion demands, the Department of State warns of the possibility of violent demonstrations that can occur unpredictably. Avoid the area of Terai in the south bordering India. Do not travel at night outside the Kathmandu Valley.

Climate

Nepal's dry season runs from October to May and the rainy monsoon season runs from June to September. Early spring in March through April and late autumn in October through November are the best times to visit and the best weather. From December to February there is snow on the mountains with freezing temperatures at high altitudes, while the summer month of June to August can be very hot for general travel.

Kathmandu, Nepal	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ave. Max Temperature (°F)	38	40	46	53	60	67	66	64	62	55	46	40
Ave. Min Temperature (°F)	2	6	13	21	30	40	45	44	38	24	11	4
Ave. Precipitation (in)	.04	.02	.02	.05	.22	.63	3.19	3.43	.78	.07	.03	.03

Clothing

In town:

Unless you are attending a special party, ceremony or official function, dress informally. In middle-to-higher priced establishments, men wear slacks and a sports shirt; women wear a casual dress, or a skirt or slacks outfit. Conservative dress is always appropriate. Both in the cities and along trekking trails, tight revealing clothing and shirtless men may offend the modest norm. However, outside of Kathmandu loose-fitting shorts are acceptable for both men and women.

On tour:

Comfortable clothes of fabrics that breathe are essential. Shorts and a loose shirt of lightweight cotton are ideal during the day, since it is always warm. Comfortable trousers would also be appropriate. Bring a thick sweater or fleece sweat shirt to wear in the evenings, when temperatures decline considerably. A lightweight jacket or windbreaker will also be useful.

While trekking:

The most important item you will require is suitable footwear for trekking. Lightweight walking boots with ankle support and rubber soles with thick tread are best. Unless you're trekking during the rainy season, they needn't be waterproof. It is essential your walking boots be comfortable and broken-in; uncomfortable boots can ruin a trek. Your boots should be worn with thick natural-fiber socks.

For your convenience, Ker & Downey Nepal will provide each traveler with a day pack as well as a rain poncho, umbrella, walking stick, cotton scarf and sun hat. Down jackets, wool gloves and hats are provided in each of the lodge rooms.

Packing Checklist

- 1 Pair of walking boots for trekking
(lightweight hiking boots with ankle support and rubber soles with thick tread)
- 1 Pair of tennis shoes, for wearing at lodges in the evenings
- 4 Field shirts; 2 long-sleeved and 2 short-sleeved

- 5 T-Shirts
- 1 Thick sweater or fleece sweat shirt
- 1 Lightweight, wind proof jacket
- 3 Pairs of shorts (women may wear skirts if they prefer)
- 2 Pairs of comfortable trousers, or skirts
- 1 Track suit
- 1 Set of warm sleepwear
- 4 Handkerchiefs
- 4 Pairs of socks
- 5 Pairs of thick, natural fiber walking socks
- * Underwear
- 1 Belt

Sundries & Miscellaneous:

- 1 Passport size photograph if you plan on obtaining your visa on arrival
- * Passport and airline tickets
- 1 Pair of sunglasses with high protection and sun cream
- 1 Flashlight with strong bulb
- 1 Pair of lightweight binoculars
- 1 Watch
- 1 Notebook and pencil
- * Supply of personal toiletries, including a small wash cloth
- * Camera, plenty of film, extra camera batteries
- * Basic medications and first aid supplies (see previous section)
- * Any prescription medications you require (in their original containers)
- * Snacks, such as trail mix or candy, if desired
- * Books on tape and a walkman

If you're participating in white water rafting, add a pair of quick drying shorts. Ker & Downey Nepal will provide life jackets, helmets, and waterproof drums for your equipment.

If you're visiting Chitwan National Park, some of your clothing should be in neutral colors, like khaki. White and bright colored clothes disturb the wildlife.

If you're trekking during the off-season, heavier (waterproof) boots and outerwear will be required.

Currency

The unit of currency is the Nepal rupee, divided into 100 paisa. Commonly circulated coins are of 5, 10, 25 and 50 paisa, and one rupee denominations. Paper notes come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 25, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 rupees.

- Major credit cards and travelers checks are accepted by most local hotels, but only accepted in some restaurants and shops. MasterCard and Visa are the most widely accepted credit cards.
- All foreign currency taken into Nepal must be declared on arrival. It is essential that you save at least one exchange receipt, for you must produce a receipt when reconvertng money upon departure. The exchange receipt needs to be of the same value or greater than the amount that you are changing back.

- Money should be carried in small denominations as change is hard to come by in the villages (100 rupee notes are the easiest to trade).
- Banks are open for money exchange and other transactions from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, Monday through Thursday. On Friday many banks are open from just 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon, but branch offices remain open until 5:00 PM. All banks are closed on Saturday and Sunday. You can also change money at hotels. There is a thriving black market in Kathmandu, but please be aware that it is unlawful to change money on the street.

Gratuities

In Nepal, tips are preferred in local Nepalese rupees.

- Hotel porters: 100 rupees per bag
- Transfer to airport or hotel: 150 rupees per transfer
- Trekking porters: 150 per person per day
- Hotel/Lodge staff: 200 rupees per person per day
- Game/Trekking guides: 150 rupees per person per day

Note: Tipping is a personal decision based on the service received. Please remember, there is no obligation to tip and American standards for tipping are some of the highest in the world. The above is only a suggestion for your convenience.

Food

Uncooked vegetables are not safe to consume, unless they've been properly treated by soaking in a solution of iodine. Unboiled water is not safe to drink anywhere in Nepal. Most hotels provide a flask of purified drinking water in each room: when in doubt, stick with bottled drinks. Local mineral water is perfectly safe to drink, or you can treat your own water with purification tablets. Remember that ice must be avoided as well.

Kathmandu has a surprising variety of restaurants serving many types of international cuisine. Remember that Nepal is a relaxed culture and service is usually much slower than Westerners are used to. Outside of the cities, the food is primarily a combination of Nepalese (which has a large Indian influence), and Tibetan. Rice, lentils and vegetables are staples, with a variety of meats used somewhat sparingly. Tasty soups, fresh breads and steamed dumplings filled with meat or vegetables are among the local favorites.

The national drink is a sweet tea brewed with milk. The local beer is quite good, though it's not always served ice cold. Locally produced rum, vodka, and gin are of good quality. Imported spirits are also available but are rather expensive, so if you have a favorite brand, consider using your duty-free allowance to bring a bottle with you. While Coke and Fanta sodas are available in Nepal, diet and decaffeinated beverages are not. Coffee is usually instant.

Shopping

If you enjoy shopping, you may want to bring extra money as there are very good deals to be found both in Kathmandu and Pokhara (wall hangings, carvings, clothes etc.). You can spend anything from US \$50 to US \$3000. We urge travelers to carry all purchases home with them and not have anything shipped. Shipping can be unreliable and is a cause of great frustration. Keep some free space in your baggage for bringing back your purchases.

Additional Information:

While Nepal is generally a relaxed and informal country, there are a few practices the visitor should be aware of. When visiting temples you must remove your shoes. The same applies when you are entering a Nepali house. In some temples, it is forbidden to wear any leather goods. Other temples, such as those in Pashupatinath, do not allow non-Hindus to enter. These are normally marked with a sign in English, and we urge you to respect such practices.

Always ask permission before taking photos inside any temples and before photographing any local people. Many villagers are unfamiliar with cameras and are unwilling to be photographed for religious reasons or for reasons of personal modesty. When permission is granted, always be sensitive when photographing people, and non-intrusive when shooting inside temples when prayers are in progress. Generally, photography is allowed outside Buddhist and Hindu temples and at religious ceremonies and festivals.

An unfortunate impact of begging is that it may create dependency. We discourage giving anything to beggars, particularly to children. If you wish to contribute, it is more beneficial to give to your tour leader who will distribute the donation to the local schools. Exceptions are made for giving to the physically handicapped and to wandering religious mendicants, called Saddhus.

Time Zone

GMT + 5:45

Language

The national language is Nepali, with distinct dialects spoken in different areas. All of our guides speak English, as do the porters at a more basic level. In the cities and towns, English is widely spoken, particularly among those serving tourists, but in villages and other more remote areas, the local people you encounter probably will not speak English.

Voltage

Electricity is mainly available in the Kathmandu Valley, where the current is 220 V/50 Cycles. Sockets have either three round pins or two thick round pins. If you are traveling with any electrical appliances, an international converter kit and a set of adapter plugs will be required. Alternatively, it is more practical to travel with battery-operated appliances where possible. While trekking, you can recharge your batteries in Ker & Downey Nepal lodges as we use generators. However, no electricity is available on the river or in the Terai.

Emergency Numbers

Police: 100

International Calling

To call Nepal from the U.S. or Canada, dial (011 + 977) before the number.

To call the U.S. or Canada from Nepal, dial (00 + 1) before the number.

Suggested Reading

Mayhew, Bradley. *Lonely Planet: Nepal*: Country guide with all the essential information, including advice for those trekking the country with children. Also in the series is *Lonely Planet Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya*, by Stan Armington, although the latter has not been updated as recently.

Pathak, Jyoti. *Taste of Nepal*: Winner of the 2008 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards for “Best Foreign Cuisine Book”, this book gives beginners and professionals alike new ideas to try in their kitchen.

Upadhyay, Samrat. *Arresting God in Kathmandu*: This collection of short stories by one of the first Nepalese authors writing in English to be published in the West is concerned primarily with marital issues in a society that is attempting to hold onto its traditional views while the world it is changing dramatically.