



## Intrepid Travel country information

### nepal

At Intrepid we have a flexible and relaxed attitude to travel, which is very much in keeping with our surrounds. No matter what style of Intrepid trip you are on, take it easy on your travels and do not attempt to see and experience everything in a very short space of time. Take the time to absorb the smells, the tastes and the sights that this wonderful part of the world offers. Not only will you return home more refreshed, but you will also gain a far greater understanding of the Asian way of life than if you were ticking off sights on a list.

Not surprisingly when Nepal is mentioned it is the majestic Himalaya which first comes to mind, but it's a pleasure and a delight to discover that mountains are just one of the many wonders and attractions this country has to offer. To travel in Nepal is to be introduced to an amazing blend of cultural and ethnic diversity. From villagers in distant mountain settlements seemingly untouched by time, to the shopkeepers in the midst of the hustle and bustle of downtown Thamel, the best of Nepal is revealed in the warm and friendly people who are the true heart of the country.

### quick facts

Population:	25.3 million
Capital City:	Kathmandu Pop.: 1,500,000
People:	Brahman, Chetri, Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai, limbu, Sherpa, Tharu & others
Language:	Nepali
Religion:	87% Hinduism, 8% Buddhism, 4% Islam, 1% other
Currency:	Rupee
Time:	GMT plus 5 hours and 45 minutes
Electricity:	220V, 50 Hz
International Dialing Code:	977

### visas

These requirements can change regularly please see your trip notes for more up to date details. These can be downloaded from the 'download documents' section of the booking form.

### religion, customs & conduct

Religion is at the very centre of Nepali life. The majority of the population is Hindu (this is a true Hindu Kingdom), with a substantial number of Buddhists (which is not surprising as Buddha was born here) and a small minority of Muslims, Christians and Animists. This is very much a traditional and conservative society, where public displays of intimacy between a man and a woman are considered unsuitable. Cleanliness in a person's appearance and modesty are greatly appreciated even in the most informal of situations. The right hand is used for giving, taking, eating, shaking hands or for any action above the waist.



The left one is considered unclean. The feet are also considered unclean, so it's a big no no to go round kicking people, to put your feet up on a chair or a table, to point your feet at someone or something revered or even to touch someone else's feet.

### best time to go / climate

Nepal has a primarily temperate climate, with some tropical and alpine regions. From June until September the monsoon usually rages across the whole country, meaning it's generally too wet and humid for trekking. In the post-monsoon months of September, October and November, the vegetation is lush – rice-harvesting season – and the air is clean, with excellent mountain views. The days are warm and sunny, with increasingly cool nights. This marks the beginning of the trekking season, which runs until May. During the winter months (December to February), the air is dry and clear with temperatures dropping down well below the freezing point at high altitudes, although in Kathmandu, the thermometer can sometimes reach a pleasant 25 C. Spring (March to May) brings a warmer and slightly hazier air and is particularly beautiful with the rhododendrons and the orchids in flower.

### accommodation

We use a wide range of accommodation, ranging from clean and comfortable hotels and guesthouses, to basic tea houses that are often multi share and waterproof tents on our fully assisted trekking program. Our hotels rooms are generally twin bedded, with private facilities which are usually of Western style. When travelling in remote areas, toilet facilities are usually local squat style and can often be quite primitive.

### transport

**buses:** On shorter routes we take the rather run down government buses and mingle with the locals. Jeeps or minibuses are often used to get us to and from our trekking departure points. On longer routes, we use private buses, which provide a slightly higher degree of comfort and safety.

**cycle:** Around Kathmandu and Pokhara bicycles are a great way to take in the atmosphere and scenery.

**taxi:** Widely found in Kathmandu and Pokhara, all licensed taxis are metered, but drivers are often reluctant to use them. Make sure to negotiate the fare before departing.

**tempos:** A local form of public transport, they're an oversized auto rickshaw which follows a determined route, taking as many passengers as can be folded into the space.

**on foot:** The traditional way of getting to places in the Himalaya.

### food & drinks

Traditional Nepali food is plain and simple, not very spicy, but full of flavour. One dish stands out from the many different regional variations and has come to characterise Nepal's cuisine: dal-bhad-tarkari. Dal is a thick lentil soup, eaten with rice (bhat), accompanied by a vegetable curry (tarkari) and pickles (achar), which enhances the flavours of an otherwise plain dish. Vegetarians are well catered for in Nepal. While trekking in the mountains, the Tibetan influence becomes more visible in the food available, while in the plains of the south, many Indian dishes are found.

Locally produced beer of international brands will quench that thirst - especially after a day's cycling or trekking. Chang, a mild beer made from millet or rice, is the home brew of the Himalaya. Raksi, a country liquor, is usually made from millet or wheat and sometimes corn. A cup of tea usually starts the morning. Locally produced soft drinks are widely available. Lassi, a curd based drink which may be either savoury or sweet, is a popular and refreshing drink. Do not drink the water unless you are sure it has been filtered. The same applies to ice. Bottled water is readily available in the main centres.



### public holidays

January 1 <sup>st</sup>	-	New Years Day
January 11 <sup>th</sup>	-	National Unity Day
January 29 <sup>th</sup>	-	Martyr's Day
February	-	Saraswati Day
February 19 <sup>th</sup>	-	Democracy Day
February/March	-	Shivratri
February 24 <sup>th</sup>	-	Education Day
March 8 <sup>th</sup>	-	Women's Day
March	-	Holi
March/April	-	Chaitra Dashin
April	-	Ram's Day
April 14 <sup>th</sup>	-	Nepalese New Year
April/May	-	Budhha Jayanti
September	-	Indra Jatra
November 8 <sup>th</sup>	-	Constitution Day
October	-	Dasain
October / November	-	Tihar
December 29 <sup>th</sup>	-	King's Birthday

### best buys

Another fantastic shopping destination - Clothing, and embroidered items, Tibetan carpets and traditional religious paintings, hand-woven pashmina shawls, thankas, pottery, jewellery, traditional masks & puppets, bronze work, traditional knives, prayer wheels and wood carvings are all popular.

### arriving early...?

All our base hotels have comprehensive notices with all types of information available: things to see, things to do, restaurants and cafes.

**kathmandu:** Kathmandu remains one of the most alluring and magical of the world's "must see" cities. Despite massive developments and the high impact of mainstream tourism, Kathmandu still rewards visitors who venture beyond its Thamel borders. Places to see include Basantapur (KTM) Durbar Square, Swayambhunath, Bouddhnath, Pashupatinath Temples, Patan, Budhanilkantha. Perhaps go shopping at Basantpur Square Market or if you have more time head out into the countryside walking or cycling.

### recommended reading

Nepal: The Kingdom of the Himalaya – Tony Hagen.

The Snow Leopard - Peter Matthiessen.

Vignettes of Nepal - Harka Gurung.

To the Navel of the World - Peter Somerville

The Festivals of Nepal - Mary Anderson.



Tiger for Breakfast - Michael Peissel.

Annapurna - Maurice Herzog.

The Ascent of Rum Doodle - W.E Bowman.

Trekking in Nepal: A Traveller's Guide by Stephen Bezruchka

Lonely Planet, Rough Guide and Footprint offer updated guides to Nepal.

### responsible travel

To find out what Responsible Travel is all about and how you can participate please refer to the 'about Intrepid' section of the website.

### safety

Your safety is important to us. Please refer to the 'our trips' section of the website to view detailed information on our safety guidelines.

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