

A scenic mountain landscape with a monk walking on a path, framed by a dotted circular border. The monk is wearing a maroon robe and is walking away from the camera on a dirt path that winds through lush green vegetation and rocky terrain. In the background, there are misty mountains and a small village with white buildings. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The entire scene is enclosed within a large, light-colored circle with a dotted border.

PHOTOKTY/5

# PRACTICAL GUIDE TO NEPAL

# ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

PhotoKTM is a laid-back festival. No dress-code parties, no red tape, just good company in a relaxed environment. We want to make your stay here in Nepal as comfortable as possible, so please, never hesitate to ask us for anything. If it's possible, we'll try our best to make it happen, with a smile. If something is just not doable, we'll be honest enough to let you know and try to figure out alternatives.

One of our main goals is to facilitate new connections and friendships, both Nepali and international. With this in mind, on most evenings at around 7pm, we organize informal gatherings in local bars around Patan Durbar Square.

The exhibitions, slideshow nights and talks are freely accessible to all and are set in public spaces, using the alleys, squares and historic surroundings of Patan and Kathmandu as our venues. This leads to very interesting interactions! neighborhood children swarm to see the slideshows, elderly passers-by passionately discuss photographs in the streets, schoolchildren drag their parents around after a guided tour they enjoyed, local touristic guides include the festival's public exhibitions in their tours.

If we handle your accommodation, you'll be staying in the beautiful old city center of Patan where all the PhotoKTM action happens. During the day it's a busy place, with small streets, where motorbikes and pedestrians contest for ways through, and where honking is common practice (and usually means nothing more than a friendly "hey look out, I'm here"). The smaller side-alleys are little havens of peace and quiet. After a couple of days, you'll get your bearings and love the Patan buzz!



# Arrival In Nepal

**Visa:** The only one you need to look at is the regular **tourist visa**.

**Indian nationals** do not require a visa to enter Nepal. A passport or an Indian identity card is sufficient to enter the country.

Visitors from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (**SAARC**) countries, except Afghanistan, receive a once-a-year free 30- day visa upon arrival (Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

Nationals of Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Cameroon, Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria and Refugees with a travel document are required to obtain visas **before** arrival.

Tourist visas are available **on arrival** for citizens of all other countries at Kathmandu airport and currently cost US\$30 for 15 days, US\$50 for 30 days and US\$125 for 90 days.

Tourist visas can be granted **for a maximum of** 150 days in a calendar year. You can also pay this in convertible currencies such as Euros, Pounds, RMBs and Australian dollars, although US dollars are always preferred. The visa fee payment desk has a credit card terminal, but it has been known to be faulty. While you can use different modes of payments, we advise you to **carry some cash** to be on the safe side. All tourist visas are currently “multiple entry.”



*Photo:Shikhar Bhattarai*

## At the airport

Step-by-step visa procedure for everybody except the nationals of above-mentioned countries:

1. Fill in the tourist visa form online ([www.online.nepalimmigration.gov.np/tourist-visa](http://www.online.nepalimmigration.gov.np/tourist-visa)), 15 days before your departure at the earliest.
2. Bring a print out of that form with you.
3. On the plane, ask the cabin crew for an Arrival Card or get one in the arrival hall .
4. Pay the visa fee at the booth on the far end of the hall , and get your receipt.
5. Armed with receipt, visa form, Arrival Card and your passport, find the appropriate immigration desk to get your visa sticker and entry stamp. The desks are differentiated according to the amount of time you want to spend in Nepal: 15 days - 30 days - 90 days.

After your passport has been processed and stamped, exit the hall and go down to the luggage belts . Expect to wait for some time until your luggage is delivered, especially if you arrive with an evening flight. Be sure to keep your luggage tag (the one that was pasted on your boarding pass at check-in) handy as security/ customs officers will check if it matches the one on your bag .

If PhotoKTM is arranging your hotel, look out for our placard outside the main arrival area. Our airport pick-up service by Four Season Travel & Tours will take you to your hotel.

If you're making independent arrangements, try to book your first night's accommodation before you arrive and ask the hotel to send someone to meet you. Many hotels and guest houses offer complimentary airport pick-ups. If you have made such arrangements, someone from your hotel or trekking agency will be displaying a sign so they can be identified.

Otherwise, fixed price pre-paid taxis can be arranged before you exit the building. Be sure to know which neighborhood you are heading to.

# Bring

In February and March, expect sunny skies with daytime temperatures around 15°C! After sunset, temperatures cool down to around 5°C on average



Pack a bag with clothes and essentials for 2 days and bring this as hand luggage (carry-on) – in case you encounter delays with checked luggage

Bring warm clothes to sleep in at night (no central heating). A sweater/jacket/scarf/hat for the evenings (key to Kathmandu nights is definitely 'layering')



Passport sized photos (e.g. for sim card application form, permits, ...)

Medication/prescriptions – ask your doctor about your specific needs



Camera, memory cards, extra batteries. Carry a universal adapter along for your electronic devices

Comfortable walking shoes to walk around



# Visit

**Palaces and Temples.** Besides the mountains, these are the other main reason people visit Nepal. Basantapur (Kathmandu), Patan and Bhaktapur boast the most famous **Durbar Squares** (durbar means palace) and are packed with temples, bells, statues, patis and hitis.

Luckily, many of these survived the disastrous earthquakes of 2015, and can still be explored today. The most interesting way to visit is with a guide, who can take you around the square and, most importantly, the surrounding neighborhoods, so as to get a glimpse of how traditional urban life is organized.

**Important:** tourists need to pay a fee to access the Durbar Squares. Bring your passport (visa) and ask for an **extended ticket** to avoid paying a daily entrance fee

Equally beautiful, but lesser known, are the old centers of **Dhulikhel** and **Panauti**, a mere two to three hours drive from the capital, just outside of the valley.

Of course, don't miss the **Boudhanath** and **Swayambhunath** Stupas. Both are major pilgrimage sites for Buddhists and impressive architectural feats.

**Pashupatinath:** this extensive Hindu temple precinct is a sprawling collection of temples, ashrams, images and inscriptions raised over the centuries along the banks of the sacred Bagmati river. Simply gorgeous.

When the hustle of traffic, horns, and pollution gets too much, take a rest on the cushions in the **Garden of Dreams** (Thamel) amidst the exquisite sub-tropical flora or play with the squirrels. For a little adventure outside the valley, visit **Chandragiri Hills**; A place with great historical significance, and a view that is hard to match. There are several ways to reach the hilltop though we recommend the 9 minute cable car ride for the most extraordinary experience.



Photo: Rajan Shrestha

# Connect

WiFi is widely available in the Kathmandu Valley. WiFi speed and reliability are not among the world's best, but they are certainly enough to check emails and browse social media.

There are two main mobile operators in Nepal: Government run NTC (Nepal Telecom Company) and the private provider Ncell. Both offer 4G data reception in populated areas.

Both operators allow tourists to buy SIM cards for about NPR 100 in Kathmandu and most major towns. You will need to bring a passport photo, fill in a form and have your passport and visa page photocopied. Try to buy the SIM card at a shop owned by the phone company as if you buy it from a corner shop it can take some time for the card to be activated, despite promises that it will be done in “a couple of hours”.

Ncell SIMs - can be bought from many stores (type Ncell in Google Maps), but are best bought from official outlets. Micro/nano SIMs can be cut for free if needed. Ncell offers both call/data and data only SIMs.

NTC SIMs - can usually only be bought from their official offices. Sometimes, the Nepal Tourism Board offers free NTC sims at their airport desk. Check them out, right before the exit!

Recharge cards of various values are readily available in most shops.

## Newspapers

These are the main Nepali newspapers in English language:

- Nepali Times
- República
- The Himalayan Times
- The Kathmandu Post



Photo: Shikhar Bhattarai

# Money Matters

- **Nepali Rupees** (NPR) is the local currency. Removing the last 2 digits of a price gives you a fair approximation of the USD equivalent (1 USD = +/- 132 NPR).
- **Indian currency** is also accepted in Nepal (at an official and fixed exchange rate of 1.60 NPR to 1 INR), nevertheless, the INR 500 and INR 1,000 notes are not widely accepted.
- There are quite a number of ATMs that are open around the clock. The maximum withdrawal amount is 25,000 Rupees (Everest Bank) for a 500 Rupees processing fee. They can easily be found through Google Maps. Currency exchange offices are available throughout the main cities.
- Be sure to **keep all currency exchange** and **ATM receipts** as you will need these at the **airport bank to convert** any cash back to your original currency. If you don't have them, they will refuse to convert your currency.
- Kathmandu is generally a safe city, and even pickpockets are rare. Nevertheless, take the usual precautions and don't flaunt your cash or make ostentatious displays of wealth.
- Sometimes, there are strikes (bandhas) and demonstrations to contend with. Some businesses close, but many allowances are usually made for tourists, who are widely respected. If in doubt, ask about strikes at your hotel or read the English language Nepali newspapers

# Stay Healthy

- **Water** - Always assume that tap water is unsafe. In restaurants and bars, when you ask for regular water, you'll get water from treated and purified 20L bottles. Otherwise stick to mineral water.
- **Food** - Peel your fruit, and avoid street food unless you're positive about the vendor's hygiene (if it's fried, it's usually OK). Most restaurants wash the vegetables and salads with iodized water to kill germs, but don't hesitate to ask your waiter about it. In any case, traveler's diarrhea is a common thing and shouldn't leave you too worried. Stay hydrated, carry tissues and hand sanitizer around, take basic precautions and it should be over before you know it.

# Go Out

For more information on the following selection, check out their facebook pages.

In Thamel, [Sam's Bar](#) and [OR2K](#) are lively and fun. [Jazz Upstairs](#) on Lazimpat Road offers nice views in a pub kind of style (with a live band on Wednesdays and Saturdays).

[Electric Pagoda](#) in Thamel has live bands almost every night as does [Purple Haze Rock Bar](#) right around the corner. [The Irish Pub](#) shows major sports events on a big screen (Lazimpat). If you're looking for something more on the south side, [Beers and Cheers](#) in Jhamsikhel is the place to be.

[Supper Club](#) (Thamel) and [LOD](#) (Thamel) are the new clubs in town.

## Food & Drinks

**Mo:mo:** These bite-sized dumplings packed full of flavor come in many shapes and tastes - they can be boiled or fried, veg or non-veg, usually savory, sometimes sweet (try a fried Snickers mo:mo: after a long day of hiking). Our picks: [Dallé](#) (Pulchowk) and [Michung Mo:mo:](#) (Tibetan style, Boudhanath). If you're looking to experience something more local, try [Mahabharat Momo](#) in Patan Dhoka or [Everest momo](#) in Naxal.



Photo:Sagar Chhetri



Photo:Shikhar Bhattarai

## Breakfast/Brunch

A favorite of the expat/NGO crowd, [Café Joshi](#) (Jhamsikhel) [The Yellow House](#) (Sanepa) serves hearty breakfasts, burgers and salads, and displays a series of irresistible desserts on the counter. If you prefer starting your day the local way, try the delicious [Jeri- Swari](#) combo found in local sweet shops in and around Patan combined with the local favorite [gwaramari](#). Make sure you hit the streets before 9 am or you might miss out on the most delicious breakfast snack Patan offers.

# Vegan/Vegetarian

As numbers of vegans and vegetarians increase, Kathmandu has opened its fair share of plant based eateries. [Hamro Vegan](#) in Kumaripati is a hub for vegan alternatives to everything from sausages and fish to yogurt and ice cream. [Annamaya](#) restaurant in Jhamsikhel is well known for its delicious breakfast bowls, healthy burgers, noodles and salad bowls with organic and gluten free options. [C-ya vegan restaurant](#) in Jhamsikhel offers the best beetroot and matcha flavored icecream in town. If you're looking for a refreshing drink, [Juice Mandala](#) offers a variety of fresh juices as well as smoothies and snacks, all vegetarian. South Asian cuisine can be friendly to vegetarians as well. For veggie sweets and snacks, [tiptop](#) and [Moti Mahal](#) are the local favorites.



*Photo: Tripty Tamang Pakhrin*

# International

The food scene in Kathmandu is fast-growing. And it's good! South of the Bagmati River, it's all happening in the Jhamsikhel area where new places pop up regularly. Check out [Roadhouse Café](#) (pizzas), [Lhakpa's Chulo](#) (fusion), [The Lunch Box](#) (Chicago style burgers), [Piano Piano South](#) (Italian) , [Taza](#) (Syrian) to name a few.

On the north side, find [Chez Caroline](#) (continental) in the beautiful Baber Mahal Revisited complex in Thapathali, or [Vino Bistro](#) (cheese and wine) on Lazimpat Road and [Le Sherpa](#) (continental) in Panipokhari, amongst many others.

There are food delivery apps like [Foodmandu](#), [Pathao](#), [Bhoj Deals](#) and [Bhoklagyo](#) which you can use for ordering food.

# Local cuisine

The Nepali national meal is [daal-bhaat tarkaari](#): spiced lentils poured over boiled rice, and served with vegetables cooked with spices. This is served in most Nepali homes and teahouses. The meal may be accompanied by dahi (yogurt) and a small helping of fresh ultra-spicy achar (pickle). Traditionally this meal is eaten with the right hand. Head to [Thakkhola](#) (Jhamsikhel) or one of the many [Jimbu Thakali by Capital Grill](#) for a great Thakali experience. Nepali food is much more than just momos and dal bhat however. If you're in the mood to explore a range of ethnic nepali cuisines, head to [Raithaane](#) in Kupondole.

One of Nepal's oldest eateries, [Honacha](#) (Patan Durbar Square), still stands strong and serves authentic Newari cuisine. Their chhoila has been a local favorite for years. A three minute walk from Patan Durbar square, [Newa Ghasa](#) is another local favourite. Famous for their yomari and chatari, [Nandini food court](#) in Swotha will not disappoint newari food lovers. If you're a hardcore lover of choila, head to [Yala Choila Pasa](#) in Pimbahal.

For a great Newari food and Raksi experience, head to lovely Kirtipur, just behind Tribhuvan University, right outside the ring road and find [Newa Lahana](#). This restaurant up on the fourth floor offers amazing views of the surrounding hills, and serves 5 different types of [raksi](#) to go along with a variety of Newari snacks. Also located in Kirtipur is [Sasa Twa](#): offering live music with amazing ambience and delicious newari food to match.



*Photo; Chemi Dorje*

# Tea

Although not as internationally famous as Indian brands, Nepal does in fact have a large organic tea industry. Sit down on a stool at any tea shop, ask for [masala tea](#), [milk tea](#) or [black tea](#). Remember to ask for little or no sugar, if that's your fancy.

# Coffee

Nepal has emerged as a coffee producing country over the last two decades. For the most part, it is grown organically and provides extra income for smallholder farmers. Don't settle for dehydrated instant powders when you can enjoy a tasty local arabica!

[Patan Lassi Station](#) in Mikhabahal offers tea, coffee and shakes along with its famous lassi in delicious varieties.

# Alcohol

[Raksi](#) is a clear drink, similar to tequila in its alcohol content. It is usually brewed "in house", resulting in variations in taste and strength. It is often served in small, baked, beveled clay cups that hold less than a shot. It works great as a mixer in juice or soda. [Chyaang](#) is a cloudy, moderately alcoholic drink sometimes called "Nepali beer". It is mostly made from rice, specially in Newari culture. While weaker than raksi, it will still have quite an effect. [Tongba](#) is a Tibetan drink based on fermented millet grains. [Sherpa Khaja Ghar](#) in Dhaugal is the go-to place when it comes to Tongba for Patan dwellers. [Kyampa](#) in Sanepa is a great place for a beer or two. Unpretentious [Base Camp](#) attracts the artistic minded crowds on Arun Thapa Chowk



*Photo; Chemi Dorje*

# Getting Around

Except for the main arteries, very few streets have names/signs in Kathmandu. To get to your destination, you need to know the closest landmark, or at least the name of the neighborhood.

**Taxis** are probably the most efficient means of getting around in Kathmandu. They're the small **white Maruti Suzuki** cars (with black numberplates), and usually with a luggage rack on the roof. Most taxi drivers know most hotels and landmarks around town, and if you tell them the neighborhood, they'll ask around themselves to get you safely to your destination. Before sitting down, make sure that they either put on the meter or agree on a price.

Be prepared to **negotiate** (on average, settle on 30% less than the first offer). Best results are obtained when you smile and take the negotiation process lightly. There's no use in getting angry, and in any case there are usually other taxis around to choose from.

From **Patan Durbar Square**, expect to pay 200 Rupees to **Jhamsikhel**  
400 Rupees to **Thamel**  
500 Rupees to **Lazimpat**  
600 Rupees to **Bouddha**

Prices **increase 50%** after dark.

Other options include the (often crowded) "tempo" three-wheelers and "micro" buses. They run on fixed routes and cost between 20 and 30 Rupees. The routes they serve are written in Nepali, so ask around for help.

For longer distances, such as to **Pokhara** (6-7h) or **Chitwan** (7h), there are **tourist buses** that leave every day at **7am from Kantipath** ( just outside Thamel).

Alternatively, you can opt for a **domestic flight** with one of the numerous carriers (Bouddha Airlines, Yeti Airlines, Tara Airlines, Nepal Airlines)

Ride sharing apps like **Pathao**, **InDriver** and **Sajilo** are super handy to get around. They have motorbike and taxi option and very reasonable prices.

---

The festival's travel partner **Four Season** (Phone: +977-1-5526894 / 5528842) offers a wide array of tours and trekking itineraries, both long and short. Take advantage of their knowledge and let them handle the logistics of your trip!

<https://www.go-nepal.com/destination/nepal>

## Shop

For books, head to Pilgrims Book Store (Thamel or Jhamsikhel) or the Wisdom Books & Aroma Shop (Bhanimandal).

For locally made and fair trade certified souvenirs and interior decoration items, head to Kupondole - the strip between Himalaya Hotel and Kan Devata Temple has a number of interesting places like Dhukuti, The Hemp Company and Mahaguthi. For locally made goodies that are eco and wallet friendly, visit Maya Ko Chino in Jhamsikhel.

Roam the alleys of Patan to find antiques (or replicas, as exporting certain antiques is prohibited). If you fall in love with a wooden object, one way to know if it's the real thing is to check for patina. Everything from paintings to jewelry to handcrafted sculptures, you are certain to find in Patan.

## Relax

Lotus mindfulness and Relaxation Services (Thamel) is the place to wind down and get yourself back together after exploring the nooks and crannies of Kathmandu. Just sit back, relax and let the singing bowls do all the work.

Sotai & Kai Japanese Physiotherapy (Sanepa). The Japanese owner and his son have trained deaf/mute Nepalis as masseuses/ masseurs, and they perform excellent massages that do wonders to ease aching muscles and joints.

For the ultimate spa experience Chaintanya is highly recommended by locals and expats alike.

Seeing Hands (Jhamsikhel & Thamel). The fantastic hands of the teams of blind masseurs will find every knot in your muscles and make sure you leave walking on clouds

## Activities

If seeing all the amazing clay crafts has made you want to get your own hands dirty, sign up for a pottery class. These classes are mostly offered in Bhaktapur, but you might find a few in Patan itself.

If you are with children or a child at heart yourself, Jump KTM in Jhamsikhel might be THE spot for you. With amenities such as a professional trampoline, a foam pit and a dodgeball arena, Jump Ktm is the perfect place to let loose and jump!

# Recommended readings and links

Among the many sources of information on Nepal, we find these particularly well written and insightful. Books:

Mark Liechty - "[Far Out-Countercultural Seekers and the Tourist Encounter in Nepal](#)" (non-fiction)

Thomas Bell - "[Kathmandu](#)" (non-fiction)

Prashant Jha - "[Battles of the New Republic: A Contemporary History of Nepal](#)" (non-fiction)

Prawin Adhikari - "[The Vanishing Act: Stories](#)" (fiction)

Manjushree Thapa - "[Tutor of History](#)" (fiction)

Pranaya Rana - "[City of Dreams](#)" (fiction)

Rabi Thapa - "[Thamel](#)" (non-fiction)

Robert Levy - [Mesocosm](#) (only if you dare)

Laura Kunreuther- "[Publics of Heritage and Domestic Archives among the Nepali Middle Class](#)" (Essay)

Dinesh Paudel & Philippe Le Billon- "[Geo-Logics of Power: Disaster Capitalism, Himalayan Materialities, and the Geopolitical Economy of Reconstruction in Post-Earthquake Nepal](#)" (Research Article)

Austin Lord and Galen Murton- "[Trans-Himalayan power corridors: Infrastructural politics and China's Belt and Road Initiative in Nepal](#)" (Research Article)

## Online in-depth news magazines:

[La.Lit Magazine](#) (lalitmag.com)

[The Record Nepal](#) (recordnepal.com)

[Himal Southasian](#) (himalmag.com)

Links to general information on Nepal and Kathmandu:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal)

[wikitravel.org/en/Nepal](http://wikitravel.org/en/Nepal)

[wikitravel.org/en/Kathmandu](http://wikitravel.org/en/Kathmandu)

# EMERGENCIES

Police 100

Fire Brigade 101

Ambulance 102

Traffic Police 103

Patan Hospital +977 01 552 2295 (Lagankhel)

CIWEC Clinic +977 01 443 5232

(Opposite British Embassy, Lainchaur) Grande City Hospital +977 01  
416 3500 (Kanti Path, opposite Hotel Yellow Pagoda) Norvic Hospital  
+977 01 597 0032 (Thapathali)

Nepal Medicity Hospital +977 01 421 7766 (Nakhu)

Blood Bank +977 01 542 7033 (Pulchowk)

# USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Nishant +977 984 175 0949

Photo.Circle Office +977 01 544 3501

Nirvana +977 980 1086645

Niharika +977 981 8969646

Biraj +977 986 0549967