

CONTENT

EAST NEPAL

Kanchenjunga	12
Basantapur	24
Solu & Khumbu	32
Illam	54
Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve	64

CENTRAL NEPAL

Chitwan	70
Kathmandu Valley	80
Janakpur	98
Langtang	106

WEST NEPAL

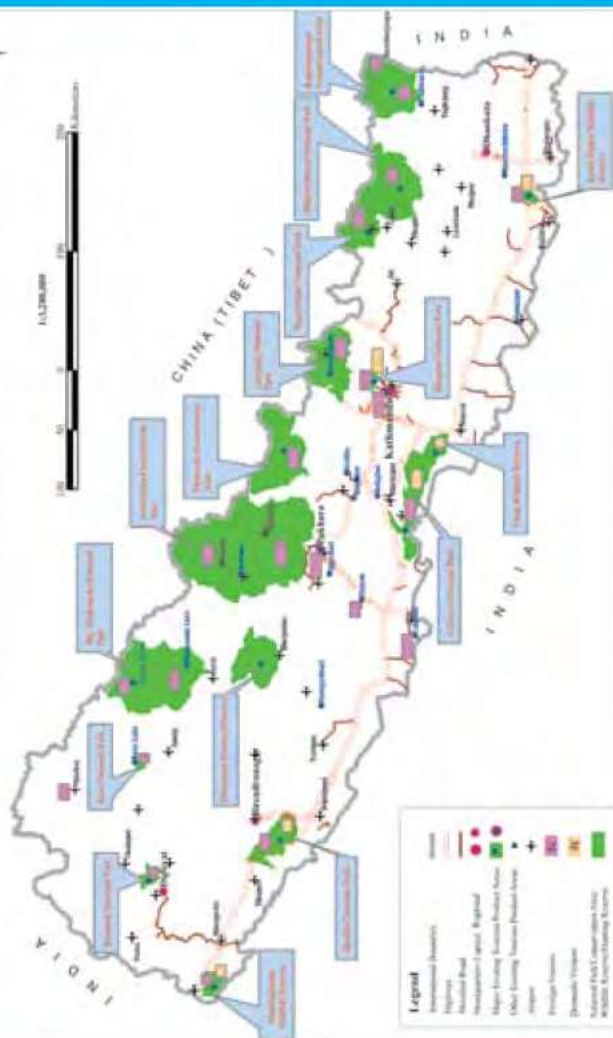
Bandipur	122
Ghalegaun - Ghanpokhara	132
Lumbini	140
Pokhara	158
Tansen	170
Sirubari	180

MID AND FAR WEST NEPAL

Dolpa	188
Wild West Triangle	198
Khaptad	208

MAJOR TOURIST ACTIVITIES	218
FEES AND PERMIT	226

Nepal



Designed & Produced By: ©2010 Linn, T&F&P

Source: *Topo Maps Publ.* (1983) (Copyright)



Nepal

INTRODUCTION

Nepal is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of natural beauty due to its unique geographical position and latitudinal variation. The elevation of the country ranges from 60 m above sea level to the highest point on earth, Mt. Everest at 8,848 m, all within a distance of 150 km with climatic conditions ranging from sub tropical to arctic. This wild variation fosters an incredible variety of ecosystems, the greatest mountain range on earth, thick tropical jungles teeming with a wealth of wildlife, thundering rivers, forested hills and frozen valleys.

Within this spectacular geography are some of the richest cultures of Himalayan heritage. Nepal, home of Mt. Everest is also home of some 28.58 million people belonging to 101 ethnic groups who speak over 92 different languages, most living rural lives in their own little worlds, along the length of the Himalayas. The best way to explore the exotic Himalayan nature and culture of Nepal is by walking through these villages and meeting the charming people.

We invite you to: Meet the lovely people of rural Nepal, share a meal with them, stay at their homes as family guests, taste

their local drink and see them carry on with life graciously. In addition to the heartwarming hospitality you will also witness some of the most spectacular views of the mountain landscapes or heritage sites along the way. Visit rural Nepal to know the real Nepal.

Visit to these rural parts of Nepal, not only takes you through pristine landscapes and colorful mountain cultures, but it also gives you a chance to educate and empower the local community and be a part of their development process. Money spent in these areas contribute directly to the local livelihood. In the 1950s, Nepal opened its doors to tourists and has received millions of visitors since then. However, much of Nepal is still the Shangri-la that travelers long to experience. Therefore, with the aim of showcasing new areas and promoting and developing indigenous people and culture, a new approach to tourism, based on sustainable development has been initiated by Nepal. Community-based tourism is also being initiated in other parts of South Asia as a tool for sustainable development.

We are pleased to extend our warm hospitality and hope your stay in Nepal is a memorable one. If you have any queries or comments, please feel free to contact us at the Nepal Tourism Board. We recommend that tourists avail services from registered agencies only.

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)

P.O. Box: 11018

Tourist Service Center

Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 977-1-4256909, 4256229

E-mail: info@ntb.org.np

Web site: www.welcomenepal.com

PEOPLE

Nepal has a population of about 28.58 million people of different races and ethnic groups living in different regions with diverse culture, languages and dialects. The Gurung and Magar live mainly in the west. The Sherpa, Tamang, Rai, Limbu and Sunwar inhabit the slopes and valleys of the eastern mid hills. The Newar constitute important ethnic group of the capital Kathmandu Valley. There are Tharu, Yadava, Satar, Rajvanshi and Dhimal in the Terai region. The Brahmin, Chhetri, Thakuri and other groups are generally spread over all parts of Nepal. The different cultures of this Himalayan country reflect harmonious blending of Hinduism and Buddhism.



GEOGRAPHY

Nepal, a sovereign independent country, is bound in the north by the Tibetan Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China and in the east, south and west by India. The length of Nepal is 885 km east-west and its breadth varies from 145-241 km north-south. The country can be divided into three main geographical regions.

Himalayan Region: The altitude of this region ranges between 4,877—8,848 m. It includes 8 of the 14 highest summits in the world which exceed altitude of 8,000m including Everest, Kanchenjunga, Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and others.

Moutain Region: This region accounts for about 68 percent of the total land area. It is formed by the Mahabharat range that soars up to 4,877 m and lower Churia range.

Terai Region: The low-land Terai occupies about 17percent of the total land area of the country.

HISTORY

Nepal has always been an independent and sovereign country with glorious history, culture and tradition that dates back to times immemorial. Before the campaign for national integration was launched by King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great, Kathmandu Valley was ruled by the Malla Kings, whose contribution to Nepali art and culture is enormous. In 1768 A.D., the Shah dynasty ascended the throne of unified Nepal.

NEPAL AT A GLANCE

Area	147,181 sq. km
Geography	Situated between China in the north and India in the south
Capital	Kathmandu
Population	28.58 million
People	Nepal has more than 101 ethnic groups and 92 spoken languages
Language	Nepali is the national language. English is widely understood by travel trade people.
Currency	Nepali Rupee

Place	Summer			Winter		
	(May, June, July)			(Dec, Jan, Feb)		
	Max (°C)	Min (°C)	Rain (mm)	Max (°C)	Min (°C)	Rain (mm)
Kathmandu	28.1	19.5	312.9	19.3	3.0	15.4
Pokhara	29.7	21.3	829.7	20.3	7.7	26.3
Chitwan	33.0	25.3	404.0	24.1	8.3	13.8

What to Wear : Light weight clothing is recommended from May through October. Warm garments are required in October-March. An umbrella or a raincoat is a must for the rainy season.

ENTRY PROCEDURES

Visa can be obtained either on arrival in Nepal or from Nepal Embassy, Consulate or Mission offices abroad

One passport size photograph is required for obtaining visa or for renewing visa 1 passport size photo is necessary.

a. Tourist Visa

Visa Facility Duration Fee	Visa Facility Duration Fee	Visa Facility Duration Fee
Multiple entry	15 days	US\$ 25 or equivalent convertible currency
Multiple entry	30 days	US\$ 40 or equivalent convertible currency
Multiple entry	90 days	US\$ 100 or equivalent convertible currency

b. Gratis (Free) Visa

• Gratis visa for 30 days is available only for nationals of South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, Indian nationals do not require visa to enter Nepal. (For further information- Department of Immigration, Kalikasthan, Kathmandu, Tel: 00977-1-4221996/ 4223590/ 4222453 Web site: www.immi.gov.np)

For Indian Nationals:

Indian nationals traveling to Nepal must possess any one of the following documents-

1. Passport
2. Driving license with photo
3. Photo identity card issued by a Government agency
4. Ration Card with photo
5. Election Commission Card with photo
6. Identity card issued by Embassy of India in Kathmandu
7. Identity card with photo issued by Sub- Divisional Magistrate or any other officials above his rank.

For further information- Department of Immigration, Kalikasthan, Kathmandu, Tel: 00977-1-4221996/ 4223590/ 4222453 Web site: www.immi.gov.np

BY AIR: Nepal Airlines is the national flag carrier of Nepal with flights to/from Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai, Bangkok, Doha and Hong Kong. Other international airlines operating from/ to Kathmandu are Air Arabia (Sharjah), Air Asia (Kuala Lumpur), Air China (Lhasa, Chengdu), ArkeFly (Amsterdam), Bahrain Air (Bahrain), Biman Bangladesh (Dhaka), Buddha Air (Paro, Lucknow), China Eastern Airlines (Kunming), China Southern Airlines (Guangzhou), Dragon Air (Hong Kong), Druk Air (Delhi, Paro), Etihad Airways (Abu Dhabi), Flydubai (Dubai), GMG Airlines (Dhaka), Gulf Air (Bahrain), Indian Airlines (Delhi, Kolkata, Varanasi), Indigo Airlines (Delhi), Jet Airways (Delhi, Mumbai), Jet Lite (Delhi), Kingfisher Airlines (Delhi), Korean Air (Seoul), Oman Air (Muscat), Pakistan International Airlines (Karachi, Islamabad), Qatar Airways (Doha), Silk Air (Singapore), RAK Air (Ras al-Khaimah), Spicejet (Delhi), Thai Airways (Bangkok) and United Airways (Dhaka).

BYLAND: All visitors coming to Nepal by land must enter only through one of these entry points (1) Kakarbhitta (2) Birgunj (3) Belhiya, Bhairahawa (4) Nepalgunj (5) Dhangadi and (6) Mahendranagar in the Nepal-India border and (7) Kodari in the Nepal-China border. The overland tourists entering the country with their vehicles must possess an international carnet or complete customs formalities.

Route	Approx. Distance (border towns to major cities)	Nearest Railway Station in India
Siliguri-Kakarvitta-KTM	620 kms	New Jalpaiguri (NJP)
Jugbani-Biratnagar-KTM	550 kms	Jugbani
Raxaul-Birgunj-KTM	280 kms	Raxaul (RXL)
Sunauli-Bhairahawa-KTM	280 kms	Gorakhpur (GKP)
Rupaidiya-Jamuna (Nepalgunj)-KTM	520 kms	Rupaidiya/ Nanpara
Gauriphanta-Mohana (Dhangadi)-KTM	630 kms	Gauriphanta/ Paliya
Banbasa-Gaddachaurki (Mahendranagar)-KTM	715 kms	Banbasa/ Tanakpur
Sunauli-Bhairahawa-Palpa-Pokhara	185 kms	Gorakhpur (GKP)
Sunauli-Bhairahawa-Chitwan	145 kms	Gorakhpur (GKP)
Sunauli-Bhairahawa-Lumbini	26 kms	Gorakhpur (GKP)

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Foreign currencies must be exchanged only through banks or authorized foreign exchange dealers. The receipts from such transaction are to be obtained and retained. Visitors can also exchange money at the foreign exchange counters at the airport upon arrival. Indian currency Rs. 500/- and Rs. 1,000/- notes are not allowed to be brought into Nepal, will not be exchanged and will not be accepted for transaction of any kind.

CUSTOMS FORMALITIES

All baggage must be declared and cleared through the customs on arrival at the entry. Personal effects are permitted free entry. A tourist may bring in dutiable goods, such as tobacco and liquors, within the prescribed quantity free of duty. Carrying narcotics, arms and ammunitions are strictly prohibited (Tel: 4470110/ 4472266). Visitors can export souvenirs to their respective countries. The export of antiques, however, require special permission from the Department of Archaeology, National Archive Building, Ram Shah Path, Kathmandu (Tel.: 4250686/7).

DOMESTIC AIRLINES

Nepal Airlines has an extensive network of air services to major parts of the country. Besides Nepal Airlines, other domestic airlines provide regular and charter services to popular domestic destinations. Many domestic airlines operate early morning, one-hour mountain flights round the year.

GETTING AROUND

Metered taxis are easily recognizable by the taxi sign and black number plates and can be hailed off the street. Micro buses and battery-run EV tempos cheaper than taxis are also available. No tip is expected. There are regular bus services within the three cities of the Kathmandu Valley operating from old bus terminal

Ratna Park. Similarly, scheduled bus services for outside the valley operate from the Gongabu Bus Terminal. It is also possible to hire mountain or motor bikes at nominal rates.

FACILITIES

Nepal has every category of accommodation facility, ranging from international standard star hotels and resorts to budget lodges. To ensure safety and quality service, it is advisable to use the services of Government registered hotels, lodges, travel agencies, licensed tour guides and hire only authorized trekking guides or porters.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

There are four UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Nepal. Two are in cultural category and two are in natural category. World Cultural Heritage Sites of Nepal are: Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Buddha, and seven monuments of Kathmandu valley within a radius of 20 km (together counted as one Heritage Site). The World Natural Heritage Sites are Chitwan and Sagarmatha National Parks. Kathmandu valley World Heritage Site comprises of three historical palaces – Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur Durbar Squares; two Buddhist stupas – Swayambhunath and Baudhanath; and two Hindu temples – Pashupatinath and Changu Narayan. Nepal offers incomparable scope to connoisseurs of art and culture to see and study different aspects of fine arts in its paintings, sculpture, wood carving and architecture.

East Nepal



KANCHENJUNGA

(T a p l e j u n g)

The Kanchenjunga region is one of the most beautiful areas in the country with spectacular landscape, Himalayan peaks rising above 7,000 m and lush flora and fauna. Mt. Kanchenjunga (8,586 m), the third highest peak of the world, lies in this region.



Kanchenjunga in far-eastern Nepal borders with India in the east and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China in the north. Alpine grasslands, rocky outcrops, dense temperate, sub-tropical forests, and low river valleys make up the area.

Staying at local tea houses, mountaineering, and trekking along pilgrimage trails are the main attractions while traveling to this region. Nearby is the Tinjure Milke Jaljale ridge that forms border between Taplejung, Tehrathum and Sankhuwasabha districts. This is an area well known for its bio-diversity including the world's largest natural rhododendron forest with the highest number of rhododendron species in the world.



➞ *Mt. Kanchenjunga (8,586m), the third highest peak in the world.*

Kanchenjunga is the prime attraction of this region. New trekking trails: Pathibhara and Limbu Cultural Trail, offer additional choices and a peek at the Himalayan lifestyle and culture.

People

The predominant people in the Kanchenjunga region are the Limbus, with the higher regions inhabited by people of Tibeto-Mongoloid ancestry. Tibetans, Sherpas, Rais, Gurungs, Magars, Newars, Sunwars, and Tamangs also live in this area, while the area also offers cultural diversity of Chhetris and Brahmins.



→ Sherpa women in Suketar village.

Cardamom farming, agriculture, animal husbandry, and tourism are the major means of livelihood for the people here. The Sherpa people, who arrived from Tibet more than four hundred years ago, live at higher altitudes. The Sherpas of this region have distinct culture and tradition - quite different from the Sherpas who live in the Solukhumbu district in the Sagarmatha region.

New Experience

Limbu Cultural Trail

A new trekking route between Kabeli and Khaksewa rivers offers an in-depth experience of the culture, tradition, and lifestyle of the Limbu people who are dominant in this region. The 4-5 day Limbu Cultural Trail trek starts from Phungling and passes through Suketar, Lalikharka, Kande Bhanjyang, Simbu, Phungphung, Phumpe and Mamankhe. The Limbu Cultural Trail ends in Mamankhe where more than 95 percent of the population is Limbu (Mabo). From Mamankhe one has the option of either joining the Kanchenjunga trail or retracing the route back to Phungling.

Thick and a wide range of cardamom farms lie along the Limbu Cultural Trail. In addition is the unique Himalayan

flora and fauna, and untouched natural landscapes. Limbu communities in different villages perform cultural dances Dhaan Naach, Chyabrung Naach, and Bijuwa Naach for visitors. Accommodation and meals are offered in local houses. This provides opportunity to discover the area and the people. Tasting the local Tongba (alcoholic beverage) and Sukuti (dry meat), interacting with the people and participating in their regular activities, and hiking along unrefined trails crossing ridge and gully offers some of the best of Himalayan experiences.

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu- Suketar	Flight from Kathmandu-Suketar or Kathmandu-Biratnagar-Suketar. Sightseeing and experiencing local culture at Suketar.	1 hr. or more if flying via Biratnagar	Suketar (Tea shops and lodges)
Day 2	Suketar -Lalikharka (Phawakhola)	Lunch at Suketar. Trek through forests from Suketar -Lalikharka (Phawakhola). Tea at Deurali.	4 hrs. (Trekking)	Lalikharka (Teashops and lodge)
Day 3	Lalikharka - Kande Bhanjyang	Trek through forests from Lalikharka - Kande Bhanjyang Lunch at Simbu.	4-5 hrs. (Trekking)	Kande Bhanjyang (Campsite and home-stay)
Day 4	Kande Bhanjyang - Phumpe	Trek along River Kabeli from Kande Bhanjyang — Phumpe. View mountain sceneries. Lunch at Phungphung Danda.	7 hrs. (Trekking)	Phumpe (Campsite and lodges)
Day 5	Phumpe - Mamankhe	Trek through cardamom gardens from Phumpe - Mamankhe. Lunch at Mamankhe. Watch cultural shows and dances in the evening (Dhaan Naach, Chyabrung Naach)	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Mamankhe (Campsite and teashops)

There are 2 options after this:

1. Retracing the route back.
2. Taking the route to Kanchanjunga Base Camp.



© Sirish B.C.

→ *The wish fulfilling Pathibhara Devi.*

Pathibhara Trail

Pathibhara Devi shrine (3,794 m) is a popular pilgrimage destination. The animist deity at Pathibhara is worshipped with equal reverence by both Hindus and Buddhists. Hindus throng the temple during special celebrations, while Buddhists living in the vicinity light lamps at the temple on full moon nights.

The Goddess at Pathibhara is believed to fulfill the long-cherished dreams of her devotees, like sons for those without sons, and wealth for the poor. The story of the temple goes back to the time when hundreds of sheep were said to have disappeared from the place where the temple stands today. Legend has it that when the shepherds prayed to get their sheep back, they had a vision of the Devi herself who asked them to sacrifice a few sheep to get back their lost ones. It is said that when they did as they were asked by the Devi, the lost sheep were found, and from thence started the worship of Pathibhara Devi.

The Pathibhara pilgrimage may take 4 to 5 days and the best time to visit is from March to June and September to November. Pilgrims can also visit monasteries situated in Olangchungola and Lungchung, the waterfall at Sawa and the

pond of Timbuk, during autumn and spring every year. The forest ecosystem along the trail offers diversity of wildlife, birds, flowers and butterflies. Most of the Kanchenjunga range can also be seen from here.

Pathibhara is in Tapethok VDC, 19 kms from Phungling, the district headquarters. The journey to Pathibhara starts from Suketar (2,840 m) about a 2-hour walk from Phungling Bazaar. Pathibhara Devi is about 8-10 hours from Suketar. Suketar has the only airport of Taplejung district (a STOL airstrip). It is connected to Kathmandu and Biratnagar by scheduled flights. Beautiful views of Kanchenjunga and Kumbhakarna can be seen from Suketar. From Suketar the Pathibhara trail passes through Deurali, Ramitedanda, Chhatedhunga, Bhalugaunda, Phedi and finally to Pathibhara. The trail offers food and lodging facilities. Basic accommodation facilities are also available for pilgrims near the shrine.

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu- Suketar - Deurali	Flight from Kathmandu-Suketar or Kathmandu-Biratnagar- Suketar. Trekking from Suketar-Deurali. Observe the surroundings and local lifestyle along the trail.	1 hr. or more if flying via Biratnagar 2 hrs.	Deurali (Teashops)
Day 2	Deurali-Phedi	Trek from Deurali-Phedi. Bird watching along the trail. Viewing mountains and sceneries on the way.	4-5 hrs. (Trekking)	Phedi (Teashops)
Day 3	Phedi-Pathibhara-Phedi	Trekking from Phedi-Pathibhara. Darshan of Pathibhara Devi. Bird watching on the way. Viewing mountains and sceneries from Pathibhara. Trekking from Phedi- Pathibhara.	3 hrs. (Trekking) 2 ½ hrs. (Trekking back)	Phedi (Teashops)
Day 4	Phedi- Suketar	Trekking from Phedi-Suketar. Observing the surroundings and local lifestyle. Visiting the local monastery. Tasting local drinks and cuisines.	4-5 hrs. (Trekking)	Suketar (Lodges and teashops)
Day 5	Suketar-Kathmandu	Flying from Suketar-Kathmandu or Suketar-Biratnagar- Kathmandu.	1 hr. or more if flying via Biratnagar	Kathmandu

Added Attractions:

Kanchenjunga

With more than 250 species of birds and wildlife, and high mountain lakes in Olangchungola, the Kanchenjunga area has some of the most stunning scenery. The indomitable bamboo appears in many varieties, often the last lanky vegetation to give way to alpine grasses and scrub rhododendron. Above the crystalline lake of Ramser, a trail skirts the massive Yalung Glacier up to Oktang for prime views of Jannu, the southern face of Kanchenjunga and the line of peaks that divide Nepal from Sikkim. Yalung Glacier is believed to be the longest blue glacier in the world.

The Kanchenjunga region has been selected as one of the 200 Global Eco Regions recognized by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and is protected by the Government of Nepal as the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA). Ten species among Nepal's 20 indigenous gymnosperms and 15 among Nepal's 28 endemic flowering plants are found here. Juniper and Himalayan larch are abundant in the forests with more than 1,200 species of flowering plants. The Kanchenjunga region also boasts of 30

➡ *Suketar village, where Taplejung's STOL airstrip is located.*

©NTB



varieties of rhododendrons and 69 varieties of orchids. Birds found here include Impheyan pheasant, red-billed blue magpie and shy drongo, while rare wildlife include Himalayan black bear, snow leopard, musk deer, red panda, blue sheep and rhesus macaw.

Trek to the region also appeases natural history interest, with ecological zones from the subtropics to glacial wilderness. The hills are densely forested with rhododendron, oak, and pine; and wooden houses and frequent waterfalls confirm a copious monsoon. At Ghunsa, a Sherpa village marked with prayer flags and a gompa, two trails from Kanchenjunga's southern flanks join the northbound route. Like treks into other far-reaching areas, the Kanchenjunga trek encounters a vast range of elevations and temperature, and is best planned for September-November or March-May, with the possibility of snowfall at any time of year.

Rafting

The region also abounds in waterfalls, lakes and Himalayan streams. The Tamur River flowing through the region offers possibilities for white-water rafting.

➞ *Scenery of the Eastern Himalayan range as seen from the region.*

©NTB





→ Sherpa women with local crafts.

Ancient Gompas

The rich cultural heritage of Taplejung is reflected in the Buddhist gompas (monasteries) such as the 400-year old Diki Chhyoling Gompa of Olangchungola which has a life size statue of Avalokiteshwara. A butter lamp at the altar has been burning here uninterrupted since the construction of the gompa. The waters of a small stream outside the gompa continuously spin twelve prayer wheels with the prayer "Om Mane Padme Hum" inscribed on them.

Further Afield

It is possible to trek north to Pangpema for spectacular views as mountains close in from both sides of the valley. Pangpema is where expedition support teams spend months as lead climbers make camps far above. You can take day hikes onto the glacier and to higher ground for even better vantages of Kanchenjunga. Pangpema (close to 5,000 m) near base camp for Kanchenjunga's northern face, sits on a glacier within 10 km of the Tibet border surrounded by peaks upward of 6,500 m.

Starting down the Simbua Khola (stream), a trail diverts south through Yamphudin. From here you can then head either west to Taplejung and on toward Jaljala Himal and Milke Danda, or south to enter the subtropical Kabeli Khola valley, and on to Phidim or Ilam.

Getting There

Kanchenjunga region falls in Taplejung district of Mechi zone. Taplejung is connected to the rest of Nepal by the 227-km Char Aali-Ilam-Phidim-Taplejung road. There is an air link with Kathmandu and Biratnagar from the STOL airstrip at Suketar. You can also take a bus from Dharan to Dhankuta - Basantapur - Hile and trek from there. In the dry season, bus services are available from Birtamod, Jhapa in East Nepal and from Phidim in Panchthar district. Often an overnight stay is required; otherwise, it is a full day's journey.

Tourist Services

Tourist facilities are available in Phungling Bazaar and Suketar. While trekking, accommodation facilities have to be arranged along the way. Lodges, teashops and campsites are available en route to Kanchenjunga and Pathibhara, while home-stay facilities are available at Khewang, Kande Bhanjyang and Mamankhe on Limbu Cultural Trail. Basic tourist facilities for accommodation and food are available in the area. Private and

➡ Phungling Bazaar, headquarter of Taplejung district.





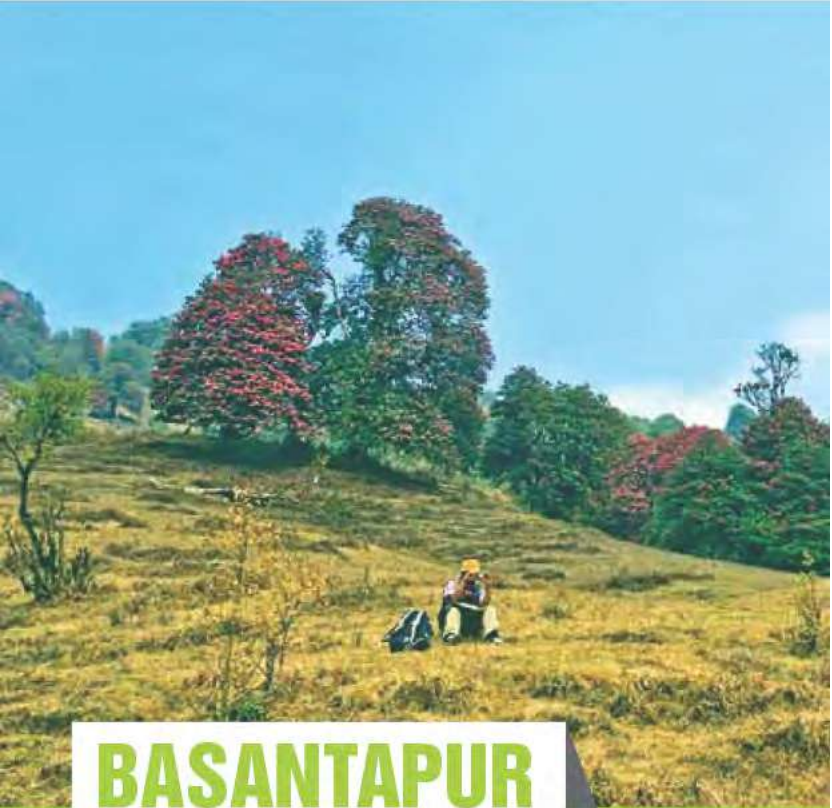
*A rare plant found
in the region.*

community-owned campsites are also available. Lodges and home-stays provide local cultural experience. If you are looking for better services of food and accommodation, camping is the alternative for the time being.

Further details about the Kanchenjunga region will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

A rural home in Taplejung.





BASANTAPUR (T e h r a t h u m)

Basantapur (2,200 m) is set up in an enchanting surrounding of mountains, lakes and greenery.

Offering excellent respite from city life, the diverse landscape includes terraced fields as well as the Terai plains covered with different types of vegetation. The mixed pastures, hills of colorful rhododendron and jasmine, beautiful sunrise and sunset, friendly people and a rich Limbu culture offer additional appeal. Basantapur also hosts trekkers on the way to Taplejung and Mt. Kanchanjunga.

The weather here is cool and temperate most times of the year, making Basantapur ideal to visit anytime. The best times to visit are autumn and spring, between October-December or from February-April. Summers are pleasant with temperatures ranging from 10 to 20 degree Celsius, while winters are mild.



© Susheel Shrestha

➤ *Basantapur (Tehrathum) region during spring.*

People

As in Kanchenjung region further, Limbu culture is predominant in the surrounding areas of Basantapur as well. Other ethnic groups that reside in the area are Gurung, Rai, Tamang, Brahmin and Chhettri. Tharu, Newar and Marwadi people also live in some areas. Most of the people are farmers by occupation.

Experience

Tin Jure

From Tin Jure Danda (3,066 m) (ridge) one can see magnificent views of sunrise and sunset, and majestic view of the mountains. Thirty-four varieties of rhododendron are found here. Tin Jure Danda is about a half hour away from Basantapur Bazaar.

Tinjure Milke Jaljale Trail, also known as the Rhododendron Trail, spreads across Taplejung, Terathum and Sankhuwasabha

districts. Hille, north of Dharan, is a good place to start out. Alternately, you can start from Phidim at the end of a newly completed dry season dirt road that traverses Ilam's young tea estates.

Heading northeast out of Hille, the trail climbs gradually through settlements of recent migrants from the northern Olangchung region, trans-Himalayan yak drivers who live for months on tsampa (roasted barley flour), dried yak meat, and

Yaks along the trail and rhododendron at bloom, Eastern Nepal.

© Susheel Shrestha



cheese. Gupha Pokhari is a serene lake set on a ridge looking east at the Kanchenjunga massif and west at Makalu and the Khumbu Himal (mountain). From here, a shorter trek follows the Milke Danda ridge due north, climbing to 4,700 m into the Jaljale Himal, a remote area spotted with lakes and inhabited by mountain peoples from Tibet. You can then descend east to the Mewa Khola (stream) and continue to Taplejung's airfield and further to the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area.



Milke

On the way to Taplejung is another popular rhododendron forest known by the name of Milke Danda (2,905 m). Milke Danda provides a closer view of the Kanchenjunga and Kumbhakarna mountains and offers beautiful sunrise and sunset surprises when weather is clear. It is on the trekking trail between Taplejung and Basantapur Bazaar.

Pattek

Pattek Danda (2,500 m) is equally beautiful for sunrise, sunset and also offers a wide view of the Himalayas including Mt. Everest and Mt. Kanchanjunga. Pattek Danda is ideal for short treks and is also a good area for picnics. There is a popular Goddess Kali temple 2-hour walk west from Basantapur Bazaar. Pattek Danda, about 3 km from Basantapur can also be reached via Chitre that is 15-minute drive away. From here Pattek Danda is a 30-minute trek.



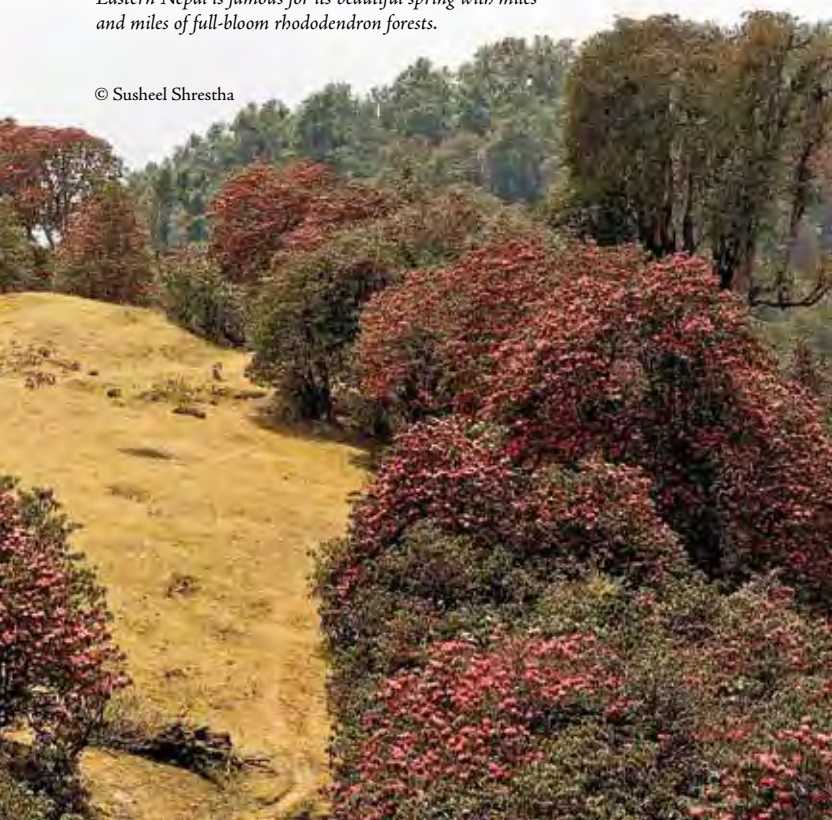
Other Attractions

Gupha Pokhari is a natural pond that lies on the trekking trail to Taplejung from Basantapur. Picturesque views of mountains, sunrise and sunset can be seen from here. This Pokhari (pond) is culturally significant and is also a good resting place for trekkers to Taplejung.

Marg Pokhari (2,600 m) is another natural pond on the lap of the hills. The pond holds religious value and scenic beauty. The pond has contributed to keep the surroundings green. The Marg Pokhari watershed area has a dense forest that habitats popular species of rhododendron and precious plants. Marg Pokhari is on the way to Basantapur from Sindhuwa, which is 5 km from Basantapur Bazaar.

Eastern Nepal is famous for its beautiful spring with miles and miles of full-bloom rhododendron forests.

© Susheel Shrestha



The rhododendron flower. It is also the national flower of Nepal.



Panchakanya Pokhari is another popular tourist site. Also known as Chhathar Pokhari, Panchakanya Pokhari is approximately 2 hours walk further down from Sukrabare Bazaar. Among the many ponds here, the largest pond in the area is Panchakanya.

A fair known as Sukrabare Bazaar (Sukrabar is Friday in Nepali) is held every Friday in Hammarjung VDC, showcasing the mixed culture of settlements. Majority of the inhabitants here are Limbu. Thus, it is an ideal place and time to experience the rich Limbu culture. The village is popular for homespun cloth called khadi (cotton). The village can be reached via Sindhuwa Bazaar, another popular area of Basantapur.

Getting There

Basantapur is in Tehrathum district of Koshi zone. It can be reached via Hille in Dhankuta district. Buses are available at Central Bus Station, Gongabu, in Kathmandu. Another option is to fly to Biratnagar and drive to Hille Bazaar. Buses are available from Hille Bazaar to Basantapur.

Tourist Services

Budget hotels and moderate accommodation facilities are available in Basantapur Bazaar. There are many small hotels and restaurants in the area to cater to local passers by. Camping sites are also available for trekkers. Other facilities are available in Basantapur Bazaar.

Further details about the Basantapur will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

**NEPAL TOURISM BOARD
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AREA
PHASE - II B
BASANTAPUR (Terhathum)**





SOLU & KHUMBU

(S o l u k h u m b u)

Trekking in the eastern region of Nepal provides a wide range of wilderness and cultural encounters - especially in the Everest region.

There are those who wish to reach the highest point on earth. While there are those who choose to live out their dreams by standing at the foot of Mt. Everest (8,848 m). Still others prefer a middle ground south of the Khumbu such as Solu.



© Sirish B.C.

➔ *Mt. Everest and Ngozumpa Glacier as seen from Gokyo Ri, Everest Region.*

Walking through the middle hills of Solu and trekking in the higher altitudes of the Khumbu to the base of Sagarmatha, or Mt. Everest, the world's highest peak, is an opportunity to observe and participate in the daily life of the legendary Sherpa people. The Sherpa people who rank among the hardest and most egalitarian people in the world are as great an attraction as the mountains.

Solu, or Sho Rung as the Sherpas know it, lies between 2,600 and 3,200 m elevation, extending from Jiri east to the Dudh

Kosi River. The climate is temperate, forests and pasturelands are well watered, the farmlands cultivated with maize, wheat, barley and apples.

Buddhist lamas, monks and nuns led by Rinpoches (reincarnate lamas) serve the predominantly Sherpa communities from gompas (monasteries). Solu has two separate destinations, Pikey and the Dudhkunda Cultural Trail. While it is also a path to the high country of Khumbu, Solu invites a leisurely pace. Spring rhododendron and magnolia blooms are more profuse here than almost anywhere in Nepal. Solu used to be part of the traditional route used by early Everest expeditions, but nowadays treks begin from Jiri (1,905 m, 6,250 ft.) cutting several days off the old trail that began from Lamosangu. Frequent lodges and wholesome meals allow the independent trekker to travel light. Campers have more flexibility to get off the beaten track.

Beyond Solu and recognized as a World Heritage Site, the Sagarmatha National Park in the Khumbu is one of the few places on earth that has a unique bio-diversity and the highest and youngest mountain system in the world. For those with sufficient time, a 10-12 day trek through Solu to the Khumbu and the Sagarmatha National Park is an excellent itinerary both in terms of acclimatization and to experience the changing customs, traditions, and lifestyles as you pass through lower altitude settlements to those in the higher altitudes.

A part of the Himalayan ecological zone, the Park was added to the list of World Heritage Sites in 1979 and is spread over 1,148 sq. km. in the Khumbu region. The Park contains three of the world's seven highest mountains Sagarmatha or Mt. Everest, Lhotse, and Cho Oyu and is also home to several other prominent peaks most of which are above 6,000m. Climbers and trekkers continue to trek to Everest Base Camp and not surprisingly the "Roof of the World" continues to be the scene of some of mountaineering's most significant accomplishments and a favored haven for alpine enthusiasts.

Mt. Everest is the prime attraction of Solukhumbu. New trekking trails: Dudhkunda-Khaling Rai-Pikey Trail, offer additional choices and a peek at the Himalayan lifestyle, culture and a wide range of nature experience.

People

For the people of both Solu and the Khumbu, the hard grind of daily life in the high Himalayas is interrupted by seasons of feasts and festivals, marked by dancing and general merry-making. Most festivals are of religious nature and center on the temples and monasteries, with rites conducted by lamas (priests). These festivals are spread out through the full-moon days of May, June, July, August and November in different sections of the Himalayas. While the Sherpas are the most predominant people of Solukhumbu, in the lower region of Solu, the Khaling Rai culture prevails as well.

Khaling Rais

Khaling Rais have their own language and practice both joint and nuclear family ties. Chhang (locally fermented millet/ rice wine) is an indispensable part of their food and culture. Some of their more important rituals are the Bhume dance, the

➞ *Khaling Rai women of Lower Solukhumbu in their traditional wear.*



©NTB

Chandi dance and the Naghi puja. The Khaling Rais believe that in order to continue human existence, it is necessary to worship their ancestors and the earth deity. Some degree of Shamanism can also be seen in this culture. Although the Khaling Rais belong to the Kirant ethnic group and have their own festivals, they celebrate the Hindu and Buddhist festivals as well.

Sherpas

Though best known for their accomplishments as high-altitude porters and mountain guides, the Sherpa people have traditionally been traders, herders and subsistence farmers. The best known and most admired of all of Nepal's ethnic groups, the Sherpas migrated to the high valleys south of Mt. Everest from eastern Tibet about 450 years ago. The name Sherpa means "people from the east." Their Tibetan origins are reflected in their language, customs, and religion. Ancient mountain gods, the most sacred of these being Numbur in Solu and Khumbu-ila in Khumbu, dominate the Sherpa homeland. The development of mountaineering and trekking has become an added source of income and a means to international recognition for the Sherpa people.

➞ *Sherpa women of Solukhumbu.*

©NTB



A deep adherence to the Tibetan Buddhist religion dominates their home lives, and their biggest festival - the dance-drama known as Mani Rimdu - depicts the victory of Buddhism over the ancient Bon faith. Mani Rimdu is held at Tengboche and Chiwang during the full moon in November-December or during the full moon in May-June at Thami monastery, a short day's walk west of Namche Bazaar.

New Experience

Dudhkunda Cultural Trail (Solu)

Dudhkunda (4,560 m), a holy mountain lake, in the lap of Mt. Numbur is a popular trekking destination of Solu. The trek to Dudhkunda starting from Phaplu can be done either only around the Dudhkunda Lake or combined with cultural experience passing through Khaling Rai settlements and then back to Salleri through dense forests of rhododendron and a variety of wildlife. The trail combined provides one with a close encounter with the unique Khaling Rais of this area. Dudhkunda, which literally means lake of milk, is said to be a sacred lake and is revered by the local people. It is believed that taking a dip in its holy waters will fulfill one's wishes. During full moon nights in August a weeklong celebration is held here by pilgrims and jhankris (Shaman priests).

➡ Lake Dudhkunda with Mt. Numbur in the backdrop.

©NTB

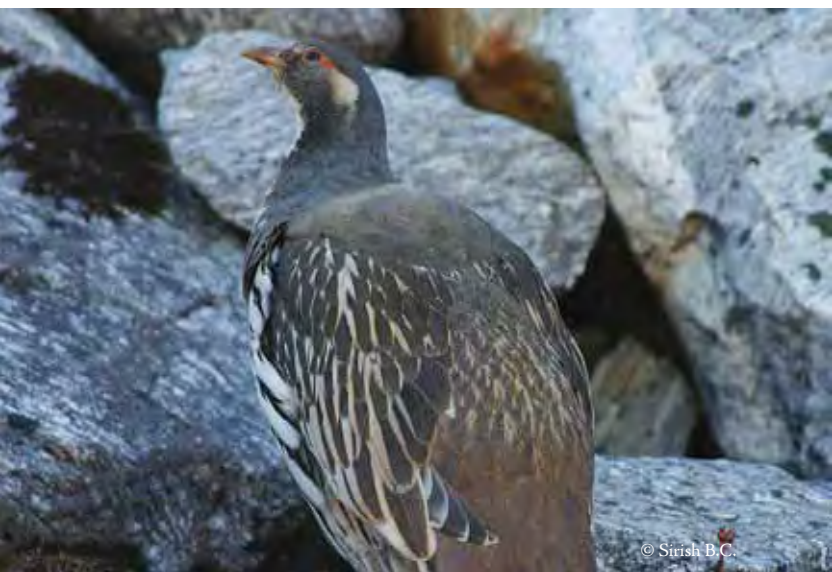


Suggested Itinerary for Dudhkunda Trail (9-11 days)

Day	From - To	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Phaplu-Salleri	Flying from Kathmandu-Phaplu. See the local market in Salleri and visit local monasteries. Visit Chewang monastery. Walking to Salleri from Phaplu.	Time 35 min. (Flight) 4 hrs. (Visit to Chiwang monastery) 30 min. (Walking)	Salleri (Teashops, lodges)
Day 2	Salleri-Dorpu-Ghansa	Trekking from Salleri — Junbesi. Observe Sherpa culture, visit monasteries.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Junbesi (Lodges, camping)
Day 3	Ghansa-Kerung-Pattale	Trekking from Junbesi — Thuptenchholing - Shengeephuk. Observe wildlife and vegetation on the way. Visit Thuptenchholing monastery. Observe traditional Tibetan medicinal therapy at Thuptenchholing. Visit Phonmoche monastery and meditation cave. Camping at Shengeephuk.	7-8 hrs. (Trekking)	Shengeephuk (Camping)
Day 4	Pattale - Jhapre	Visit Shengeephuk cave and see palm imprint on stone. Trekking from Shengeephuk — Basa Khola - Beni . Walk through alpine forests. Experience wilderness in beautiful landscape. Closer view of mountains.	8-9 hrs. (Trekking)	Beni (Camping)
Day 5	Jhapre — Pikey Base Camp	Trekking from Beni-Dudhkunda. See mountain glacier, Lake Dudhkunda and the mountains closely. Walk around and tour the area. Observe fair if you are there at Janai Purnima in August. See migratory aquatic birds during rainy season.	4-5 hrs. (Trekking)	Dudhkunda (Camping)
Day 6	Pikey-Junbesi	Trekking from Dudhkunda-Takshindu. Observe Sherpa culture on the way. See animal herding on the Himalayan pastures. Experience wilderness and beautiful landscape. Watch Sherpa cultural show at Ringmo and on request in Takshindu.	8-9 hrs. (Trekking)	Takshindu/ Ringmo (Camping, lodges, teashops)
Day 7	Junbesi—Thuptenchholing-Junbesi.	View of mountains early in the morning from Takshindu. Visit Takshindu Gumpa. Take a village tour and observe Sherpa culture.		Takshindu (Camping, lodges, teashops)
Day 8	Junbesi-Phaplu	Trekking Takshindu — Phaplu. Walk through mixed alpine forests. Experience wildlife and birdwatching. See Sherpa settlement. See wildlife and vegetation. Watch cultural show which will be performed on request.	6-7 hrs. (Trekking)	Phaplu (Camping, lodges, teashops, resort)
Day 9	Phaplu-Kathmandu	Flight.	35 min.	Kathmandu

Suggested Itinerary for Dudhkunda-Khaling Rai Trail (11-13 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Phaplu-Salleri	Flying from Kathmandu-Phaplu. See the local market in Salleri and visit local monasteries. Visit Chewang monastery. Walking to Salleri from Phaplu.	35 min. (Flight) 4 hrs. (Visit to Chewang monastery) 30 min. (Walking)	Salleri (Teashops, lodges)
Day 2	Salleri-Ringmo-Takshindu	Trekking to Takshindu via Ringmo. Seeing Sherpa settlements on the way. Walk through woods. Bird watching on the way. Sherpa cultural show at Ringmo and on request in Takshindu too.	3-4 hrs. (Trekking)	Takshindu (Lodges, camping)
Day 3	Takshindu-Sahasra-Beni	Trekking from Takshindu-Sahasra-Beni. View of mountains early in the morning from Takshindu. Visit local cheese factory. Visit monasteries of nuns and monks. Walk through Alpine forest. See yak farms on the way. Bird watching on the way. Experience wilderness and see beautiful landscapes. Closer view of mountains Numbur, Khatang and Karyolung.	6-7 hrs. (Trekking)	Beni (Camping)
Day 4	Beni-Dudhkunda	Trekking from Beni-Dudhkunda. Walk through Alpine forest. See mountain glaciers. See holy Lake Dudhkunda. Experience high-altitude thin air. See spectacular views of Numbur, Khatang and Karyolung.	3-4 hrs. (Trekking)	Dudhkunda (Camping)
Day 5	Dudhkunda — Takshindu/Ringmo	Trekking from Dudhkunda — Takshindu/Ringmo. Taste the local cuisines in Ringmo. Taste apple delicacies, apple wine, yak cheese and local vegetables cooked as desired. Watch cultural shows which are performed by local communities on request.	6-7 hrs. (Trekking)	Takshindu (Camping)/ Ringmo (Camping, lodges, teashops)
Day 6	Takshindu-Nungthala-Thulo Dhunga	Trekking from Takshindu-Nungthala-Basa. Pass through Nungthala, which is also a tourist center where tourist facilities lodges and tea shops are available. Walk through Khaling Rai settlements on the way to Thulo Dhunga. Observing cultural programs of Bhume dance performed by Khaling Rai at Thulo Dhunga.	6-7 hrs. (Trekking)	Thulo Dhunga (Camping and teashops)
Day 7	Thulo Dhunga — Sombare	Trek from Thulo Dhunga - Basa. On the way visit Khaling Rai settlement.	6-7 hrs. (Trekking)	Sombare (Camping and teashop) (Home-stay available on request)
Day 8	Sombare	Visit Khaling museum at Sombare. Take a tour of the village. Observe the unique Khaling Rai lifestyle and culture. Watch cultural show performed on request.	3-4 hrs. (Trekking)	Sombare (Camping and teashop) (Home-stay available on request)
Day 9	Sombare-Changmiteng-Ratnange	Trekking from Sombare — Changmiteng. Visit Changmiteng, a beautiful Sherpa settlement, visit monastery and taste different varieties of local Sherpa drink. Trekking from Changmiteng — Ratnange.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Changmiteng (Home-stay, camping) Ratnange (Camping)
Day 10	Ratnange — Phaplu	Sunrise and mountain view from Ratnange in the morning. Trekking from Ratnange — Phaplu. Participate in cultural farewell program at Phaplu.	2-3 hrs. (Trekking)	Phaplu (Camping, lodges, teashops, resort)
Day 11	Phaplu- Kathmandu	Flight.	35 min.	Kathmandu



© Sirish B.C.

→ A bird found in this Himalayan region.

Pikey Cultural Trail (Solu)

Pikey Danda (4,065 m) is one of the tallest hills of Solu. From Pikey you can see most of the central and eastern Himalayan peaks Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest), Makalu, Kanchenjunga, Annapurna, Gauri Shanker, Lhotse, Numbur, Khatang, Karyalung, Shishapangma, Mera Peak, Thamserku, Lhotseshar, Nuptse and a little of Ama Dablam. The peak also offers breathtaking sunrise and sunset views during good weather. The trail passes through some of the most beautiful settlements of the region. A trail through Jiri-Chaulakharka-Ngaur also leads to the Pikey Danda area. The trail starts at Phaplu and passes through Kerung, Pattale, Jhapre, Pikey peak, Lamajura, Junbesi and ends at Salleri.

The name Pikey is derived from the name of a Sherpa clan deity. During the month of July the locals hold celebrations to worship their clan god, the eastern Chyabo Pikey, as Pikey Hlapchen Karbu. There are other interesting possibilities of undertaking



➤ *Himalayan orchid along the trail.*

tourism activities at Pikey such as paragliding, mountain biking, birdwatching, pilgrimage and meditation. From here the trail descends through dense forest finally meeting the Everest trail at Beni. July is a good time to take a trip to Pikey, as this is when the local people hold their celebrations of the clan god, the eastern Chyabo Pikey. From Pikey one can also continue on to the Dudhkunda trail. Rumjatar and Jiri are other alternative entries to Pikey Cultural Trail.

As mentioned above, after reaching Pikey one also has the option of taking the Dudhkunda Cultural Trail via Thaksindu. The trail passes through Junbesi, Phaplu, Thaksindu, Beni, Dudhkunda, Thaksindu and back to Salleri. This trek goes through beautiful settlements and landscapes. One of the most beautiful Sherpa villages, Junbesi, is on the way from Pikey to Dudhkunda. One can also visit the famous Thuptenchholing monastery on the way.

Suggested Itinerary Pikey Peak Trail (9-11 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Phaplu-Salleri	Flying from Kathmandu-Phaplu. See the local market in Salleri and visit local monasteries. Visit Chewang monastery. Walking to Salleri from Phaplu.	35 min. (Flight) 4 hrs. (Visit to Chawang monastery) 30 min. (Walking)	Salleri (Tea shops, lodges)
Day 2	Salleri-Dorpu-Ghansa	Trekking to Salleri-Dorpu-Ghansa. Experience of Tamang, Magar, Sherpa culture on the way. View of beautiful sceneries of mountains and landscapes.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Ghansa (Camping)
Day 3	Ghansa-Kerung-Pattale	Trekking from Ghansa-Kerung-Pattale Visiting monasteries, Buddhist stupa at Kerung. See mixed settlements of Tamangs, Magar, Sherpa and others. See panoramic mountain views in the evening and next morning.	7-8 hrs. (Trekking)	Pattale (Camping, basic lodges)
Day 4	Pattale - Jhapre	Trekking from Pattale - Jhapre. See wild orchids on the way. Viewing beautiful landscapes along the Solu—Okhaldhunga border. Visiting monasteries, Buddhist stupa in Jhapre.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Jhapre (Camping, lodges and teashops)
Day 5	Jhapre — Pikey Base Camp	Watching Sherpa cultural shows. Trekking from Jhapre-Pikey Base Camp. Experience of high-altitude vegetation, Himalayan flora and fauna. Visiting centuries old monasteries, Buddhist stupas and Mani stones. Seeing yak herding. Viewing unique landscapes and sceneries. The area is feasible for marathon and mountain bike race.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Pikey (Camping)
Day 6	Pikey-Junbesi	Trekking from Pikey —Junbesi via Pikey peak. Trekking upto Pikey peak from where one can see sunrise view and mountain peaks from Kanchenjunga to Dhaulagiri, including Everest can be seen. Walk down through unique landscape to Junbesi valley.	1 ½ hrs. (Trekking to Pikey peak) 3-4 hrs. (Trekking from Pikey peak to Junbesi)	Junbesi (Wide range of tea shops, lodges)
Day 7	Junbesi—Thuptenchholing-Junbesi	Trekking from Junbesi—Thuptenchholing-Junbesi. Visit Thuptenchholing monastery. Observe traditional Tibetan medicinal therapy at Thuptenchholing. Take a tour of the Junbesi village. Taste local food and drink. Watch Sherpa cultural show performed on request.	4 hrs. (Trekking)	Junbesi (Wide range of tea shops, lodges)
Day 8	Junbesi-Phaplu	Trekking from Junbesi-Phaplu. Taste local food. Participate in cultural farewell programs.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Phaplu (Lodges, tea shops and camping)
Day 9	Phaplu-Kathmandu	Flying from Phaplu- Kathmandu.	35 min. (Flight)	Kathmandu

There are other options from Junbesi:

1. Continue to Everest Base Camp via Thaksindu.
2. Continue to Dudhkunda Cultural Trail from Thuptenchholing.

Junbesi (Solu)

Junbesi (2,700 m) is one of the most beautiful Sherpa villages in the Lower Solukhumbu region, with its astonishing landscapes, cultural wealth, and the hospitable Sherpa people. Junbesi is also a junction of the Everest trail and Thuptenchholing monastery. Junbesi falls on the Pikey-Dudhkunda trail. There are comfortable family-run lodges here with modern facilities like hot showers, which are a real delight after the long hours of trekking. Visitors also have a choice in food varieties ranging from local apple pie, apple raksi (alcohol) to fresh organic vegetables cooked as desired. Cultural performances by the local youth add to the charm of the experience. Junbesi is about 3-hour trek from Salleri, the district headquarters, and about 3 ½ hours from Phaplu airport.

Thuptenchholing Monastery (Solu)

Thuptenchholing monastery is about an hour from Junbesi. The monastery is 4-hour trek from the district headquarters Salleri. This monastery, founded in the late 1960s by Tushi Rinpoche, is about 5 hours from the Phaplu airstrip. It is a small active monastery surrounded by an aroma of pines, natural beauty, and a variety of flora that enhance the serenity

➞ *Thuptenchholing Monastery in Lower Solukhumbu region.*

©NTB



of the monastery and its surroundings. The monastery is popular as a center of religious tourism and its reputation has been further boosted by the fame of His Holiness Thulsuk Rinpoche. There are more than 500 monks and nuns who study Buddhism, meditate and offer prayers in this monastery.

Phortse Ecotourism Village (Khumbu)

Phortse (3,950 m) is a unique Sherpa settlement of about 80 households. With the aim of adding cultural aspect to the Everest experience, Phortse is being developed as model ecotourism village in Sagarmatha National Park.

Community-run home-stays are available in Phortse for experience of the mountain life. Teashops and lodges are also available here. Staying at the home-stays as house guests, trying out wholesome Sherpa and Nepali food, and observing



© WWF Nepal

→ *Himalayan Tahr seen abundantly in this region.*

the the local peoples' everyday life, may provide experience of a lifetime. Cultural show and Sherpa dance are also performed on the request of tourists. This Sherpa village in the lap of the mountains also offers wonderful views and wildlife experience. The village is lush, surrounded by birch and juniper trees that shelter endangered musk deer different varieties of pheasants. Peacocks, Himalayan tahr and bear are also spotted around the region every now and then. The

rare snow leopards found in the mountains, have also been reported to be seen here. Phortse is about 4-hour walk north-east from Sagarmatha National Park headquarters. One also has the option of returning via Phortse, while coming down from Everest Base Camp.

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Lukla – Phokding or Monjo	Flight from Kathmandu-Lukla. Trekking from Lukla to Phokding or Monjo. Sightseeing on the way.	½ hr. (Flight) 4-5 hrs. (Lukla-Phokding or Monjo)	Phokding or Monjo (Lodge and teashops)
Day 2	Phokding or Monjo-Namche	Tour of Namche Bazaar. View of Mt. Everest and other mountains if weather is clear. Sightseeing wildlife, mountains and rivers. Visiting local monasteries. Observing traditional lifestyle.	4-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Namche (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 3	Namche	Tour of Namche Bazaar, Sagarmatha National Park and surrounding areas. Jungle walk and bird watching. Sightseeing mountains, Mt. Everest and others. Trekking to Khumjung.	½ hr. (Walk to SNP Headquarters) 2 ½ hrs. (Trekking to Khumjung)	Namche (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 4	Namche-Phortse	Trekking from Namche-Phortse. Viewing of mountains and rivers. Experience of wildlife and bird watching on the way. Watching cultural show.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking to Phortse)	Phortse (Home-stay)
Day 5	Phortse	Visiting local Gompas. Visiting the local power house. Nature walk. Or Trek to Luri Peak.	Day Hike (Trekking to Luri Peak)	Phortse (Home-stay)

Suggested Itinerary for Phortse Ecotourism Village (5-6 days or more depending on the route chosen)

There are 3 options available: 1. Coming back from Base Camp to Namche via Phortse.

2. Returning to Namche after spending a night at Phortse.

3. Continuing on to the Base Camp Trail via Pangboche and Kala Pattar.

Thamo and Thame (Khumbu Region)

Thamo (3,700 m) and Thame (3,900 m) are Sherpa villages, about 2-4 hours northwest of the Park headquarters. About 50 households are located at the settlement. The two settlements fall on the way to Renjo La Pass very popular visit among tourists. A little off the main trekking trail, Thamo and Thame offer untouched Sherpa culture where people have maintained the traditional way of life. They also offer a taste of the local culture through home-stay accommodation. Cultural groups perform shows for tourists on request. In addition, the jungle near the settlement harbor endangered wildlife species, like musk deer and pheasants. The mainstay of local economy here is tourism.

Suggested Itinerary for trek to Gokyo through Renjo La Pass (14-16 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Lukla – Phakding or Monjo	Flight from Kathmandu-Lukla. Trekking from Lukla to Phakding or Monjo. Sightseeing on the way.	½ hr. (Flight) 4-5 hrs. (Lukla- Phakding or Monjo)	Phakding or Monjo (Lodge and teashops)
Day 2	Phakding or Monjo-Namche	Tour of Namche Bazaar. View of Mt. Everest and other mountains if weather is clear. Sightseeing wildlife, mountains and rivers. Visiting local monasteries. Observing traditional lifestyle.	4-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Namche (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 3	Namche	Visit Thamo. Visit power house in Thamo. Walk back to Namche. Tour of Namche Bazaar, Sagarmatha National Park and surrounding areas. Jungle walk and bird watching. Sightseeing mountains, Mt. Everest and others. Trekking to Khumjung.	5 hours (Visit to Thamo) ½ hr. (Walk to SNP Headquarters) 2 ½ hrs. (Trekking to Khumjung)	Namche (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 4	Namche-Thame	Trekking from Namche-Thame. Visit Khumbu Bijoli Power on the banks of Bhatekoshi. Visiting the Khare Monastery. Sightseeing mountains and landscape on the way.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Thame (Lodges, home stay, tea shops, camping)
Day 5	Thame	Visiting Thame Gumpa. Visiting Thambuchet. Visiting Tashi Lapcha Base Camp which divides Khumbu from Dolakha. Hiking to Sumdur Peak from where spectacular views of Mt. Everest can be seen.	Day hike	Thame (Lodges, home stay, tea shops, camping)
Day 6	Thame- Taranga- Lungden	Trekking from Thame- Taranga-Lungden. Walking around the village. Sightseeing landscape, vegetation and mountains.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Lungden (Lodges, home stay, tea shops, camping)
Day 7	Lungden	Visiting and sightseeing at Nakpa Valley which falls on the old trade route to Tibet. Hiking to Darkyachulung peak. Visiting Marlung sacred site of Warfield. Hiking to Lake Cha Kelma.	Day hike	Lungden (Lodges, home stay, tea shops, camping)
Day 8	Lungden-Renjo pass-Gokyo	Trekking from Lungden-Renjo pass-Gokyo. Observing local activities like yak herding. Sightseeing mountain views. Experiencing wildlife.	6 hrs. (Trekking)	Gokyo (Lodge, camping, teashop)
Day 9	Gokyo-Gokyo-Ri Or Gokyo-Fifth Lake	Seeing the beautiful Gokyo Lake. Seeing water birds at the lake. Sunset from Gokyo-Ri. View of mountains.	Day hike	Gokyo (Lodge, teashop, camping)
Day 10	Gokyo- Machhermo-Dole	Trekking from Gokyo-Machhermo-Dole. Sightseeing mountains, landscapes and river.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Dole (Lodge, teashop, camping)
Day 11	Dole-Namche	Trekking from Dole-Namche. Viewing landscapes, settlements and mountains. Observing local activities like yak herding.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Namche (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 12	Namche- Phakding or Monjo	Trekking from Namche-Phakding or Monjo. Viewing landscapes, settlements and mountains. Observing local activities like yak herding.	4-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Phakding or Monjo (Lodge and teashops)
Day 13	Phakding or Monjo – Lukla	Trekking from Phakding or Monjo – Lukla	4-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Lukla (Lodge and teashops)
Day 14	Lukla-Kathmandu	Flying from Namche-Kathmandu	½ hr (Flight)	Kathmandu



© Sirish B.C.

→ Lukla Airport, gateway to the Everest region.

Chaurikharka (Khumbu Region)

The settlements of Chaurikharka (2,600-3,000 m), that fall en route to Namche from Lukla, provide excellent options for acclimatization. A little off the route to Everest, Rimijung is a charming settlement in Chaurikharka, which is a day hike from Lukla. Rimijung is a quaint little village with the old Pemachholing Gompa (monastery) and nunnery settlements. Tourists can observe the Sherpa lifestyle and culture. Tourists are also interested to visit the local blacksmiths to watch them at work. In addition, cultural programs are performed by the local people on the tourists' request. Also in plenty are beautiful views of the mountains, including spectacular views of Mt. Everest and other mountain peaks. Wildlife like Himalayan bear, Himalayan Tahr, and non timber forest products are found in Rimijung. The rare snow leopard is also reported to have been spotted by a lucky few sometimes. Camping grounds are available in Rimijung. Another settlement in Chaurikharka worth a visit is Lumding which offers panoramic view of more

than 45 mountain peaks. Lumding is 4-day trek from Lukla. Trekkers need to carry camping gear and be self sufficient in terms of food and water when visiting Lumding.

Suggested Itinerary for Rimijung, Chaurikharka (4-5 days or more depending on the route chosen)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Lukla-Phakding	Flying from Kathmandu-Lukla. Trekking from Lukla –Phakding. Viewing scenery on the way.	1 hour (Flight)	Phakding or Monjo (Lodge and teashops)
Day 2	Phakding-Rimijung	Trekking from Phakding-Rimijung. Visiting Pemacholing monastery. Visiting the nunnery settlement. Visiting the local blacksmith and watching them at work. Viewing the mountains including Mt. Everest. Observing the non timber forest products. Taking a walk in the are and woods nearby.	4 hours (Trekking)	Rimijung (Camping)

There are 3 options available: 1. Camping overnight at Rimijung for acclimatization.

2. Going to Monjo.

3. Returning to Phakding

Sagarmatha National Park (Khumbu)

Sagarmatha National Park is home of the highest peak in the world - Mt. Everest (8,848 m). The area was declared national park in 1976. The Park which also has several other peaks all above 6,000 m, was established as a World Heritage Site in 1979. With most of the Park above 3,000 m, Sagarmatha is full of rugged terrain with deep gorges, glaciers and huge rocks. The Park boasts of a variety of wildlife and over 118 species of bird. While the forest is dominated by silver fir, birch, rhododendron and juniper trees, animals such as musk deer, the Himalayan tahr, the ghoral, the serow, the wolf, and the Himalayan black bear may be spotted by trekkers in this region. Endangered species seen by a lucky few include snow leopard, red panda, and two varieties of dazzling pheasants - the crimson-horned and the impeyan, Nepal's national bird. Smaller animals like marmots, pikas and martens are also found here. The best time to visit the park is during the autumn months of October-November and from March-May in summer.



© Sirish B.C.

➔ *Namche Bazaar, a stop on the Everest trail.*

Namche Bazaar (Khumbu)

Namche Bazaar (3,500 m) is the staging point for expeditions to Everest and other peaks in the area. It is also a prosperous market town selling everything from Tibetan artefacts to trekking and climbing equipment. The visitor center at Park headquarters has detailed information on various climbs in the area, memorabilia from different mountaineering expeditions, and information on the lifestyle and culture of the Sherpa people.

Khunde and Khumjung (Khumbu)

The traditional villages of Khunde and Khumjung are above Namche. These two towns with rock walls dividing stony fields have beautiful vistas on all sides. Khunde Hospital, built in 1966 and maintained by the Himalayan Trust, is at the top of the village. Its mission is to treat local people, but it also provides emergency care to trekkers. Khumjung is the largest village in the Khumbu at the foot of the sacred peak Khumbila. Another place to visit is Khumjung School which is the original Hillary School established in 1960.



© Sirish B.C.

➤ *Tengboche Monastery, another stop on the Everest Trail.*

Tengboche Monastery (Khumbu)

Tengboche monastery is perched on a high ridge across the canyon from Khunde. This is the leading Buddhist centre in the Khumbu, and its location is one of the most scenic. Pines, azaleas and colourful mountain rhododendrons surround the attractive gompa (monastery), which rests amid stunning views of Everest, Lhotse and Ama Dablam. Tengboche itself features a rest house and a number of lodges and camping sites.

From Tengboche you can continue on to Pheriche, Kala Pattar and the hamlet of Gorakshap. From here, the site of Everest Base Camp is easily accessible, as is the summit of Kala Pattar (5,545 m), from which much of Mt. Everest is clearly visible. However, you must take time to properly acclimatize as the altitude gains are rapid.

Further Afield

From Lukla you can venture into the Hongu basin. “Wilderness” is the only apt term for the wild and rugged Hongu basin of the Khumbu. There are five small lakes, known as Panch Pokhari, within this huge glacial cirque. These small lakes, rest in the heart of the basin, surrounded by tumbling glaciers and large



© Sirish B.C.

→ Monks blowing the conch shell during Mani Rimdu festival at Tengboche Monastery.

moraines. Overlooking it are the beautiful summits of Ama Dablam (6,812 m), Baruntse (7,220 m), Hongu South (6,057 m), Chamlang (7,310 m) and a number of unnamed pyramids of fluted ice, all over 6,000 m. A trek to the Hongu is a difficult, serious journey and should be attempted only with a guide and by persons experienced in mountaineering and properly equipped.

Other Trekking Peaks

There are 12 trekking peaks ranging from 5,806 m to 6,476 m in the Sagarmatha National Park that provide an opportunity to climb for the climbing enthusiasts without having to go through the effort and expenses required for a major mountaineering expedition. Permits to climb these peaks are processed by the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) in Kathmandu.

Getting There

Solu and Khumbu are in Solukhumbu district in Sagarmatha zone.

The fastest and simplest way to get to this area is by air. To reach the Solu region, you can take a half hour flight from Kathmandu to Phaplu and then a 20-minute walk to Salleri - the district headquarters of Solukhumbu. There are daily flights from Kathmandu to Lukla if you have limited time and want to visit the Khumbu area and trek in high altitudes. However, proper acclimatization with rest days and a slow but steady pace is strongly advised.

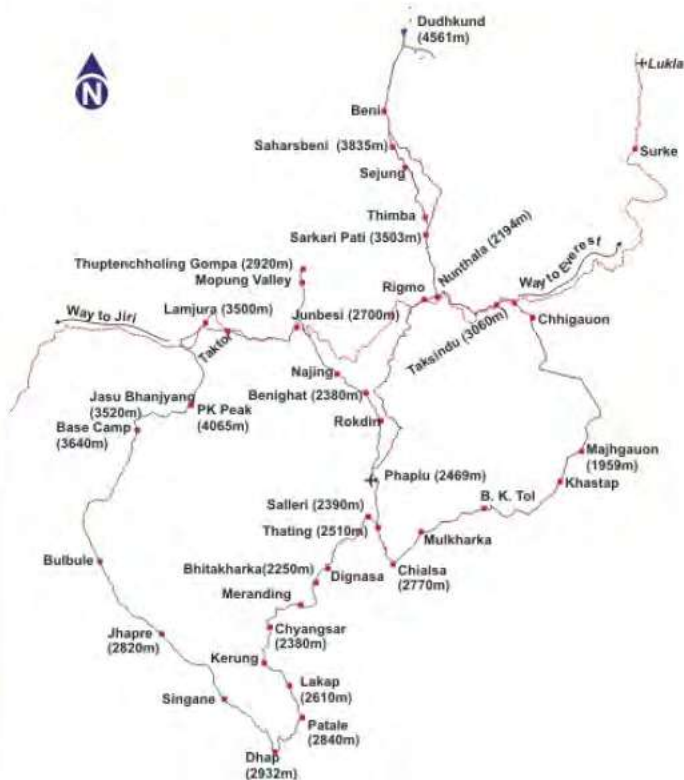
To get from the Solu region to Khumbu and vice versa, one has the option of trekking for about 2 days via Salleri-Thapting-Kerung and via Nungthala-Kharikhola-Chaurikharka. One also has the option of flying which is rather cumbersome as one would need to fly out of Phaplu in Solu to Kathmandu, and then catch a flight back to Lukla in Khumbu. Detail information can be obtained from local trekking agencies and travel guidebooks.

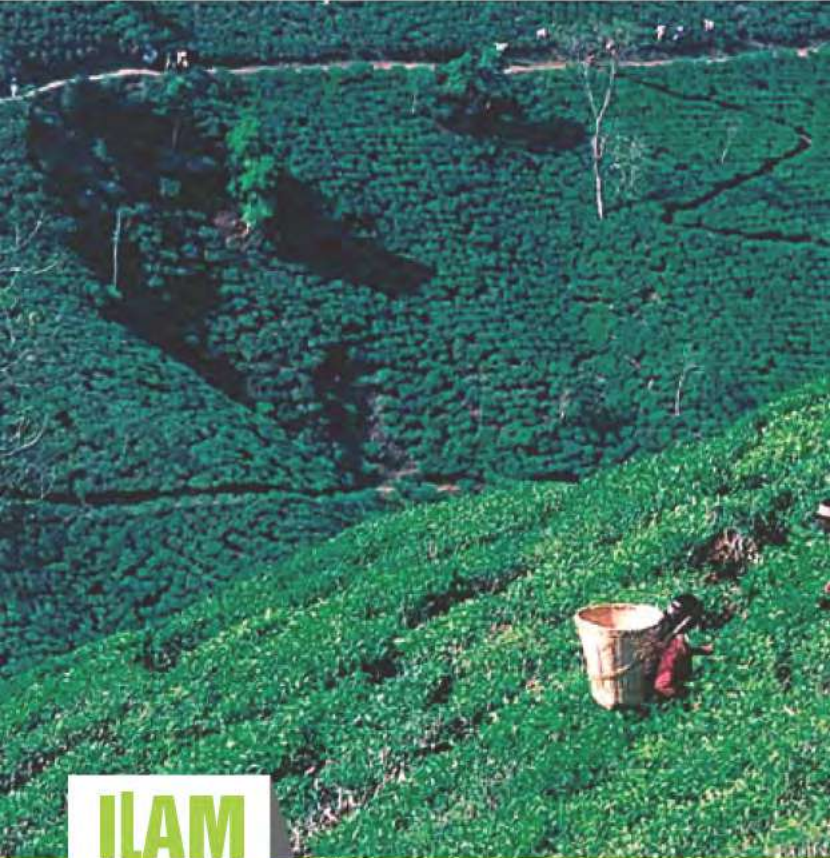
Tourist Services

Teahouses, resorts and home-stays owned and run by Sherpa families offer meals and lodging both in Solu and the Khumbu. The meals offered are at reasonable rates and cater to trekkers with Western style food and typical Nepali and Sherpa meals. The lodges and teahouses also serve as community meeting point and a source for interaction with the local residents and other trekkers. Those who have their own camping equipments can use community campsites.

Further details about Mt. Everest, the Everest region in Khumbu and Solu will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

Solukhumbu Area





ILAM (I l a m)

A brisk walk in a tea garden, tranquil picnic and sightseeing stops, short treks along gentle slopes, or a trudge into the nearby woods – all this and more is offered by Ilam.

An excellent getaway from city life, Ilam, famous for its tea, is a small hill town with pristine landscapes of sloped tea gardens, mountain streams, dense natural forests, holy sites and a unique culture. Using Ilam Bazaar as a base you can take excursions for a day or more.

While the subtropical climate of Ilam ensures good weather throughout the year, the best time to visit Ilam is between October-December or from April-February.



©NTE

→ *The famous tea gardens of Ilam.*

Ilam district is bordered by Panchthar in the north, Jhapa in the south, West Bengal (India) in the east and Morang and Dhankuta districts in the west. It lies to the south of the Mahabharat range and west of the Shinghalila range.

Elevations in Ilam district range between 140 m to 3,636 m above sea level. Ilam is sometimes called Charkhol (area of four rivers) because of the four main rivers - the Jogmai, Puwamai, Mai, and Deaumi in the district.

Ilam is one of the richest districts in Nepal in terms of its cultural diversity, natural landscape, and flourishing cash crops sector. Potato, cardamom, ginger, red round chilly, milk, and broom grass are the major cash crops. Visitors also go to Ilam for botanical and anthropological research.

People

The main ethnic groups living in Ilam are the Brahmins and Chhetris. Lepcha is also a predominant ethnic group in this region. A Lepcha museum is at an initial stage in Antu and is in the process of being extended. Ilam reflects rich social and cultural heritages of people living in harmony. Other major ethnic groups living in Ilam include Magars, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus, and Sherpas. Most parts of Ilam are hilly regions with farmers as main inhabitants along with some businessmen, officials and government employees.

Experience

Shree Antu

Shree Antu is home for Antu Danda (2,328 m) (ridge) that offers spectacular views of the sunrise and sunset over the eastern Himalayas. Shree Antu overlooks the Terai flatlands, terraced hills of cash crops, tea gardens and thick forests of pine trees. On a clear day you can see the middle hills and plains of neighboring Darjeeling district in West Bengal, India. About a 3-hour drive from Ilam Bazaar, Shree Antu area has home-stay facilities also.

➞ *Shree Antu, Ilam.*

© Susheel Shrestha



Suggested Itinerary to Ilam (5-6 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Bhadrapur-Ilam or Kathmandu-Biratnagar-Ilam	Flying Kathmandu-Bhadrapur or Kathmandu-Biratnagar. Driving from Bhadrapur-Ilam or Biratnagar-Ilam. Seeing tea gardens on the way. Tea break and snacks at Fikkal. Stopping at tea factory if time permits. Walking around Ilam Bazaar in the evening.	1 hour (Flying) 3-4 hours (Driving from Bhadrapur) 6-8 hours (Driving from Biratnagar)	Ilam (Hotels, teashops, lodges)
Day 2	Ilam Bazaar(Ilam) -Mai Pokhari(Ilam) – Ilam Bazaar(Ilam)	Driving Mai Pokhari- Ilam Bazaar-Mai Pokhari. Observing Mai Pokhari area. Tasting fresh home-made tea at Mai Pokhari. Visiting tea factory on the way to Ilam Bazaar.	1 ½ hour (Driving to Mai Pokhari) 2-3 hours (Observing the surroundings) 1 hour (Driving back)	Ilam (Hotels, teashops, lodges)
Day 3	Ilam Bazaar(Ilam) – Shree Antu (Ilam)	Driving from Ilam Bazaar- Shree Antu. Hiking up to Antu Danda. Viewing the sceneries. Visiting Lepcha Museum. Visiting tea gardens. Tasting fresh home-made tea at Antu. Interacting with local community.	2 ½ -3 hours (Driving to Shree Antu) 30-45 minutes (Hiking up to Antu Danda)	Shree Antu (Home -stay)
Day 4	Shree Antu (Ilam) – Bhadrapur or Shree Antu (Ilam) – Biratnagar	Viewing Shree Antu sunrise. Driving to Bhadrapur or Biratnagar. Tea and snacks at Phikkal. Visit Bhadrapur or Biratnagar Bazaar in the evening. Taking flight back to Kathmandu if available.	4-5 hours (Driving from Shree Antu-Bhadrapur) 6-8 hours (Driving from Shree Antu-Biratnagar)	Bhadrapur or Biratnagar (Hotels, teashops, lodges)
Day 5	Bhadrapur –Kathmandu or or Biratnagar-Kathmandu	Flying from Bhadrapur – Kathmandu or Biratnagar- Kathmandu.	1 hour (Flying back)	Kathmandu

Mai Pokhari

Mai Pokhari (2,121 m) (pond) is a pristine lake surrounded by dense forest of fir, juniper, birch, pine and a variety of flora and fauna. Mai Pokhari is a religious and historical spot with a 9-cornered lake as the main attraction. The lake is considered the sacred abode of Goddess Bhagawati. Different species of medicinal plants, herbs and orchids, mostly for research and experimental purposes, are cultivated in the Mai Pokhari area. Rare animals like the musk deer, leopard, porcupine, jackal as well as numerous migratory birds and rare insects are also found in the area. People from different parts of Nepal visit Mai Pokhari in Ilam for an annual festival on Kartik Ekadasi which falls in October or November. Mai Pokhari is about an 1 ½ drive from Ilam Bazaar.

Kanyam and Fikkal

On the way to Ilam Bazaar, Kanyam and Fikkal have large tea estates that have made Ilam famous for more than a hundred years. These tea gardens are popular among tourists for picnicking, sightseeing, and photography. Fikkal is a business center in eastern Ilam and on the Mechi Highway leading to Ilam. It is also the junction from where one can go to the eastern border city Pashupatinagar adjacent to Darjeeling district of India. Indian and Nepali nationals can cross over to the other side of the border with valid documents.

Sidhi Thumka

Sidhi Thumka (1,800 m) offers good views of sunrise and sunset from its elevation. You can also see the Terai flatlands, the Mahabharat range, and the Churia mountain range from this area. Siddhi Thumka is about a 3-hour trek from Ilam Bazaar.

Chhintapu

Chhintapu (3,353 m) is the second highest peak in Ilam district. Nearly 11 varieties of rhododendron, rare herbs, endangered

➡ *Tea gardens on the way to Ilam.*

© Susheel Shrestha



species of animals like the musk deer and red panda are found in this area. Mt. Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world, and most parts of Ilam can be seen from here.

Temples and Pilgrimage Sites

Gajur Mukhi is an important religious site. About 4 hours drive west of Ilam Bazaar, Gajur Mukhi is a stone tunnel with carved images of Hindu deities. It is on the banks of the Deumai Khola - one of the four rivers of Ilam.

Sanu Pathibhara temple is at the top of Kutidanda and Hanspokhari on the Mechi Highway. Sanu (smaller) Pathibhara is regarded as the younger sister of Pathibhara in Taplejung. The hill is covered with forest and has views of the Terai plains, the Mahabharat range and Mt. Kanchenjunga.

Mai Beni houses the temple of Lord Shiva at the confluence of the Mai Khola and Jogmai Khola. It is located about 3 km from Ilam Bazaar. Thousands of devotees gather here on the day of Maghe Sangranti in January for a holy dip.

➡ *A temple in the region.*

© Susheel Shrestha



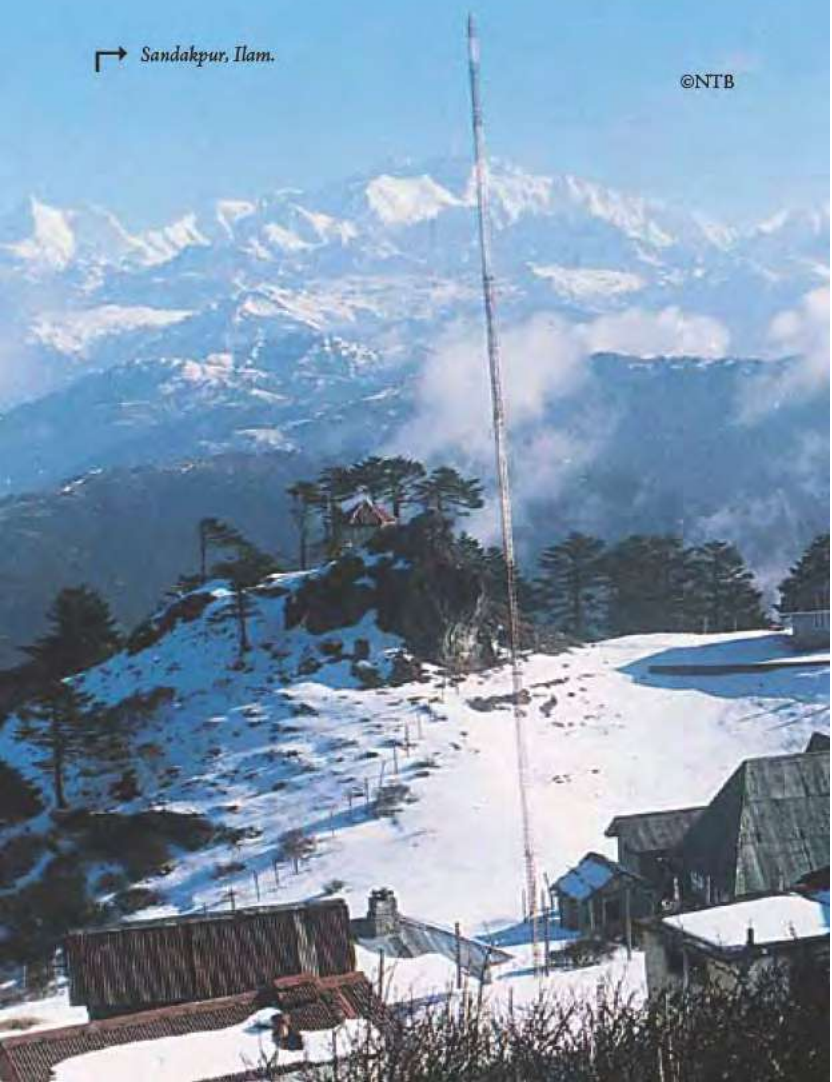
Further Afield

Mangmalung

Mangmalung is regarded as the place of origin of the Kirat religion. It is an important religious site for Kiratis in the middle of a forest at the upper part of Ibhang and there are a number of images of the snakes, lions, and eagles. There is also a cave of the deity Matrika Kirateswar where a festival is celebrated with great pomp every year.

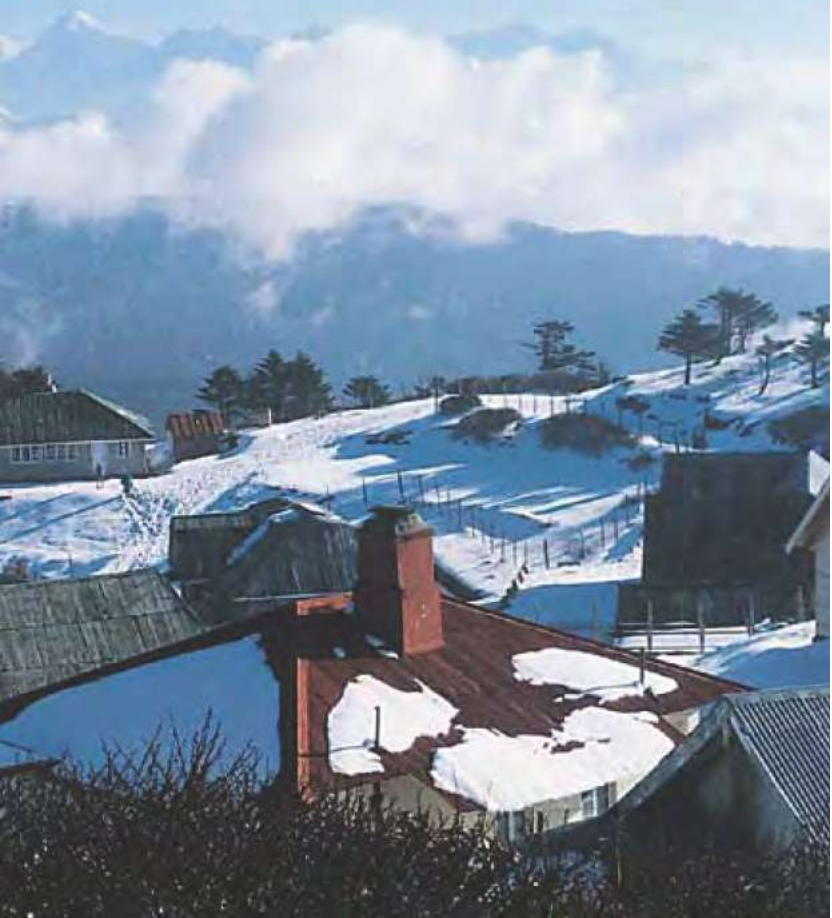
➞ Sandakpur, Ilam.

©NTB



Sandakpur

Sandakpur (3,636 m) is situated in the north of Ilam on the Nepal-India border. It is a big attraction for tourists because of the beautiful sunrise and sunset views over Mt. Kanchenjunga, and the adjoining peaks of Makalu and Mt. Everest. You can virtually see all parts of Ilam district, most parts of the Terai flat land, and the main parts of Siliguri and Darjeeling in India. Various species of animals, such as the musk deer and red panda, and rare species of birds such as the pheasant can also be seen here. The Mai Khola (river) originates here thus giving it religious importance.



Getting There

Ilam Bazaar is in Ilam district, Mechi zone.

There are daily buses from Kathmandu for the 18-hour drive. Buses are also available from other major cities such as Pokhara, Biratnagar, and Nepalgunj. Ilam can also be reached by taking one of the scheduled flights from Kathmandu to Bhadrapur or Biratnagar and then transferring to a regular bus service or hiring a private vehicle.

Darjeeling in West Bengal, India is a mere 2-hour drive from Pashupatinagar on the Nepal-India border of Ilam district. Only Nepali and Indian nationals can travel by land between India and Nepal via Pashupatinagar. Other nationalities have to use the Kakarbhitta exit point in Jhapa to travel to or from India.

Tourist Services

Good to moderate facilities are available for food and accommodation in Ilam Bazaar. Besides home-stay facilities managed by community members are available in Shree Antu. Other major tourist facilities are available in Ilam Bazaar.

Further details about Ilam and the surrounding region will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

Shree Antu during an annual fair.

© Susheel Shrestha



Ilam Area

NEPAL TOURISM BOARD TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AREA PHASE - II B SHREE ANTU (Ilam)



LEGEND	
International Boundary	—
Highway, Marked Road	—
Dirt Road, Marked Road	—
Major Road	—
River, Lake	—
Reservoir, Dam, Check Dam	—
Natural Forest, Terrestrial Forest	—
Major Place	—
Accommodation, Ringroad Sign	—
Hospital, Health Post, Post Office	—
Police Station, Customs Office	—
Mountain, Forest	—
Mountain Peak	—
Every Point, Major, Minor Road	—
Village, Town, Road	—
Trail, Station, Road	—
Trail Station	—
Trail Station, Road	—
Trail Station, Road	—
Trail Station, Road	—

KOSHI TAPPU WILDLIFE RESERVE

(S u n s a r i)

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve lies on the floodplains of the Sapta Koshi River in the south-eastern Terai. The Reserve was gazetted in 1976 to preserve habitat for the only remaining population of wild buffalo, Arna (*Bubalus arnee*).



The 176 sq. km. Reserve is Nepal's smallest wildlife reserve. The eastern and western embankments of the Sapta Koshi River define the area. In 1987, Koshi Tappu was declared a Ramsar site, a wetland of international significance. The Government of Nepal declared the Buffer Zone (173.5 sq. km) of the Reserve in August 2004.

Climate

The Reserve experiences three distinct seasons. Summer (March through May) is intensely hot with minimum precipitation. Shade temperatures can reach 40 degree Celsius. The monsoons (late May or early June and until September) bring heavy rainfall. The rainfall is intense during July but high humidity and temperature is experienced throughout the season. Winter

Marshy areas of the Koshi Tappu region.

© Susheel Shrestha



→ *Birds seen in the region.*

Photos: © Susheel Shrestha

(October through January) is characterized by clear skies with moderate temperature, but can be quite cold.

Features

The Sapta Koshi is one of the three main tributaries of the Ganges- rapid and intense flooding occur during the monsoon or rainy season. Flood control embankments have been built along the river banks.

Flora and Fauna

The vegetation is mainly composed of tall grasslands. Local villagers are permitted to collect thatch grass once a year. These materials are used for thatching and building house walls. There are also patches of khair-sissoo forest and deciduous mixed riverine forest along the moist bank of the floodplain.

The Reserve is important for a variety of wildlife. The only population of wild buffalo is found here. The estimated population is around 159 individuals. They are distinguished from domestic buffalo by their bigger horns and tall posture. The Reserve is also home to a number of species including hog deer, wild boar, spotted deer, blue bull, Gangetic dolphin, gharial

→ Birds seen near river areas.



crocodile and the rock python. Over 80 species of fishes have also been found here.

A total of 441 species of birds have been recorded, of which 14 are endemic. The Koshi Barrage is an extremely important resting place for many migratory birds, including winter and trans-Himalayan migratory species.

During winter, many of the migratory birds can be seen on the Koshi Barrage and on the river channel. Migration usually peaks around mid March. Much wildlife visit these areas during dusk and dawn. The clear skies allow for beautiful sights of several Himalayan peaks including Makalu (8,463 m), the world's fifth highest peak.

© Susheel Shrestha



Visitors can also go on elephant safari for a closer look of the Reserve.

Getting There

Daily bus service is available from Kathmandu to Kakarbhitta and Biratnagar. Visitors should get off at Laukhi and walk 2.5 km to reach Kusaha, the Reserve headquarter. The road to Kusaha is marked by a signboard on the main highway. There are also daily flights to Biratnagar, visitors flying to Biratnagar will have to take a bus and reach Laukahi.

Tourist Services

There are a few lodges and teashops near the Reserve headquarters. Visitors are advised to carry first-aid kit including medicines for intestinal problems.

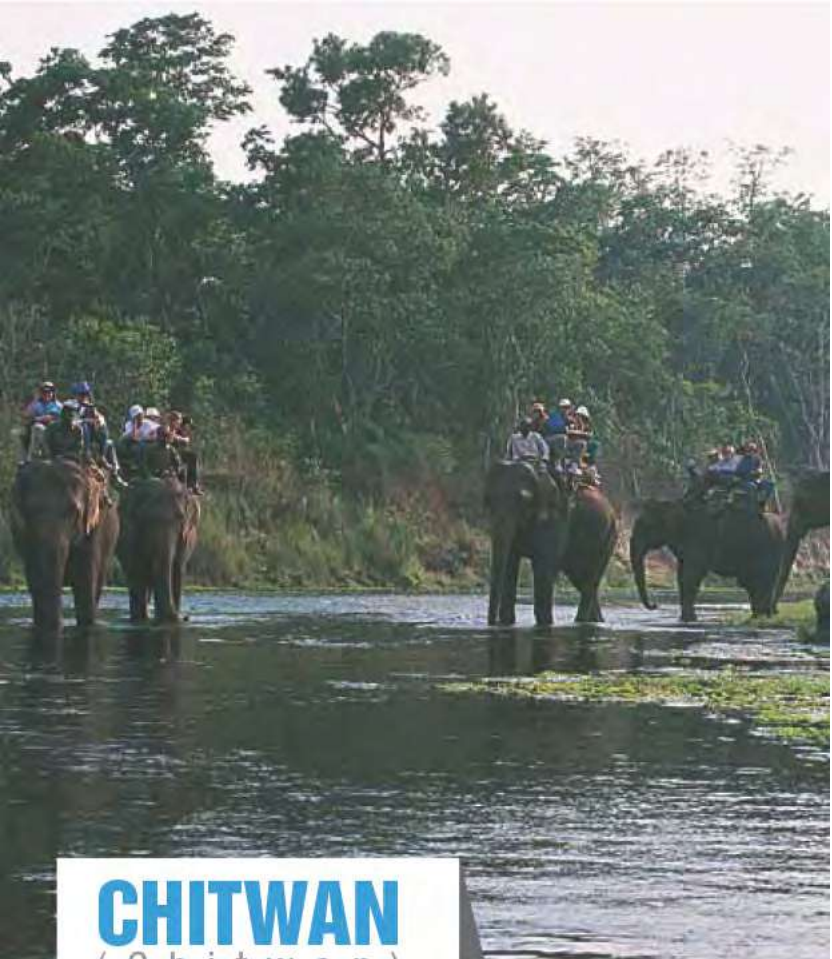
Further details about Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

➡ *The Wild Buffaloes, locally known as Arna, seen in the region.*



Central Nepal





CHITWAN

(C h i t w a n)

Chitwan literally means “heart of the jungle.” In recent years Chitwan tops the list of things to do in Asia.

Chitwan is a true wildlife adventure - jungle safaris on elephant back or in jeeps, birdwatching, and canoe trips offer a different perspective of the teeming forest.

Nepal's best-known and most accessible national park, Chitwan National Park, is invariably associated with the Royal Bengal tiger and the great one-horned rhinoceros, both endangered



©DNPWC

→ *Jungle safari at Chitwan National Park.*

species. Chitwan is also home of the interesting ancient ethnic groups of Nepal, the Chepangs in the mid hills, and the Tharus in the Terai region.

The Chitwan National Park is the prime attraction of this region. The newly developed Chepang Hill Trail, offers yet another option and a peek at the mid-hill lifestyle and culture of the region.

People

The Chepangs are the main inhabitants of the hills. Tharu, Tamang, Musahar, Satahar, Danuwar, Kumal, Gurung and



➤ Village children on the Chepang Hill Trail.

Magar also live in this region. The Chepang people have their own language. A nomadic people, the Chepang's primary lifestyle is hunting, fishing, traditional farming near jungles, and foraging for wild roots. Their settlements, the way their homes are built, and their social organization, language, customs, festivals and religion are unique.

New Experience

Chitwan Chepang Hill Trail

The Chitwan Chepang Hill Trail, offers a rare combination of cultural and sightseeing experience. One of the most interesting aspects of the trek is getting a glimpse of the Chepangs and other local communities who live in this mid-hill region of Nepal. Accepting the invitation of the villagers to stay in their beautiful homes as guests and sharing their meals is a journey of discovery in itself. The unique culture in this area, birdwatching, and other natural attractions add to the experience. The Chitwan Chepang Hill Trail begins at Hugdi, between Mugling and Krishna Bhir in Dhading district about 80 kms from Kathmandu, and ends in Shaktikhor. If one is coming from the Chitwan National Park the trail can also be started from Shaktikhor ending at Hugdi.



→ Hattibaang village that falls on the Chepang Hill Trail.

Hattibang, a major stop on the way, offers good scenery of the surrounding mountains and trek through pristine mid-hill forests. Here one can also experience Magar, Chepang and Giripuri culture, at the several community-run home-stays and community-managed guest house. On request the community members will also perform cultural shows for visitors. Local handicrafts are available here to take back home as souvenirs. A tour of the village and visit to the community lodge is recommended at Hattibang.

Siraichuli (1,945 m), one of the highest hills of Mahabharat range, offers spectacular views of the mountains and magnificent sunrise and sunset views. The view includes a wide range of Himalayan peaks such as Rolwaling, Gaurishankar, Langtang, Gorkha Himal, Peak 29, Himalchuli, Manaslu, Annapurna range, Dhaulagiri, and the Chitwan National Park in the Terai. The trek to Siraichuli from Hattibang is challenging through rough landscape and vegetation. Jyandala village on the trail is a Chepang settlement where tourists can have a cultural experience. A tour of the village and accommodation at village home-stay is recommended. Next is Chisapanitar, which is a popular birdwatching site. More than 250 varieties of bird

species are found here. The dense forest in this region is also home to other wild animals.

Another interesting place is Upparang Gadi which used to be the headquarters of Chitwan till early 1962. The remains of a historic fort that defended the surrounding countryside are still here. The fort which sits at 1,275 m is said to have been built by Shatru Bhanjan Shah, the oldest son of Bahadur Shah. The area also offers spectacular views. Shaktikhor, where the trek formally ends gives ample opportunity to visitors for a wholesome cultural experience. Home-stay facilities are available here where visitors can taste the local food and be a part of the local livelihood. Tents from camping up to 10 people are also available here. Cultural shows are also performed by local community members for visitors.

Added Attractions

Suggested Itineraries for Chitwan Chepang Hill Trail

Option 1 (5-6 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu – Hugdi – Hattibang	Driving Kathmandu-Hugdi. Trekking Hugdi – Hattibang.	3 hrs. (Driving) 4-5 hrs. (Trekking)	Hattibang (Home-stay, community- managed guest house)
Day 2	Hattibang– Jantesh – Changa – Dinglang – Jyandala	Trekking from Hattibang – Jantesh- Changa-Dinglang –Jyandala The villages on the way are pure Chepang settlements. Observing Chepang settlements and culture at Jyandala.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Jyandala (Home-stay, camping)
Day 3	Jyandala –Siraichuli – Chisapanitar- Gadi	Trekking from Jyandala –Siraichuli. Viewing mountains, sunrise or sunset at Siraichuli. Trekking from Siraichuli- Chisapanitar. Bird watching at Chisapanitar. Trekking from Chisapanitar- Gadi. Observing historical fort at Gadi.	1 hr. (Trekking) 4 hrs. (Trekking) 1 ½ hrs. (Trekking)	Gadi (Home-stay, camping)
Day 4	Gadi-Shaktikhor	Trekking down from Gadi-Shaktikhor. Cultural experience at Shaktikhor. Visiting Chepang museum, Multiple Use Visitors' Information Center (MUVIC). Visiting Sinti waterfall and Sinti cave. Village tour and cultural show performed by Chepangs, Magars.	3 hrs. (Trekking) 2 hrs (Trekking)	Shaktikhor (Home- stay)
Day 5	Shaktikhor – Kathmandu or Sauraha.	Drive from Shaktikhor to Sauraha. Or Drive from Shaktikhor to Kathmandu.	1 hr. (Driving) 6-7 hrs. (Driving)	Sauraha or Kathmandu

Option 2 (7-8 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu – Hugdi – Hattibang	Driving Kathmandu-Hugdi. Trekking Hugdi – Hattibang.	3 hrs. (Driving) 4-5 hrs. (Trekking)	Hattibang (Home-stay, community- managed guest house)
Day 2	Hattibang– Javtesh – Changa – Dinglang – Jyandala	Trekking from Hattibang – Javtesh- Changa-Dinglang –Jyandala The villages on the way are pure Chepang settlements. Observing Chepang settlements and culture at Jyandala.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Jyandala (Home-stay, camping)
Day 3	Jyandala –Siraichuli – Chisapanitar- Gadi	Trekking from Jyandala –Siraichuli. Viewing mountains, sunrise or sunset at Siraichuli. Trekking from Siraichuli- Chisapanitar. Bird watching at Chisapanitar. Trekking from Chisapanitar- Gadi. Observing historical fort at Gadi.	1 hr. (Trekking) 4 hrs. (Trekking) 1 ½ hrs. (Trekking)	Gadi (Home-stay, camping)
Day 4	Gadi-Shaktikhor	Trekking down from Gadi-Shaktikhor. Cultural experience at Shaktikhor. Visiting Chepang museum, Multiple Use Visitors' Information Center (MUVIC). Village tour and cultural show performed by Chepangs, Magars.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Shaktikhor (Home- stay)
Day 5	Shaktikhor- Sinti- Siddi-Majhbang	Trekking from Shaktikhor- Sinti. Visit the Sinti waterfall and caves. Trekking to Siddi-Majhbang. Village tour and Chepang cultural experience at Siddhi and Majhbang.	2 hrs. (Trekking) 5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Majhbang (Home-stay) Chitram camping
Day 6	Majhbang- Chitram – Majhbang/ Siddi or Shaktikhor	Trekking to Chitram waterfall, and then back to Majhbang or Siddi or Shaktikhor. Experiencing the Chepang culture, bird watching, fishing, Chepang village Trekking back to Shaktikhor.	4 hrs. (Trekking)	Majhbang or Shaktikhor (Home- stay)
Day 7	Majhbang/ Siddi-Shaktikhor – Sauraha or Kathmandu	Drive to Sauraha. or Drive to Kathmandu.	3 hrs. (Trekking) 1 hr. (Driving) 6-7 hrs. (Driving)	Kathmandu

Paragliding

One of the latest adventure sports on offer at this location is paragliding from Siraichuli. Arrangements can be made in Kathmandu or Pokhara through travel and trekking agents.

Rafting

One can also enjoy the Chitwan Chepang Hill trek combining it with 3 to 4 hours rafting down the Trishuli River from Charaundi or Galchhi up to Hugdi from where the trek starts. A gentle 2-3 day scenic raft trip down to Narayanghat; only 8 kms

from Chitwan, gives a different perspective to the countryside. Trips start at Muglin or further up.

Birdwatching

Chitwan is a birdwatcher's delight with more than 450 migrant and local species recorded. The most sightings are in February - March (spring) when thousands of water fowl migrate along the Koshi Tappu Reserve.

Further Afield

Chitwan National Park

The Chitwan National Park is one of the most popular tourist hubs in the country. Owing to its rich nature the Park was declared a UNESCO Natural Heritage Site in 1979. Located in the central inner Terai region this former hunting reserve has abundant wildlife and is famous for its tiger population. Sal forests cover 70 percent of the area and there are about 600 species of plants. The Park is home to the only significant number of one-horned rhinoceros and other endangered species like the Royal Bengal tiger, the Gangetic dolphin and the Gharial

➡ *Tourists sightseeing and boating along the Rapti River.*

© Susheel Shrestha



crocodile. There are more than 43 species of large mammals, 526 species of birds, 150 different types of butterflies, 126 species of fish and 49 species of reptiles.

The fauna of the Terai is striking and the most obvious are the handsome black-faced, gray langur monkeys and the common brownish red rhesus monkeys. Other animals likely to be seen in the Chitwan National Park include leopards, gaurs, buffaloes, sloth bears, wild boars, various species of deer, and marsh mugger crocodiles. Smaller mammals include the langur and rhesus monkeys, jungle and civet cats, mongooses, jackals, otters, martens, porcupines and squirrels. Other species are the pangolin, rattler, python, king cobra and Bengal florican. Another factor adding a distinct touch to the Chitwan experience is the colorful Tharu culture.

Getting There

Chitwan is southwest of Kathmandu, near the Indian border. It is accessible by air with a flight from Kathmandu to Bharatpur or Meghauli, and by road from Kathmandu, Pokhara and other

➞ *One-horned rhinoceros.*

© Susheel Shrestha



major cities. You can either take a bus from Kathmandu or a raft trip down the Trisuli River to begin your trek. The trail climbs uphill from Hugdi Khola (river) through Gakla Chautara and Khor Bhanjyang, a campsite among terraced fields. The best time to trek in this area is from September through Mays warm, temperate and pleasant.

Tourist Services

Accommodation and other tourist facilities are available in the Chitwan Chepang Hill area. Besides home-stay facilities managed by community members are available in Shaktikhor and Hattibang, teashops are available in Siddhi and campsite is available in Uppardang Gadi, Hattibang and Jyandala. The nearest point where all major tourist facilities are available is Sauraha the Chitwan National Park or district headquarters Narayanghat .

Further details about the Chitwan National Park and the surrounding region will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

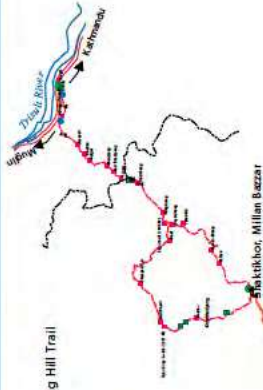
➞ *Tourists in the jungles.*



Chitwan Area

- Legend**
- ✈ Chitwan Airport
 - 🏠 Chitwan
 - 🏪 Shop
 - 🏫 School
 - 🏢 TTNP/ADP/Other
 - 🏡 House
 - 🏛️ MG
 - 🏛️ Temple
 - 🏛️ Siderment
 - 🏛️ Trading House
 - 🏛️ Trading Point
 - 🏛️ Siderment
 - 🏛️ National Park

Chitwan - Chepang Hill Trail



Sl. No.	Point	Distance (km)	Distance (miles)
1	Bharatpur	0	0
2	Sauraha	10	6.2
3	Chitwan	20	12.5
4	Chitwan	30	18.7
5	Chitwan	40	25.0
6	Chitwan	50	31.2
7	Chitwan	60	37.5
8	Chitwan	70	43.7
9	Chitwan	80	50.0
10	Chitwan	90	56.2
11	Chitwan	100	62.5
12	Chitwan	110	68.7
13	Chitwan	120	75.0
14	Chitwan	130	81.2
15	Chitwan	140	87.5
16	Chitwan	150	93.7
17	Chitwan	160	100.0
18	Chitwan	170	106.2
19	Chitwan	180	112.5
20	Chitwan	190	118.7
21	Chitwan	200	125.0
22	Chitwan	210	131.2
23	Chitwan	220	137.5
24	Chitwan	230	143.7
25	Chitwan	240	150.0
26	Chitwan	250	156.2
27	Chitwan	260	162.5
28	Chitwan	270	168.7
29	Chitwan	280	175.0
30	Chitwan	290	181.2
31	Chitwan	300	187.5
32	Chitwan	310	193.7
33	Chitwan	320	200.0
34	Chitwan	330	206.2
35	Chitwan	340	212.5
36	Chitwan	350	218.7
37	Chitwan	360	225.0
38	Chitwan	370	231.2
39	Chitwan	380	237.5
40	Chitwan	390	243.7
41	Chitwan	400	250.0
42	Chitwan	410	256.2
43	Chitwan	420	262.5
44	Chitwan	430	268.7
45	Chitwan	440	275.0
46	Chitwan	450	281.2
47	Chitwan	460	287.5
48	Chitwan	470	293.7
49	Chitwan	480	300.0
50	Chitwan	490	306.2
51	Chitwan	500	312.5
52	Chitwan	510	318.7
53	Chitwan	520	325.0
54	Chitwan	530	331.2
55	Chitwan	540	337.5
56	Chitwan	550	343.7
57	Chitwan	560	350.0
58	Chitwan	570	356.2
59	Chitwan	580	362.5
60	Chitwan	590	368.7
61	Chitwan	600	375.0
62	Chitwan	610	381.2
63	Chitwan	620	387.5
64	Chitwan	630	393.7
65	Chitwan	640	400.0
66	Chitwan	650	406.2
67	Chitwan	660	412.5
68	Chitwan	670	418.7
69	Chitwan	680	425.0
70	Chitwan	690	431.2
71	Chitwan	700	437.5
72	Chitwan	710	443.7
73	Chitwan	720	450.0
74	Chitwan	730	456.2
75	Chitwan	740	462.5
76	Chitwan	750	468.7
77	Chitwan	760	475.0
78	Chitwan	770	481.2
79	Chitwan	780	487.5
80	Chitwan	790	493.7
81	Chitwan	800	500.0
82	Chitwan	810	506.2
83	Chitwan	820	512.5
84	Chitwan	830	518.7
85	Chitwan	840	525.0
86	Chitwan	850	531.2
87	Chitwan	860	537.5
88	Chitwan	870	543.7
89	Chitwan	880	550.0
90	Chitwan	890	556.2
91	Chitwan	900	562.5
92	Chitwan	910	568.7
93	Chitwan	920	575.0
94	Chitwan	930	581.2
95	Chitwan	940	587.5
96	Chitwan	950	593.7
97	Chitwan	960	600.0
98	Chitwan	970	606.2
99	Chitwan	980	612.5
100	Chitwan	990	618.7
101	Chitwan	1000	625.0



KATHMANDU VALLEY

(Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur)





No other place in the world has the concentration of culture, art and tradition that exists in the Kathmandu Valley (1,336 m). Kathmandu is the crossroads for the many ethnic groups of Nepal and for visitors from all over the world.

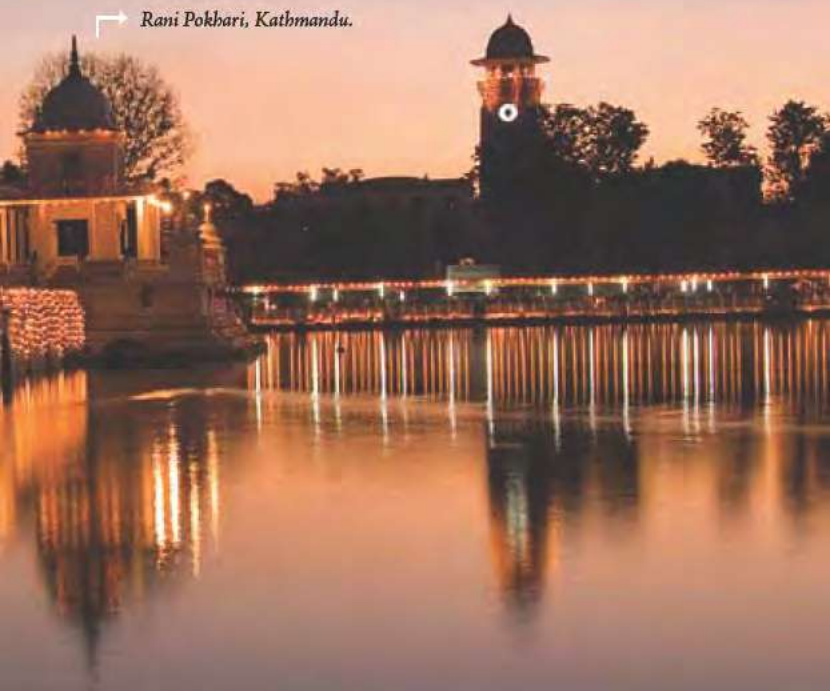
Nestled in the central hills of Nepal, Kathmandu is at once medieval and modern. The Kathmandu Valley sprawls at the junction of two sacred rivers, Bagmati and Vishnumati. Just across the Bagmati River to the south is Patan, an ancient city of temples, while Bhadgaon (or Bhaktapur) with its hundreds of homes and temple shrines lies six miles to the east. More than two hundred years ago these three cities housed the royal palaces of three different kingdoms that divided the Valley palaces surviving today.



They say there are more temples than houses in Kathmandu Valley: great temples with heavily carved exteriors; massive white-domed stupas and hundreds of smaller Buddhist chaityas - small temples with low, ornate archways - and tiny temples containing one lone idol - all are an integral piece of the unique mosaic that is Kathmandu.

To really discover the Kathmandu Valley you need to begin exploring from well beyond the city limits, and travel in from the outside in order to touch its spiritual roots. Fortunately, there are many very beautiful walks within the Kathmandu Valley that combine cultural experience and natural heritage.

→ *Rani Pokhari, Kathmandu.*



There are a number of "viewpoints" with clean and comfortable accommodations and easy day trips to interesting villages or historic and sacred sites. While it is necessary to hire a car or taxi to reach the starting and ending points for some of the walks, most of these can be done in a day. Most of these walks take one to sites of spiritual importance, but all of them offer a sampling of the serenity of the countryside and the drama of mountain views.

Kathmandu Valley's 218. sq. miles area includes seven World Heritage Sites: the famous Pashupatinath Temple, Bouddhanath Stupa, Swayambhunath Stupa, Changunarayan Temple and palatial residences of former rulers at Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. Kumari, the Living Goddess, is another living force of this Himalayan Kingdom. Kumari is considered a personification of Durga by Hindus and one of the eight Ashta Matrikas by Buddhists. The goddess resides in Kumari Bahal in Kathmandu's Darbar Square on the first floor historical building of Kastamandap.

➞ *Swayambhunath Stupa, Kathmandu.*



People

Kathmandu Valley represents a cultural cauldron of the country, where, people from varied backgrounds have come together. Kathmandu has often been called a flawless jewel in a unique setting. Hindus and Buddhist share the same festivals and the same places of worship in the Kathmandu Valley, the heart of the land. It is here that Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity form a unique blend of religions creating a homogeneous and sophisticated culture and civilization.

The natives of the Valley are the Newars. Newari culture is an integration of both Hinduism and Buddhism. The Newars of Kathmandu Valley were traders or farmers by occupation in the old days. The Newars are also forbearers of the Valley's splendid civilization. The history laden shrines and palaces of the Valley's historical cities stand testimony to the Newar's artistic achievements.

➤ *A Newar father and son.*



Within the Valley

Kathmandu

Kathmandu is the capital city of Nepal. In Kathmandu you can visit: Machchendranath Temple, Akash Bhairav Temple, Kathmandu Darbar Square, Kumari Temple, Kasthamandap, Ashok Vinayak, Jaishi Dewal, Tundikhel, Martyr's Memorial, Bhadrakali Temple, Singha Darbar, Narayanhiti Darbar, Kaiser Library, Budhanilkantha, Balaju Water Gardens,



© Susheel Shrestha

➞ View from Swayambhunath, Kathmandu.

Swayambhunath, the National Museum, Natural History Museum, Pashupatinath Temple, Guheswari Temple, Chabahil, Chandra Vinayak and Bauddhanath.

Patan

The ancient city of Patan, lying 5 km southeast of Kathmandu, is known as Lalitpur or the city of fine arts. The city is full of Hindu temples and Buddhist monuments. The diversity of medieval culture that allowed both Hinduism and Buddhism to flourish has left a rich legacy of impressive sightseeing in



© Susheel Shrestha

➔ *Patan Durbar Square, Lalitpur.*

KATHMANDU VALLEY
(Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur)

this city. At Patan you can visit: Patan Darbar Square, Patan Museum, Krishna Mandir, Mahabouddha, Hinranya Varna Mahavihar, Kumbheshwor, Jagatnarayan Temple, Rudra Varna Mahavihar, the Ashokan Stupas, Achheswor Mahavihar, temple of Machchendranath and Minnath, the Zoo and Patan Industrial Estate.

Bhaktapur

Bhaktapur (1,401 m) covers an area of four square miles. Bhaktapur or the city of devotees still retains a medieval charm

➔ *Bhaktapur during Bisket Jatra.*



© Thomas L. Kelly

and visitors to this ancient town are treated to myriad wonders of cultural and artistic achievements. The past glory of the Malla rulers continues to be reflected at the Darbar Square. Pottery and weaving are its traditional industries. Bhaktapur is famous for woodcarving and the Bhadgolen topi or cap. The city lies about 14 km east of Kathmandu and can be reached by public transport and by trolley buses. At Bhaktapur you can visit: Bhaktapur Darbar Square, the National Art Gallery, Nyatapola Temple, Bhairavnath Temple, Dattatreya Temple and Dattatreya Square.

Outside the Valley:

Nagarjun

Nagarjun, also called Jamachok, is a prominent forested hill west of Kathmandu. Hikers can reach the top (2,096 m) in about two hours. At the top is a Buddhist stupa with a superb view of Ganesh Himal, Langtang and the Kathmandu Valley. A return trail descends the southwest side of Nagarjun to Ichangu Narayan and reaches Kathmandu via a dirt road that joins the Ring Road behind Swayambhunath.

Ichangu Narayan

Ichangu Narayan is reached from the cross-roads on the west side of Swayambhunath. A dirt road leads west toward stone quarries, past the scarred hillside, and along a trail leading toward the little settlement of Ichangu. Approximately one hour of walking brings you to the little temple complex of Ichangu Narayan.

Sankhu via Bajra Jogini to Nagarkot

Sankhu via Bajra Jogini to Nagarkot is a good hard day's walk offering a combination of culture with spectacular mountain views. This route begins from the little town of Sankhu, an ancient and interesting post on the old trade route between Kathmandu and Lhasa. An uphill climb leads to the important temple of Bajra Jogini. From here, a trail east behind the complex takes you through a stand of pine trees and continues down

a hill, across a bridge, and through another forest. Climbing out of the Valley, you get your first glimpses of the high snow peaks of the Himalayas. The track dips and climbs a smaller ridge branching from Nagarkot. On a clear day Nagarkot offers undoubtedly one of the best panoramic views of the Himalayas. The panoramic view extends from the eastern Himalayas (it is possible to see Mt. Everest, though it may appear small at the eastern end) all the way west to the Annapurnas and Dhaulagiri.

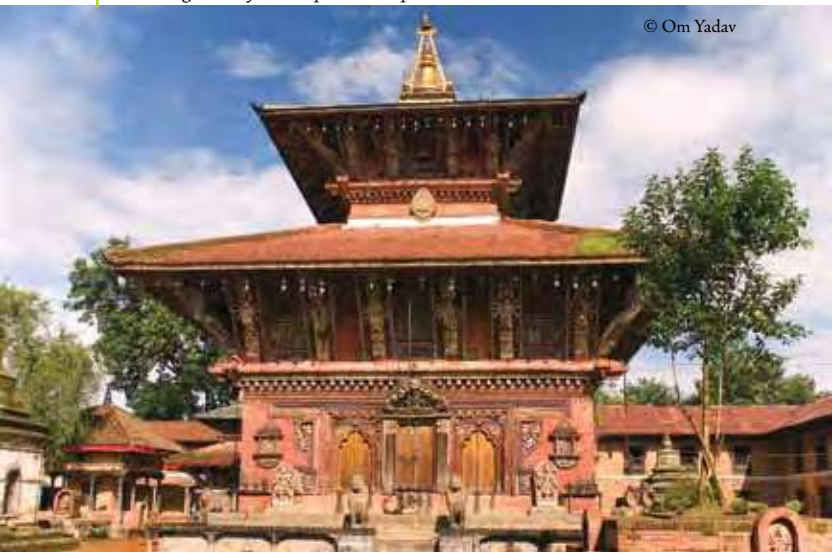
Nagarkot to Changu Narayan

Nagarkot to Changu Narayan is a comfortable walk of about three hours. The trail descends and becomes a gentle uphill climb leading through a pine-tree plantation levelling out along a saddle. There are gorgeous views across the Valley to the Himalayas as the trail passes through several little Chhetri settlements. Soon, the gilded roofs of Changu Narayan can be seen above the clustered houses of Changu village. A stone-paved street leads up to the impressive temple of Changu Narayan with early stone sculptures. The temple built on a hilltop was completely rebuilt after a fire destroyed it in 1702. But its origins go back to the 4th century. The temple of Changu

KATHMANDU VALLEY
(Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur)

➞ Changu Narayan Temple, Bhaktapur.

© Om Yadav



Narayan dedicated to Lord Vishnu, is believed to be the oldest shrine in the Valley and is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From Changu Narayan, a staircase leads down to a fork in the trail, the left one to Bhaktapur, and the right descending to rice paddies and across a stream to the Sankhu road.

Nagarkot to Shivapuri

Nagarkot to Shivapuri is a two day hike or a day and a half to Sundarijal. You share the same trail for the first eight hours, following the dirt road then staying high on the ridge to Burlang Bhanjyang (2,438 m) where food and lodging are available. The main Sundarijal to Helambu trail crosses here - the path south leads to Mulkarka and Sundarijal, serviced by taxis or bus. The trail to Shivapuri continues through a forest along the ridge for approximately four hours before climbing the final knoll for a 360-degree view of the Himalayas and the Kathmandu Valley. Two trails descend to Budhanilkantha, on the easterly one you emerge at Nage Gomba and down a steep road to the bottom while the other heads west and follows the main path south to the reserve office. Together the two paths make a challenging but rewarding day hike of four to five hours up and three hours

➡ *View of the Eastern Himalayan range from Nagarkot.*

© Susheel Shrestha



down. From Nage Gompa there are other variations possible - down the ridge to Kopan monastery above Bodhnath, or the rim trek west to Kakani (2,073 m).

Gokarneswar to Bouddhnath via Kopan

Gokarneswar to Bouddhnath via Kopan is a walk that starts at the Gokarna Mahadev temple. The trail is a well-marked one up a rather steep grade from below the hamlet of Gokarneswar. Traversing through paddy and maize fields and a bamboo grove the trail crosses the main trail and heads downhill to a grassy meadow. The path follows the edge of a forest plantation then climbs a small hillock on top of which are the monastery and settlement of Kopan. This is a Tibetan refugee center with more than a hundred young novices. The monastery and main temple are worth a visit. You can see the great Bouddhnath stupa to the southwest of the monastery. From here, all trails lead to Bouddhnath.

Kirtipur to Patan via Chobar

Hiking from Kirtipur to Patan via Chobar begins with a morning taxi or bus to the town of Kirtipur, atop a rocky hill. Here you can spend a few hours wandering around this fascinating

KATHMANDU VALLEY
(Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur)

→ *Women at daily chores, Kirtipur, Kathmandu.*



© Susheel Shrestha

Newar settlement. The ridge route toward Patan leads from Kirtipur and climbs slowly to the village of Chobar overlooking the Bagmati River. There are several important shrines here, including the shrine of Adinath Lokeswar. Continuing from Chobar you reach the Jal Binayak temple complex at the mouth of the famous Chobar Gorge. Crossing the Bagmati River that drains the Kathmandu Valley you notice the chasm believed to have been cut by Manjushri's sword. The suspension bridge here was manufactured in Scotland and erected at the beginning of the 20th century. The trail climbs a hill to meet the main trail from Bungamati and Khokana. You can track back toward Jawalakhel on the outskirts of Patan, or cross the road and continue down into the beautiful Naku Khola (river) valley. A trail leads to southern Patan.

Pharping

Near Pharping, just outside the Valley and southeast of Patan, a white, castle-like monastery stands on a forested slope at the entrance to the Gorakhnath Cave, formerly a hermit's refuge now turned into a thriving centre of Tibetan worship. This cave bears the name of one of the ancient sages who meditated here. On the platform in front of the cave are his footprints, which according to the inscription were carved in 1390. Tibetan Buddhists consider this site sacred to Padma Sambhava, the "second Buddha" who introduced Buddhism to Tibet. His image and those of other deities inside the cave date from the 18th century. Nearby, at the shrine of Sesh Narayan, sacred to Hindus, Tibetans have raised a monastery to commemorate the visit of the great Tibetan saint, Guru Padma Sambhava.

Phulchoki

Phulchoki is the tallest of the foothills that encircle the Valley. The triple-peaked mountain with its highest point at 2,762 m attracts many pilgrims in spring who climb high to fetch blossoms of orchids, clematis vines and rhododendrons - for offerings to the mother of the forest, Phulchoki Mai, to whom two shrines have been built on the mountain. The view from Phulchoki's summit can only be termed phenomenal. The



→ *Godavari Botanical Garden.*

whole Kathmandu Valley lies to the north, with the snow-clad Himalayan range as backdrop. The lower hill ranges that lead into the Terai and India are to the south.

Godavari

The Godavari area is at the foot of Phulchoki, with the Botanical Garden, the Department of Medicinal Plants, and a fish farm. The botanical garden has greenhouses on the slope of the hill just above it with a notable collection of orchids, ferns and cacti.

Further Afield

Thankot

Thankot is about two kilometres from Kathmandu city. It is a sizeable village on an elevated sloping site surrounded by terraced fields. An uneven stone path leads uphill from here to the Mahalakshmi Temple, an impressive structure with two roofs, carved tympanum and columns, well-done erotic carvings, an open shrine, and kneeling devotees frozen in prayer facing it.

Dhulikhel

Dhulikhel is about an hour's drive east of Kathmandu along the Ariniko Highway leading to Tibet. Banepa, passed en route, was once the capital of a 14th-century kingdom that boasted diplomatic relations with China's Ming emperors. Dhulikhel

was an important trade post and you can see an impressive vista of the snowy central Himalayas making a backdrop to the gentle hills. Dhulikhel is central to a number of day excursions such as an early morning 30-minute hike up to the Bhagavati Temple for an unforgettable sunrise over the Himalayas. Trails lead along the ridge north of town. A leisurely all-day hike can be undertaken to visit Namo Buddha, a sacred site that has drawn reverent pilgrims for many centuries. Legend tells that the Buddha sacrificed his body here to feed a starving tigress and her cubs. A carved stone slab on the top of the hill depicts the moving story, a lesson in compassion and selfless giving. A dirt road (sometimes suitable for vehicles) leads from Dhulikhel to Namo Buddha via Kavre - a pleasant roundtrip walk of eight hours.



Kakani

Kakani (2073 m) is on the opposite side of the Kathmandu Valley on a knoll. It lies on the main road to Trisuli Bazaar. To the north the Ganesh Himal and Langtang Lirung peaks dominate the center, with Annapurna II and Himalchuli, Lenpogang (Great White Peak) and Gauri Shankar in the left and right wings. Several day hikes and Valley rim treks begin or end at Kakani.

Nuwakot

Nuwakot is a commanding fortress site and an interesting side trip from Trisuli Bazaar, reachable in an hour's climb from the road. The seven-story palace fortress built during the reign of Prithvi Narayan Shah in the 18th century stands little marred by time despite a history of attacks by Malla and later Chinese forces. Trisuli Bazaar can be reached in 3-4 hours on a regular bus service from Kathmandu.

➡ *Nuwakot Durbar*

© Susheel Shrestha



Gorkha

Gorkha, the original home of the Shah Kings, remains a historical and commercial center. It is a detour off the Kathmandu to Pokhara highway. A number of treks begin from here, which day-hikers can explore as well. A 300-meter climb up a well-tended stairway to the northern hilltop is worthwhile not only for a lovely view of Baudha, Himalchuli and the shoulder of Manaslu but also for a visit to Prithvi Narayan Shah's palace.

Daman

Daman (2,400 m) remains an under-rated and unknown hill station with the broadest Himalayan views of all. From its vantage point a full 400 km of ice-cast peaks are visible - from Dhaulagiri to Everest. The Palung Valley, with its jigsaw patterned terraces stretches to the north and west. There is a small Buddhist monastery tended by monks and nuns about an hour's walk from the viewpoint. You can take a regular passenger bus or hire a private car and driver in Kathmandu for the winding three-hour drive.

Further details about the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding region will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

➡ *Gorkha Durbar*

© Sirish B.C.







JANAKPUR (D h a n u s h a)

Janakpur is the capital of ancient Mithila culture and is renowned as birthplace of Sita, Lord Ram's consort.

As Ram is believed to be the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Sita is believed to be the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi as per the great Hindu epic Ramayan. It is also believed that it was in Janakpur that Lord Ram and Sita met and were married to each other. Janakpur is also on the holy route of Parikrama (holy circle) carried out by Hindus as a form of worship in Ayodhya, Kashi and Brij in India as well.

Another important religious site nearby is Dhanushadham, its reference again dating back to the Ramayan era. It is believed



© Susheel Shrestha

➤ Janaki Temple, Janakpur



© Susheel Shrestha

➤ Inside the Janaki Temple, Janakpur.

to be the place where the broken remains of the divine Shiva bow fell after Ram broke it to obtain Sita's hand in marriage. A fossilized fragment of the broken piece is still believed to present here. Dhanusha offers: religious sightseeing, lush surroundings of trees and groves, semi-rural charm of the Terai suburbs, and the colorful Maithali art and culture.

People

Diverse ethnic groups live in the district of Dhanusha. Yadavs, Teli, Brahmins, Kyastha, Tharu, Musahar, Rajput, and Chhetri are the main inhabitants of these villages. Most are farmers by occupation. The whole region is also considered the center of Maithali culture, therefore Maithali art and culture is predominant in this area.

Please refer to Annex A for more information on people.

➤ *Typical Terai home.*



Experience

Janaki Temple

A temple in Janakpur known as Janaki Mandir (temple) dedicated to Sita, also known as Naulakha Mandir, is dedicated to Sita who is also known by the name of Janaki. A rare blend of Mughal and Rajput architecture, the temple is the first and only example of its kind in Nepal. The temple has a beautiful garden and an adorned Vivah Mandap (wedding courtyard) dedicated to Ram and Sita.

Dhanushadham

Dhanusha Mandir in Dhanushadham is a historical temple constructed in 1939 A.D. Dhanushadham is one of the resting places on the Parikrama route that has special significance to Hindus. It is situated 18 km north east of Jahakpurdham and only 10 km from Dharapani on the East -West Highway.

➞ *Vivah Mandap inside the Janaki Temple complex.*



© Susheel Shrestha



*Terai man offering prayers
to the Sun God during
Chhatt Festival.*

Near Dhanusha Mandir is an ideal spot for picnics or leisurely walks in the shade. The forest is lush with trees, bushes and a large pond. There are possibilities of water sports on the lake in future.

Parashuram Kunda

Previously known as Jahank Sarobar, Parashuram Kunda (pond) holds a historical as well as cultural significance. It is believed to



be the pond where Maharishi Parashuram bathed to quell his anger after his confrontation with Ram over the breaking of the sacred bow of Shiva. The pond is picturesque, with lotus flowers floating on it and lush trees on its southern banks. The pond in Mithileshwar Nikas VDC is 4 km west of Dhanushadham and on the way to Dhanusha from Janakpurdham.

Other Pilgrimage Sites

There are several pilgrimage sites in and around the Dhanushadham area. Among the holy shrines there are temples of Ram, Ganesh, Shiva, Hanuman, Ram Krishna, Panchamukhi Hanuman, Baba Makhandada Kuti, Subba Kuti and others. Jaleswor Mahadev in Jaleswor is another popular temple in the nearby area. The temple of Jaleswor Mahadev was built by King Girban Bir Bikram Shah Dev in 1867 B.S.

Some other popular pilgrimage sites are: Maithani with 12 temples and 8 ponds dedicated to different deities; Madai, where the temple of Muneswor Mahadev is situated; Kanchan Ban, where popular temples in the area are situated; Parbata, where a temple of Hanuman is situated; and Karuna, where the famous temple of Ram Janaki is a major attraction.

▶ A village lake. Natural and man-made lakes are common sights in the Terai region.



Getting There

Dhanusadham is in Dhanusha district and Janakpur zone.

Janakpur is approximately 390 km and 10-hour drive from Kathmandu. Buses to district headquarter Janakpur city leave from Central Bus Station, Gongabu in Kathmandu. One can also take a 40-minute flight to Janakpur city from Kathmandu. Dhanushadham which is 18 km is an hour-drive from Janakpur. Public transportation services are available to Dhanushadham from the city area.

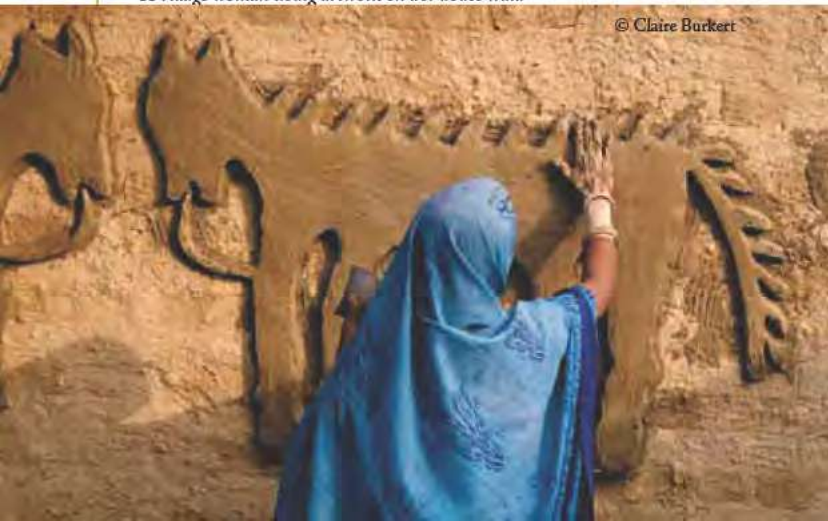
Tourist Services

Luxury hotels to budget accommodation and food facilities are available in Janakpur city. Dharamshalas (accommodation for pilgrims) are also available. Food is delicious with Indian touch. Varieties of sweets and vegetarian specialties are available. Other tourist facilities are also available in Janakpur city.

Further details about Janakpur and the surrounding region will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

➞ *A village woman doing artwork on her house wall.*

© Claire Burkett



Janakpur Area



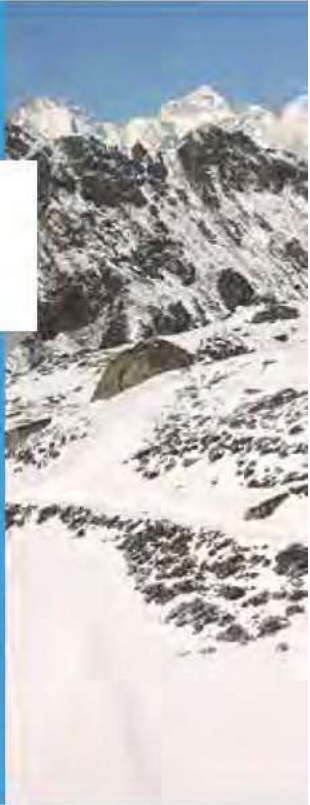
Langtang

(R a s u w a)

One of the nearest trekking destinations from Kathmandu lies an unparalleled combination of natural beauty and cultural riches of Langtang, Rasuwa.

Langtang has over 70 glaciers of varying sizes, the Langtang and Ganesh Himal mountain ranges, and high altitude lakes including Gosainkunda, Parvatikunda, Bhairavkunda, and Dudhkunda. The people in this place are mostly of Tamang and Tibetan origin, whose culture goes back to hundreds of years. The craftsmanship, dress, traditionally built stone houses, and the beautifully carved wooden porches reflect their rich Himalayan heritage. Partly protected as Langtang National Park, visit to the area gives Himalayan nature experience and an insight into the lifestyle and culture the Tamangs who are predominant inhabitants of the region.

Located about 30 km toward the north of Kathmandu near the Tibetan border, Langtang was previously a restricted area. Extending in an east-west direction, it is bordered on the north by the main crest of the Himalayas, dominated by Langtang Lirung (7,245 m), the highest peak in the area. To the south are the Chimse Danda (ridge), crossed by the Ganja La pass





© Sirish B.C.

Tourists on their way to cross Lauribina La Pass, Langtang National Park, Rasuwa.

(5,122 m), and Jugal Himal, culminating in Dorje Lakpa (6,989 m). Glaciers spawned by the slopes of Dorje Lakpa, Langtang Lirung and other peaks feed the Langtang Khola (river).

The Langtang River passes through the high, gentle Langtang Valley before emptying in a raging torrent into the Bhote Kosi River through a long, narrow defile at the west end of the valley. Whereas the major rivers of Nepal flow south from Tibet cutting through the Himalayan chain, the Langtang Khola, a major tributary of the Trisuli Ganga, flows east to west, cutting, as it were, across the grain of the country. The Trisuli, or Bhote Kosi as it becomes above Dhunche, forms an important corridor and ancient trade route through the mountains between the Ganesh and Langtang Himal, to Kerong in Tibet.

Langtang and Gosainkunda are the prime attractions of this region. New trekking trail: Tamang Heritage Trail, offers yet another option and a peek at the Himalayan lifestyle and

culture. The unexplored part of the Langtang National Park has recently been connected with Tamang Heritage Trail.

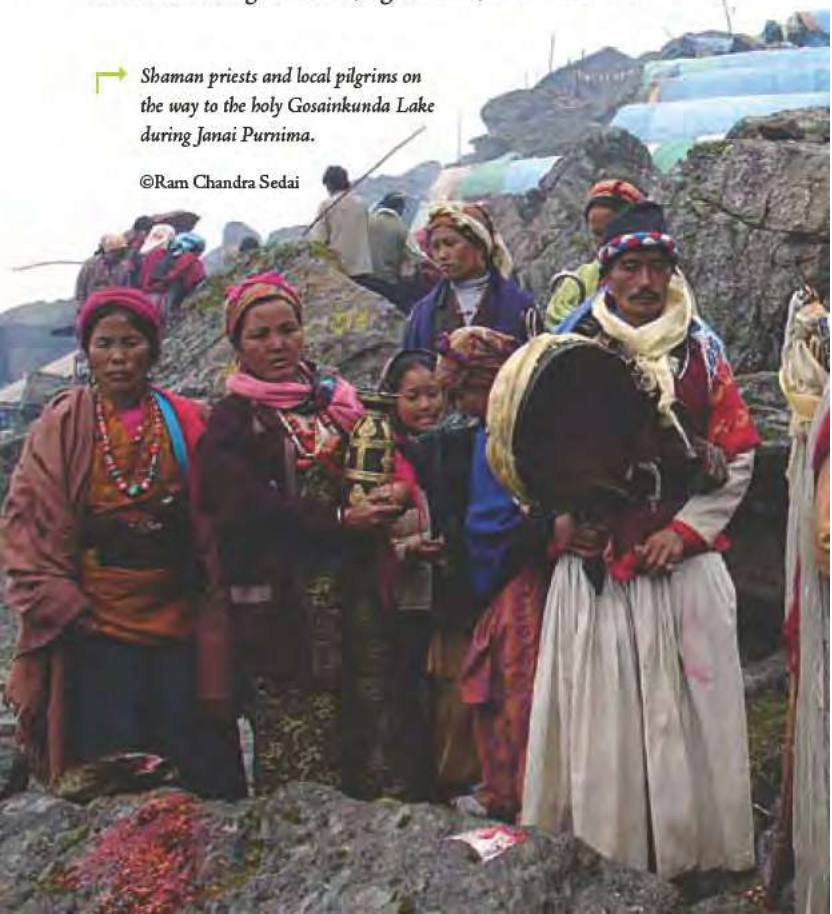
People

The inhabitants of the Langtang Valley are thought to be descendants of Tibetans from Kerung who intermingled with Tamangs from the Helambu area.

The inhabitants of Briddim village are of the Tamang ethnic group but a marked influence of Tibetan culture and tradition is noticed in their lifestyle closely resembling that of most Tibetan villages. They are mainly sheep and yak herders, but grow some hardy grains and vegetables. The daily life of the villagers includes raising livestock, agriculture, and trade with

➔ *Shaman priests and local pilgrims on the way to the holy Gosainkunda Lake during Janai Purnima.*

©Ram Chandra Sedai



Kerung in Tibet. Wheat, maize, potato, soyabean, and millet are their staple food.

New Experience

Tamang Heritage Trail

The Tamang Heritage Trail takes you to verdant midlands of Nepal experiencing the beauty of this mountain region and the culture of the people who live here. The trail passes through traditional Tamang villages where life, culture, and crafts have remained unchanged since the beginning of the settlement. Warm traditional welcome hosted by the locals, their elaborate costumes,

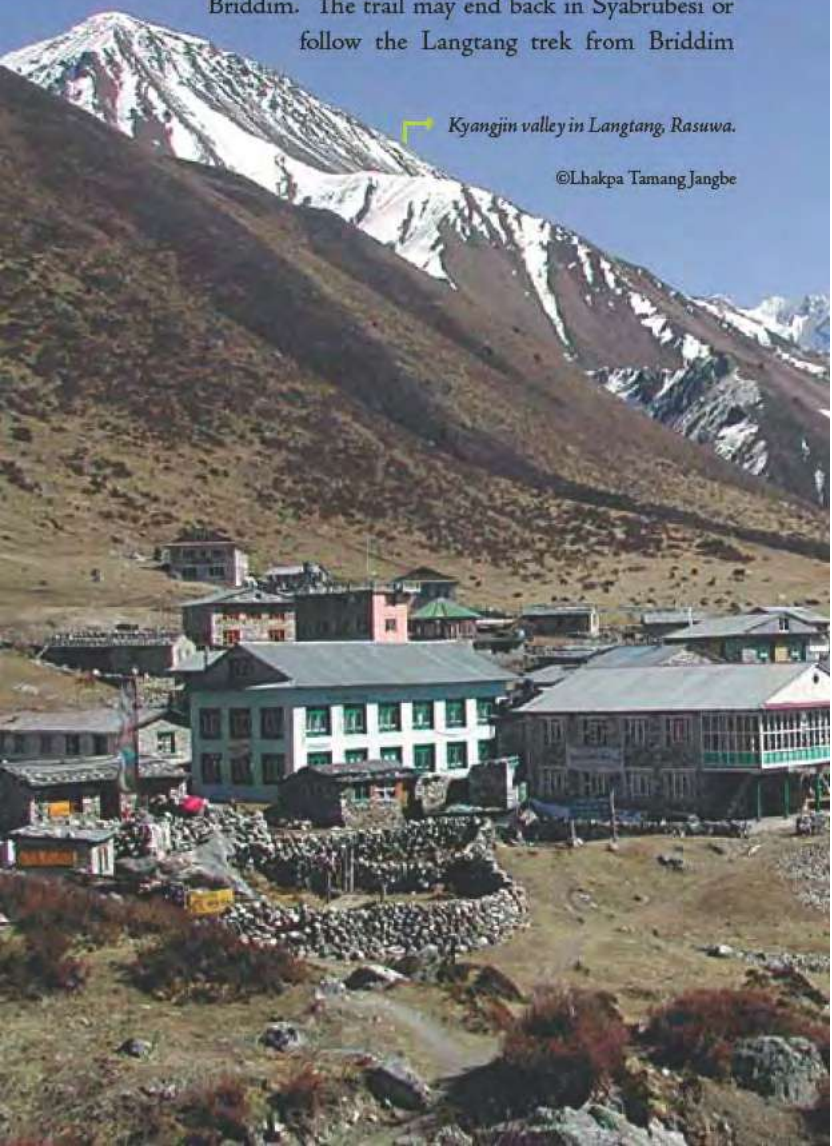


rich architecture of their mountain houses, and the ancient monasteries and places of pray add color to the experience of this trail. In addition to cultural experience, the trek also offers wilderness experience through beautiful landscapes of alpine terrain, flat meadows, and rhododendron forests.

The trail starts either from Dhunche or Syabrubesi and passes through Goljung, Gatlang, Chilime, Thuman, Timure and Briddim. The trail may end back in Syabrubesi or follow the Langtang trek from Briddim

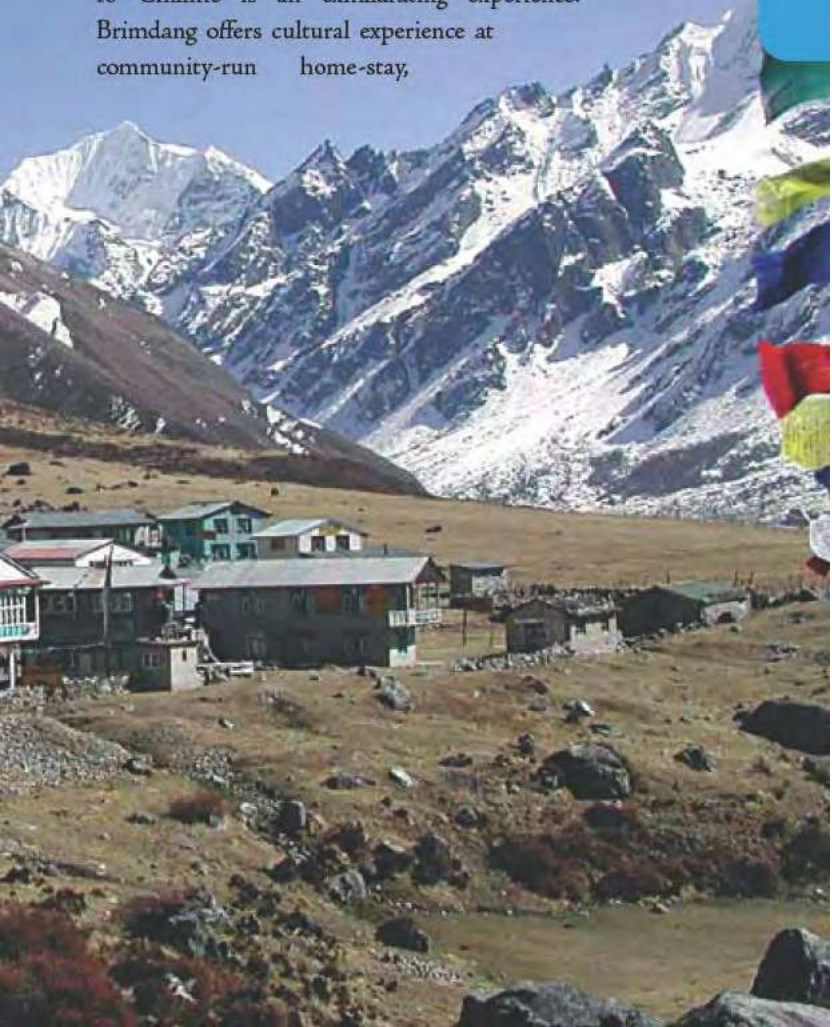
➤ *Kyangjin valley in Langtang, Rasuwa.*

©Lhakpa Tamang Jangbe



village via Khanjim. Goljung and Gatlang are traditional Tamang villages. While Goljung has ancient monastery, Gatlang set high on a hillside among terraced fields is the Tamang settlement. One can also visit a Tamang monastery and the beautiful Parvatikunda Lake at Gatlang. From the viewpoint at Bahundanda near these settlements, one can also see a panoramic view of Lantang, Kerung, and the Ganesh Himal, Sanjen Himal ranges.

After the trek of several days, bathing in the hot, healing waters of the natural spring at Tatopani en route from Gatlang to Chilime is an exhilarating experience. Brimdang offers cultural experience at community-run home-stay,



while Nagathali in Thuman VDC is surrounded by beautiful views of Langtang, Kerung, Ganesh Himal and Sanjen Himal ranges. Nagthali used to be a popular meditation center for the local monks and priests. Next is Timure on the old trade route to Tibet. A fort at Rasuwagadi in Timure is a historical reminder of the Nepal-Tibet relations that has existed for many centuries. A suspension bridge here links Nepal and Tibet.

The trail ends at Briddim which lies on the lap of Langtang Himal. Briddim offers warm Tamang hospitality at the home-stays run by community members. In addition, visitors can also visit local monasteries of Dukchu Gomba (monastery) chosen as sacred site by the great Tibetan Lama - Guru Rinpoche and Chukla Khnaga Gomba.

Suggested Itinerary to Tamang Heritage Trail (8-10 days)

Day	To - From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu - Syabru	Drive Kathmandu- Rasuwa via Trishuli, Nowakot.	7-8 hrs. (Driving)	Syabru (Hotel)
Day 2	Syabru - Gajung - Gattlang	Drive Syabru - Gajung - Gattlang. Experience of the Tamang culture. See scenery from view point. Village walk. See cultural show at Gajung or Gattlang.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking) or 2 hrs. (Driving)	Gattlang (Community lodge)
Day 3	Gattlang - Tatopani	Trekking from Gattlang - Tatopani. Hot bath in the natural spring of Tatopani. Sightseeing of Langtang range, Ganesh Himal on the way. Experience of the Tamang culture.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking)	Tatopani (Lodge)
Day 4	Tatopani - Nagthali - Thuman	Trekking from Tatopani - Nagthali via Brindang. Animals like monkeys and deer can be seen on the way. Panoramic view of Langtang on the way.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Thuman (Homestay)
Day 5	Thuman - Timure - Rasuwagadhi - Timure	Trekking from Thuman to Timure and visit nearby historical Rasuwagadhi. Observe Tibeto-Burman Tamang culture on the two villages on the way.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Timure (Lodges)
Day 6	Timure - Briddim	Trekking from Timure - Briddim. Observe village life of Briddim. Watch cultural show done by community members. Experience of home-stay and Tamang culture.	6 hrs. (Trekking)	Briddim (Home stay)
Day 7	Briddim - Syabrubesi	Trekking from Briddim - Syabrubesi via Wangel.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Syabru (Hotels, Lodges, Teashops)
Day 8	Syabrubesi - Dhunche - Kathmandu	Drive Dhunche - Kathmandu	7-8 hrs. (Driving)	Kathmandu

Suggested Itinerary to Tamang Heritage Trail combined with Langtang Trail (10-12 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu – Dhunche-Syabru - Gatlang	Drive Kathmandu- Rasuwa via Trishuli, Nuwakot. On reaching Dhunche, the headquarters, drive to Gatlang. See different settlements and interact with local people on the way. In the evening Tamang cultural show at Gatlang.	6 hrs. (Drive Ktm- Dhunche) 3 hrs. (Drive Dhunche-Gatlang)	Gatlang (Community lodge)
Day 2	Gatlang – Tatopani	Activities: Trekking from Gatlang – Tatopani via Thambuche; Hot bath in the natural healing waters of Tatopani. Sightseeing of Langtang range, Kyanjin, Ganesh Himal on the way. Experience the rich Tibeto-Burman Tamang culture on the way.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Tatopani (Lodges and tea shops)
Day 3	Tatopani – Brimdang – Nagthali-Thuman	Trekking from Tatopani – Thuman via Brimdang and Nagthali. Beautiful views of Langtang, Sanjen, Ganesh Himal, Kerung, and forests of rhododendrons at bloom during season. Visiting Animals like monkeys and deer can be seen on the way. At Thuman observe the local vernacular architecture typical of this region.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Thuman (Lodges and teashops, Community hot shower)
Day 4	Thuman – Lingling- Briddim	Trekking from Thuman-Bridhim via Lingling. Observe Tibeto-Burman Tamang culture on the way. Observe village life of Briddim. Watch cultural show done by community members.	4 hrs. (Trekking till Lingling) 3 hrs. (Trekking till Briddim)	Briddim (Homestay)
Day 5	Briddim – Lamahotel	Village walk at Briddim, observing the local lifestyle and culture, and interacting with the locals. Trekking from Briddim – Lamahotel. En route to Langtang, the settlement of Lamahotel is located on the banks of Langtang river and surrounded by lush forests and mountains.	5-6 hrs. (Trekking from Briddim to Lamahotel)	Lamahotel (Lodges and teashops, Kerosene available at local depot)
Day 6	Lamahotel- Langtang	Trek from Lamahotel-Langtang. Beautiful views of the Langtang range on the way. Experience and observation of Tibetan settlements.	4-5 hrs. (Trekking from Lamahotel till Langtang)	Langtang (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 7	Langtang – Kangjin	Trek from Langtang – Kangjin. Seeing the glaciated valley of Kangjin on the lap of Langtang Lirung and surrounded by snowy mountains, which is also the world's nearest settlement to glacier. Seeing various wild Himalayan flowers if during monsoons.	3 hrs. (Trekking Langtang-Kangjin)	Kangjin (Hotels, lodges, teashops)
Day 8	Kangjin- Lamahotel	Trek from Kangjin-Lamahotel.	6 hrs. (Trekking from Kangjin-Lamahotel)	Lamahotel (Lodges and teashops, Kerosene available at local depot)
Day 9	Lamahotel- Syabru	Trek from Lamahotel-Syabru.	4-5 hrs. (Lamahotel- Syabru)	Syabru (Lodges, teashops)
Day 10	Syabru- Kathmandu	Drive from Syabru-Kathmandu.	7-8 hrs. (Drive from Syabru-Kathmandu)	Kathmandu

Home-stay at Briddim

Briddim (2,229 m) is a small and beautiful Tamang village. It offers Himalayan cultural experience in the form of accommodation. About half of the 43 houses in Briddim offer accommodation at their homes. Here visitors are accommodated as house guests and are able to have first-hand experience of the age-old culture and hospitality of the Tamang community. Being an honored guest of a rural family, sharing their daily chores, and having delicious home-cooked meals with them add a different dimension to one's experience in Nepal. Briddim is at the end of the Tamang Heritage Trail. However, visitors also have the option of visiting only Briddim, which is about a 3-hour light trek from Syabrubesi. The accommodation and tourism package is managed by Home-stay Tourism Management Committee. Briddim home-stay was awarded 2nd Mountain Development Prize at the 3rd International Mountain Day programme held in Kathmandu in December 2005.

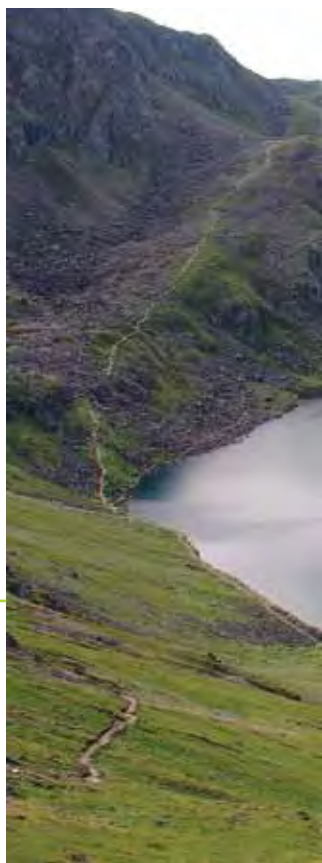
Other Experience

Gosainkunda

Gosainkunda Lake (4,300 m) in the Syabru VDC on the southern slopes of Jugal Himal, is a mini trek by itself and can be done in about five days. Gosainkunda is a sacred lake for Hindus and Buddhists alike, and is said to have had its origin when Lord Shiva swallowed poison to save the world. It is believed he pierced the earth with his trishul (trident) from where a fountain

*Bird's eye view of the holy
Gosainkunda Lake of Langtang.*

©Ram Chandra Sedai



of water sprang forming a lake where the burning Shiva jumped to soothe the burning in his throat. Devotees pray to a long stone in the middle of the lake believing it to be the sleeping Shiva. There are 108 lakes in this region some of which are named Saraswati, Bhairav, Surya and Ganesh. Gosainkunda is considered one of the holiest pilgrimage sites in Nepal.

The trail to Gosainkund climbs from either Dhunche or Syabru through lush rhododendron hillsides to Sing Gompa. East of the lakes Laurebina (4,600 m) pass leads to Helambu. The trail descends to Tharepati, where it divides into two return routes to Kathmandu. The shorter way rides the ridge south through cool rhododendron forests passing several Tamang villages, and crests the Kathmandu Valley rim at Burlang Bhanjyang, some 1,100 m above Sundarijal. This ridge forms the divide between two of Nepal's major river systems - the Gandaki, which extends



west to Dhaulagiri, and the Saptakosi whose tributaries extend east to Kanchenjunga on the border with Sikkim.

The other trail from Tharepati plunges 1,000 m to a tributary of the Melamchi Khola (river) and above it the village of Melamchigaun. Stone houses scatter across the terraced fields above an old gompa (monastery) dressed with tall prayer flags. A gompa set on the ridge above Tarkeghyang commands excellent views of the Himalaya, looking north toward Ganja La pass and Dorje Lakpa (6,966 m) and a number of peaks over 6,000 m.

During Janai Purnima (full-moon festival in August), 15 – 25,000 Hindu and Buddhists pilgrims visit the area in about a one-week period. At this time Jhankris (Shaman priests) come from all over Nepal to dance in an induced trance to all night singing and drum beating. The trail to Gosainkunda involves rapid ascent to about high elevation of 4,380 m, and therefore, it is best done after acclimatising in Langtang, Helambu or Nagthali.

➡ Typical local Tamang houses.



Langtang National Park

The Langtang Valley was declared a national park in 1976 and remains the second largest in Nepal covering approximately 1,700 square km (660 square miles). Stretching up to the Tibetan border, it has a high level of biodiversity including 15 forest types, 3,000 species of flowering plants like oaks, fir, blue pine, spruce, and various species of rhododendron. The Park is also a rich area for medicinal plants. Extensive forests and varied vegetation types provide a habitat for approximately 32 mammals and 283 species of birds, including musk deer, snow leopards, red panda, wild dog, Himalayan black bear and the clouded leopard. It is also a rich area for medicinal plants.

Twenty five percent of the Park's total area is covered by forest, starting at sub-tropical forests below 1,000 m to alpine scrubs and grasslands at the higher altitudes, including 15 forest types. Extensive forests and varied vegetation types provide a habitat for approximately 32 mammals and 283 species of birds including tragopan, impeyan, and pheasants. The wild dog, red panda, pika, muntjac, musk deer, Himalayan black bear,

➡ *Locals of Langtang valley.*

©Ram Chandra Sedai



Himalayan tahr, ghoral, serow, rhesus monkey, common langur, and the snow leopard among others have made the Park their habitat.

Remote and practically unknown, the area had not seen a Westerner until H.W. Tilman visited there in 1949. The next European visitor was Swiss Tony Hagen who carried out geological surveys in 1952. His exciting descriptions of the area aroused the interest of Warner Schulthess, a Swiss agricultural adviser for the United Nations. Schulthess subsequently established a Swiss cheese factory in the valley.

Further Afield

Visitors can extend their stay in Langtang to trek to Kyangjin and explore the upper valley to Langshisa and beyond. Tilman's Col, a difficult crossing named after H.W. Tilman the first Westerner to visit Langtang in 1949, leads east toward Panch

➞ *Thulo Syabru*



Pokhari. Ganja La pass (5,120 m) often covered by snow and clouds, leads south to Helambu and the Kathmandu Valley.

Getting There

Langtang region predominantly lies in Rasuwa district of Bagmati zone.

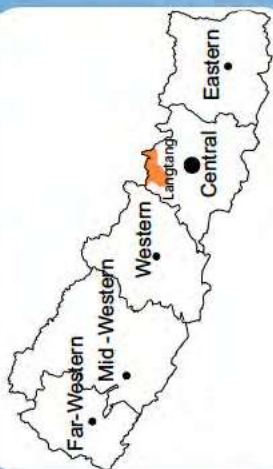
A 6 to 7-hour drive from Kathmandu to Dhunche in Rasuwa district is the most convenient approach to Langtang. From Dhunche it is about three days trekking up the gorge of the Trisuli River (or the Bhote Kosi as it is known above Dhunche) to Langtang Valley. The spectacular track up this gorge once formed an important trade route to the Tibetan fort at Kerung, just over the Chinese border at Rasuwagadi. The trail passes through a dense forest of oak, birch and pine, hung with Spanish moss and hosting delicate orchids. Further on, the valley opens out into alpine meadows and yak pastures. The Park is also accessible from Sundarjal toward the east of Kathmandu and Melamchi Pul (bridge), about 3-hour drive from Kathmandu.

Tourist Services

Tourist facilities are available in Dhunche and Syabru. Established accommodation facilities are available in Langtang route and Gosainkunda route. Tourist facilities have also been developed in the Tamang Heritage Trail. A community lodge offers accommodation at Gatlang. Home-stay houses offer accommodation facilities at Brimdang (Chilime) and Briddim. Normal hotel, lodge and individual home-stay are available in the remaining villages where meals are also offered with accommodation. Cooked with special attention on food safety, the simple yet nutritious meals are an adventure for the palate. Trained guides and porters are also available in the villages.

Further details about the Langtang region and the surrounding areas will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

Langtang Area



Tamang Heritage Trail

Legend

- Settlement
- 🏠 Chorten
- 🌄 View Point
- 🏢 Gompa
- 🎓 School
- ✈️ Helipad
- Tamang Heritage Trail
- Gravel Road



West Nepal





BANDIPUR (T a n a h u n)

Midway on the day-long drive between Kathmandu and Pokhara lies the hilltop settlement of Bandipur, a Newar town with its age-old flavor still intact.

You climb through pristine forests on the historical trail at Dumre Bazaar to a town that has hardly changed. Well preserved Bandipur today invites travelers to experience its unique offerings: rich hill culture, mountain views, and hiking. Bandipur is tantalizing and as yet undiscovered.

Unlike most trading posts in the Nepal hills, Bandipur has retained its age-old cultural attributes - temples, shrines, sacred



©NTB

➞ *View of hilltop from a local shrine, Bandipur.*

caves, innumerable festivals, and a Newari architecture that harks back to the Kathmandu Valley of old.

Located on a wide saddle at a height of 1,030 m the surrounding hills of Bandipur are ideal for hiking along trails that take you through tribal villages, verdant forests, and hilltop shrines that once doubled as fortresses.

Following the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768 by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, many of the valley's Newar inhabitants fanned out to establish trading posts in the hills. Some traders made their way to Bandipur, from where they began to meet the needs of an increasingly mercantile British India and the Himalayan hinterland. An obscure mountain village was transformed into a bustling commercial center, and Bandipur became a funneling point where all trails from central

Nepal (and Tibet to the north) converged to head southward, crossing the great Narayani River and the Chitwan jungle to reach the Indian railhead of Narkatia Ganj.

In the 1800s, this bazaar town grew in wealth and importance. Traders came from Tibet with musk pods, mountain herbs, animal skins, and horses. Calico, tobacco, glassware, and kerosene came in from British India. However, when Nepal opened her doors to the world in the 1950s, Pokhara with its airfield began to gain importance, and in 1972 the Kathmandu-Pokhara highway by-passed Bandipur altogether. But, the road's alignment was a blessing in disguise - while many Newar hill towns lost their distinctiveness after joining the highway grid, Bandipur retained its originality. Because Bandipur's merchant class had built sturdily, their buildings have stood firm and are used today once more to house shops, cafes and lodgings.

People

The place names around Bandipur indicate that Magars, whose chieftains ruled numerous principalities of today's central Nepal, originally inhabited the surrounding region, known as Tanahun. When Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha set out to expand his dominion, Tanahun was a powerful adversary that was overcome only after a hard battle.

Majority of the current residents are originally traders from Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu Valley who made their way to Bandipur and settled here. When the Kathmandu-Pokhara highway opened by-passing Bandipur, trading families immediately forsook their ancestral town to seek economic opportunities elsewhere. Even as their hometown became a ghost of its earlier self, the Bandipur Newars prospered, some becoming Nepal's foremost businessmen, professionals and bureaucrats.

While the Newars are predominant in Bandipur, the Magar

and Gurung ethnic groups inhabit the hillsides growing rice, millet, corn and mustard on terrace fields. Women, when not working in the fields, can be found weaving cloth and baskets. The Magar and Gurung men have traditionally joined Gurkha regiments in the Indian and British armies. Brahmin, Chettri, Kami, Sarki, Damai ethnic groups have also made Bandipur their home since the Magars first settled here.

Experience

Bandipur Bazaar

Bandipur town stretches east to west on its mountain saddle reflecting the architecture of the Kathmandu Valley in its pagoda roofs, latticework windows, and stone-paved streets. The dwellings are in the form of compact town houses, built of brick often with ornate windows and doorways. The roofs are of tin or slate that is mined nearby. A distinctive aspect of the bazaar is a covered veranda that extends through its entire length, from shop front to shop front.

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu-Bandipur OR Kathmandu-Dumre	Driving from Kathmandu-Bandipur. Hiking to Bandipur following the popular old trail. Tour of Bandipur Bazaar. Viewing beautiful scenery.	3 ½ hrs. (Driving) 2 hrs. (Hiking) 1 ½ hr. (Tour) 4 hrs. (Hiking)	Bandipur (Hotels, resorts, lodges and home stay.)
Day 2	Bandipur	Hike up to Magar village Ramko or hiking to Mukhundeswari. Evening nature walk in Raniban.	2 ½ hrs. (Visit to Raniban)	Bandipur (Hotels, resorts, lodges and home stay.)
Day 3	Bandipur	Explore Siddha Cave, recently discovered and probably the biggest cave in Asia.	3 ½ hrs. (Hiking)	Toward the next destination.

Caves

The Caves on Bandipur's hillsides have great religious significance for the local people. A 2-hour hike through the forest leads to Paatali Dwar, or the Gateway to the Netherworld, with a Shiva shrine at its deepest recess. This cave is also known as Swargadwari, or Gateway to Heaven. Another cave, discovered only a few years ago, is known as the Siddha Gufa and is said to be the largest discovered cavern in the country and probably the

biggest in Asia. Full of stalactites and stalagmites, it has not been fully explored. These caves can be hiked up from Bimalnagar or down from Bandipur enjoying the spectacular views of the Marshyangdi valley.

Historical Fort

The Gadhi is a fort on a hilltop northeast of Bandipur. Believed to have been established by Mukunda Sen, the fort's trenches are still visible. The view of the Himalayan range from this high point is fully worth the hour's hike to get there. The eastward bend of the Marsyangdi River is seen far below and you can follow the river's course northward as it disappears into the Manang region between the Annapurna and Manaslu massifs. Tibet lies beyond.

Mukhundeswari

Mukhundeswari is considered an important tribal "power place." Located on top of a high summit, Mukhundeswari is a 2-hour walk from Bandipur. The shrine, festooned with many bells and tridents, is especially revered by Gurungs.

➤ *Bandipur Bazaar and the local houses.*



©NTB

Beautiful Mountain Views

Panoramic view of the central Himalayas, stretching to the far west ranges, can be seen from the hillocks that surround Bandipur. You are able to take in a 300 km "visual tour" of this Himalayan chain from the Jugal Himal (mountain) directly north of Bhaktapur in Kathmandu, westwards to Langtang, Ganesh Himal, Gorkha Himal, Manaslu, Himalchuli, Buddha, Annapurnas, Dhaulagiri and Kanjiroba. The different viewpoints around Bandipur include Gurungche hill, 20 minutes hike from Bandipur Bazaar, Tundikhel and Mukhundeswari.

Tudikhel

Tudikhel, the field at the northern end of town, is the most convenient place for a view of the mountains. This flat stretch of land, popular with the locals to practice their football skill and a much-visited picnic spot, ends with precipitous cliff that falls away toward the Marsyangdi valley far below.

Raniban

Raniban, a beautiful and well-preserved community forest belt for nature walks, bird watching and to explore the abundant flora and fauna of this region.

Ramkot

Ramkot is a village about an hour's easy hike from Bandipur. Mostly Magars, an ethnic group mainly from the hills of Nepal, have settled here. This village still retains its distinctive characteristics of a typical village where you can experience the rural life in Nepal that is mainly dependent on agriculture. You can either hike back to Bandipur or continue your journey from Ramkot to Chapdi Barahi, a popular Narayan temple with fish ponds.

Added Attractions

Khadga Devi Temple

Khadga Devi is the most revered shrine in Bandipur as it houses a sacred khadga (sword) of historical significance. This sword

is said to have been a gift of the deity Shiva to Mukunda Sen, the 16th century king of Palpa. The sword is said to have been left by Mukunda Sen, whose domain included Bandipur, to an old woman while he was on his way to becoming an ascetic. The locals revere the sword as representation of Goddess Durga, who symbolizes Shakti (female power). The sword is wrapped in cloth and it is said that whoever views the sword invites instant death. The temple is open once a year during the Hindu festival of Dasain in October or November. On the seventh day of Dashain, called Phulpati, a sheep is offered as sacrifice to the sword. The sword is then carried through the neighborhood to be worshipped.

Bindhyabasini Temple

Bindhyabasini Temple is situated in the heart of the Bandipur Bazaar. This pagoda-style temple displays Newar craftsmanship at its best. The temple is rich in woodcarvings on its struts and windows, while the lintels and floral archways are done in detailed brass work. Inside, the idol is of Bindhyabasini, a form of the Goddess Durga, the destroyer of evil. During the Bisket Jatra (festival), a mid-April celebration with origins in Kathmandu Valley's Bhaktapur, the idol is placed on a palanquin and taken through the town, accompanied by a traditional band. Coins are showered on the worshippers at the conclusion of the rituals of worship.

Mahalaxmi Temple

Mahalaxmi Temple also in the style of a pagoda, is dedicated to the Goddess of wealth. The structure also displays exquisite woodwork in its struts and arches.

Tin Dhara

Tin Dhara is a perfect shady place to enjoy the afternoon amidst various temples, traditional resting places, and the stone spouts flowing with natural spring water. This is also a popular picnic destination for people from and around Bandipur, some even from as far as Narayanghat, who come here to enjoy the day, especially on Saturdays.

Further Afield:

- ✦ The surrounding hills and forests are crisscrossed by easy trails that take the visitors to hilltop shrines, caves, springs and waterfalls.
- ✦ Another short hike from Bandipur also takes you to Bahun Bhanjyang, past Raniban.
- ✦ The popular short hiking trips from Bandipur include an easy one and a half hour hike to Ramkot, a typical Magar village, where you can experience rural life in Nepal.
- ✦ If you continue west of Ramkot, another hour's hike will take you to Chapdi Barahi, a popular sacred site, from where you can take a bus to Damauli to either resume your journey to Pokhara or travel back to Bandipur.
- ✦ You can conveniently come down to Dumre on Kathmandu - Pokhara highway and find transportation to travel west to Pokhara, south to Chitwan, or east to Kathmandu.

Getting There

Bandipur is in Tanahun district in Gandaki zone.

It is a 3 ½- hour drive (143 km) from Kathmandu and a 2-hour drive (73 km) from Pokhara. The best way to Bandipur is to arrive by mid-day at Dumre Bazaar from Pokhara or Kathmandu and hike up the walking trail retracing the ancient trade route to Bandipur.

The climb takes about 2 hours and is easy, passing through paddy fields and a forest. The route has mountain springs, a waterspout, and traditional paati (resting shelter) and chautara (rest platforms). The trail skirts the great cliff below Bandipur, passes through a Magar village, and emerges on top at Tundikhel.

From here it is a ten-minute level walk to Bandipur town. You can also take a bus or a jeep on the recently completed link road enjoying the panoramic view of the Himalayas and the valley below.

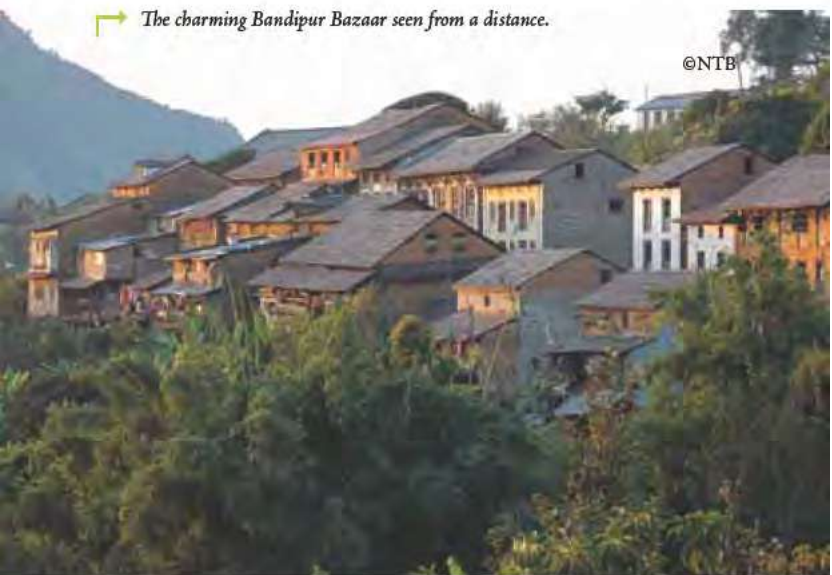
Tourist Services

Bandipur has a mountain resort hotel at one end of Tundikhel. For a flavor of the old settlement and its life rhythms, the visitors can stay at one of the old Newar houses that have recently opened their doors and provide bed and breakfast. More old houses are being restored to open their doors to visitors. A visitor information center is also being set up to provide information on the town as well as trained guides.

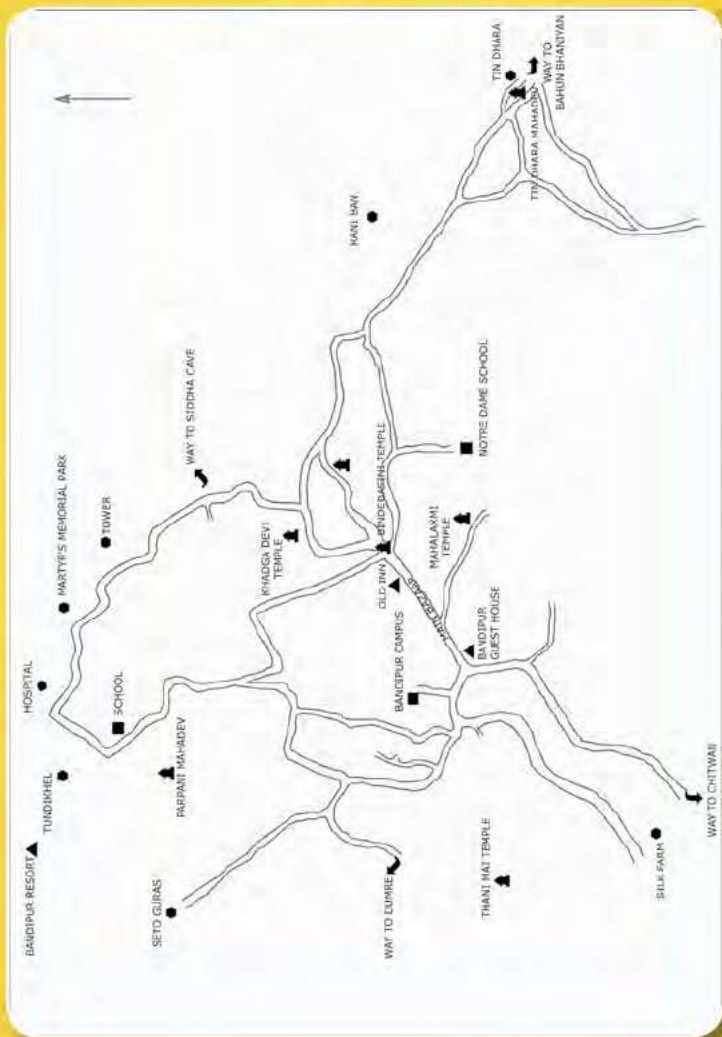
Further details about the Bandipur will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

➞ *The charming Bandipur Bazaar seen from a distance.*

©NTB



Bandipur Area



GHALEGAUN GHANPOKHARA

(L a m j u n g)

One of the nearest trekking destinations from Kathmandu lies an unparalleled combination of natural beauty and cultural riches of Langtang, Rasuwa,

The Annapurna Circuit trek is popular as it takes you behind the great Annapurna range. However, villages en route provide an insight into the real beauty of the Himalayas - the people. Khudi in Lamjung district lies along this route. And the beautiful Gurung villages of Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara at the top of two nearby hills are about 4-5 hours walk to the northwest of Khudi.

The Marsyangdi Valley is nestled in the watershed dividing the Annapurna Massif from the Manaslu Himal. The trail up the Marsyangdi Valley affords excellent and ever-changing views of the high Himalayas. Meandering through broad terraces of the lower Marsyangdi Valley, this river bed is extremely fertile and is heavily cultivated with rice. Millet, corn and buckwheat terraces scale the side hills. In this part of Nepal, huge shady banyan trees





→ *Ghalegaun village*

shelter scattered villages, and mangoes and bananas flourish. The region becomes increasingly forested with pines and firs as you get to higher elevations

People

The majority of the residents of these two villages belong to the Gurung ethnic group. The Gurungs are indigenous to the hilly and Himalayan regions of Nepal. The historical land and inhabitants of the Gurungs from this area have their original tradition, culture and festivals that are alive and unspoilt. Wearing traditional costumes and dancing to the rhythm of musical instruments during moments of joy and sorrow is a

unique characteristic of the Gurung people. They continue to use traditional methods for agriculture, livestock raising, and making items for daily use. Their occupation also includes herbal farming and treatment, weaving, fishing, and hunting wild animals.

Experience

Gurung Heritage Trail

The Gurung Heritage Trail provides first-hand experience of Gurung lifestyle and culture. The trail starts from Khudi, to Ghalegaun and Ghanapokhara. The trail then passes through other Gurung villages, Bhujung, Pasgaun, Pakhrikot, Nangidhar finally ending at Pokhara. One can also see wonderful views of the Annapurna range on the route. The local communities in these villages perform cultural shows for visitors on request. Accommodation is available at community-run home-stays.

Conversely, one can also start the trek from Pokhara. A 4-hour drive from Pokhara to Thumsikot, Ghumte Bazaar in Kaski, brings you to the trekking gateway passing Begnas Lake and the other seven lakes of the region. The route continues to Gahatebesi (750 m) and beyond, and a final tough climb brings you to Nangidhar (1,900m) village where you stay for the night. It is not unusual for the villagers from Nangidhar to descend down and greet you with a warm Namaste, flower garlands and crimson powder, a typical Nepali way of greeting guests. There is a hill with the remains of a 200-year old Gurung settlement and a beautiful lake that can be reached after a short hike from Nangidhar.

Next morning you begin your trek to Pasgaun along a straight and level trail for several hours. This section passes through jungles and beautiful waterfalls. The toughest part of the journey is in the afternoon - the locals say that the steep ascent from Bagaicha to Pasgaun is their Everest!

Pasgaun is a beautiful Gurung village and a perfect example of community village life in Nepal. Compared to Nangidhar, ex-army men here have set up clubs and are inclined to cleanliness and health issues. The Aama Samuha here has also set up telephone service and built a gumpa.

The next stop Bhujung, well populated Gurung village, is a 2-hour walk from Ghanpokhara and Ghalegaun. Bhujung is unique as it is the only VDC in Nepal with only one settlement to administer.

This route also provides firsthand experience on the matriarchal aspect of life among the Gurung people. Every village visited has a mothers' group or Ama Samuha. The mothers are active, enthusiastic and dedicated in the development of the villages, hospitality, environmental protection, cultural programs, income-generating programs, and conflict management in the family and society.

Suggested Itinerary for Gurung Heritage Trail

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu – Khudi	Drive from Kathmandu-Khudi via Bimalnagar. On the way, hike to Siddha Cave from Bimalnagar and explore the Cave. Tour Buddhist monasteries at Khudi. Walk along River Marsyangdi and observe local lifestyle.	6 hrs. (Drive)	Khudi (Hotels, resorts, lodges)
Day 2	Khudi – Ghalegaun – Ghanapokhara	Trekking from Khudi – Ghalegaun – Ghanapokhara. Viewing sunrise and sunset. Viewing mountains Mt. Annapurna and Manaslu ranges, and river valleys. Observing Himalayan culture dances on the way.	4 hrs. (Trekking)	Ghalegaun or Ghanapokhara (Community-run home-stays)
Day 3	Ghalegaun / Ghanapokhara – Bhujung	Trekking from Ghalegaun / Ghanapokhara – Bhujung. Observing Gurung lifestyle, participating and watching Gurung cultural show.	2 hrs. (Trekking)	Bhujung
Day 4	Bhujung – Pasgaun	Trekking from Bhujung – Pasgaun. Viewing micro hydro project at Midim river. Tour the traditional village. Observe Gurung handicrafts and tour Buddhist monasteries.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Pasgaun
Day 5	Pasgaun – Nagidhar – Pakhrikot	Trekking from Pasgaun – Nagidhar – Pakhrikot. Tour of village, Visiting Buddhist monasteries. Viewing mountain and river valley.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Pakhrikot
Day 6	Pakhrikot – Pokhara	Trekking from Pakhrikot – Pokhara. Boating, fishing, touring Pokhara.	3 hrs. (Trekking)	Pokhara (Hotels, lodges and resorts.)
Day 7	Pokhara – Kathmandu	Flight or Drive.	½ hr (Flight) 6-7 hrs. (Drive)	Kathmandu



→ Typical Gurung houses of Ghanpokhara.

Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara

Ghalegaun (2,095 m) and Ghanpokhara (2,157 m), are traditional Gurung villages nestled in the lap of the Annapurna range. The villages are predominantly inhabited by the Ghyabre Gurungs of this region. The villages offer a peek into the culture of Gurungs at their home-stays and through cultural programs. The local people also perform traditional Ghatu, Krishna Charitra, Jhankri Lama dances for visitors dressed in traditional attire. One of the earliest settlements of the Gurungs Ponjyu village falls in Ghalegaun VDC, while the Ghyabre Ghar, which is the ancestral home of traditional Gurungs priests, and the ancestral home of Gurung kings at Kolasonthar are in Ghanpokhara VDC. There are Gurung pilgrimage sites in and around this region, including the Samba Chhyoling Gompa (monastery) at Nassar Danda (ridge). Devotees throng Ghalegaun during Maghe Sankranti, when a fair is held at Uttar Kanya temple. Visitors can also visit the honey hunting sites in Ghanpokhara.

Ghanpokhara is about 100 m above Ghalegaun and requires hiking for about 30 minutes from Ghalegaun. The villages offer spectacular mountain views when weather is clear. The



➤ Typical Gurung houses of Ghalegaun.

peaks that can be seen from Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara are Annapurna range, Lamjung, Ganesh Himal, Manaslu among others. The area has green pastures of grasslands and is rich in fauna including medicinal herbs, rhododendron forest. Various kinds of Himalayan birds and wild animals are also found here.

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu – Khudi	Drive from Kathmandu – Khudi via Bimalnagar. On the way, hike to Siddha Cave from Bimalnagar. Touring Buddhist monasteries and walk along River Marsyangdi and observe local lifestyle.	6 hrs. (Drive)	Khudi (Hotels, resorts, lodges)
Day 2	Khudi – Ghalegaun	Trekking from Khudi – Ghalegaun. Viewing mountains Mt. Annapurna and Manaslu ranges, and river valleys. Observing Himalayan culture on the way.	4 hrs. (Trekking)	Ghalegaun (Community-run home- stays)
Day 3	Ghalegaun- Ghanpokhara	Hiking from Ghalegaun-Ghanpokhara. Viewing sunrise and surrounding mountains Mt. Annapurna and Manaslu ranges. Village Tour.	½ hr. (Hiking)	Ghanpokhara (Community-run home-stay)
Day 4	Ghanpokhara – Khudi	Trekking down from Ghanpokhara – Khudi. Viewing waterfall and cave. Visiting construction site of Khudi Hydro Electricity Project.	5 hrs. (Trekking)	Khudi (Hotels, resorts, lodges)
Day 5	Khudi - Kathmandu	Drive from Khudi-Kathmandu	6 hrs. (Driving)	Kathmandu

Home-stay With Gurungs

Accommodation is offered at community-run home-stays in Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara and other villages. Visitors have a chance to have a closer look at Gurung lifestyle by staying in their homes, sharing their home-cooked food and interacting with them as family guests. Food offered here is wholesome and organic, usually rice, dal, home-made buckwheat and millet bread, local vegetables and meat served with Pa (local millet alcohol). Visitors go to their allocated home for meals and to rest. Here guests are able to observe the lifestyle of the Gurungs of this region, who still follow traditional customs during birth, marriage and other important occasions. The home-stay experience is complemented by cultural shows performed by community members on request of visitors. The special feature of this village is that the Himalayas can be seen from every home.

Honey Hunting

Hunting for honey is an age-old tradition among the people of Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara. The local honey hunters show exceptional skills as they hang from steep cliffs as high as 300 m using bamboo ladders and hemp ropes, while harvesting the honeycombs of wild bees. The honey is harvested twice a year during April-May and October-November. Honey collected in April-May from hives on the steep cliffs is highly flavored. It is used as medicine and has a high price in the international market.

Gurung Handicrafts

Handicrafts made in these two villages are excellent for gifts and souvenirs. The people of Ghalegaun-Ghanpokhara use the wool from their goats and sheep to make woolen products. They make clothes and bags from nettle fiber and aloe, and scarves, towels and shawls from the wool of angora rabbits. The local craftsmen make a wide range of bamboo products. The local craftsmen make traditional wooden containers Pung, Theki, Puche etc. local products from local wood called Dar.

Getting There

Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara are in Lamjung district of Gandaki zone.

Ghalegaun is 3-4 hour trek from Khudi the gateway to the Annapurna Circuit trek. Kathmandu to Khudi is a 9-10 hour drive to Khudi via Dumre off the Kathmandu-Pokhara highway. It takes about half an hour's uphill trek to reach Ghanpokhara from Ghalegaun. One can then continue to trek to Pokhara rather than retracing the route back to Khudi. One can also start the trek from Pokhara.

After staying in Ghalegaun you can descend through dense forests to Khudi and drive to Beshisahar. This is the starting point for the Annapurna Circuit and an easy shortcut to Ghalegaun via Khudi.

Tourist Services

Houses selected for home-stay in Ghalegaun and Ghanpokhara have rooms with two beds, bathroom and toilet. There are 20 home-stays in Ghalegaun and 16 in Ghanapokhara. All programs for visitors are held in homes of the Aama Samuha (Mothers' Group). Apart from tasting local food, other food items can be ordered from a menu. All the ingredients are local, pure and natural. Telephone service on the route is available at Pasgaun. Hiring a local guide is recommended while going on the trek.

Further details about this area in Lamjung will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

LUMBINI

(Rupandehi)

Lumbini in Rupandehi district is the birthplace of Lord Buddha. It is a pilgrimage site for all who cherish peace and harmony. Lord Buddha was born here in the 6th century B.C.



Prince Siddhartha, later known as Gautama Buddha - the "Enlightened One," preached a doctrine based on the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Eightfold Path." Suffering, he said, was caused by our attachment to people and things in a world where nothing is permanent. We can rid ourselves of desire and remove our suffering by living our lives according to the Eightfold Path: right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation.

The "self," said the Buddha, is nothing but an illusion trapped in the endless cycle of life, death and rebirth, and created by Karma (the sum of a person's action in this and previous lives), the chain of cause and effect. He said by following the Buddhist doctrine, the Dharma (the eternal law of the universe) one can put an end to the effects of Karma, thereby escaping from the cycle of life, death and rebirth, and achieving the Nirvana (a state of perfect happiness in which there is no suffering or desire, and no sense of self).



© Susheel Shrestha

➤ *Mayadevi Temple in Lumbini.*

Lumbini, which is a popular tourist destination, is visited by more than 400,000 Buddhist and non Buddhist visitors every year. Taking this in consideration and to ensure that the benefit of tourism goes to the local community as well, rural tourism has been developed and promoted in the region. Taking the approach of sustainable tourism development, villages in the region are being promoted for rural tourism. In addition, the Lumbini-Buddhist Circuit that includes other areas related to the life of the Buddha and tour of villages also offer experience of the Terai lifestyle of Nepal.

People

Lumbini hosts variety of religious groups of people. It is home of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. The Lumbini area is located in southwest of Rupandehi. The population of Lumbini is segmented in several cultural



→ Terai woman busy at indigenous craft.

communities. The major cultures here are Terai Bhojpuri and Tharu.

The major cultural sub groups are Biraha, Tharu, Jhumada and segmented Bhojpuri culture as well. The cultural communities follow their own tradition of costume, make up, entertainment performance and also their own language.

Women usually wear saree and blouse or local lungi, while the men wear lungi and pyjama. Muslim women wear burkas (complete covering dress black), which is an integral part of the culture.

Experience

Lumbini – Birthplace of Lord Buddha

Situated in the foothills of the Churiya range in the district of Rupandehi, 300 km southwest of the capital Kathmandu, Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha is one of the greatest pilgrimage sites for Buddhists and peace seekers of the world. The Buddha himself proclaimed Lumbini as one of the foremost pilgrimage sites among the famous Chatumahasthana (the four great places of birth, Enlightenment, sermon and Mahaparinirvana).



© Susheel Shrestha

→ *The lotus flower, a symbol of purity. Lotus flowers are very commonly seen in the marshy areas of the region.*

The single most important spot at Lumbini for Buddhists all over the world is the stone slab located deep in Sanctum Sanctorum or the Sacred Birthplace. Revealed after hard and meticulous excavations under the three layers of ruins on the site of the famous Mayadevi Temple, the stone slab foundation pinpoints the precise location of the original place marking the exact spot of the birthplace of Lord Buddha. On February 4, 1996, an official declaration was made by the then Prime Minister of Nepal about the discovery of the spot marked by stone conglomerate.

The primary attraction of Lumbini is the Sacred Garden, where Lord Buddha was born. The sacred pool of Lake Puskarini lies in this garden where Mayadevi took a holy dip before giving birth to the Buddha. This is also where the infant Buddha was given his first bath. Another monument of importance is the stone image of Mayadevi, better known as the Nativity Sculpture, dated 4th century. The image shows Mayadevi with her stretched right hand on a lotus pedestal and two celestial figures pouring water from heaven.

Lumbini-Buddhist Circuit Tour

The Lumbini Circuit Tour provides insight into the life of Lord Buddha and the development of Buddhism. There

are 62 archaeological sites scattered outside the Lumbini Garden. The tour goes through Tilaurakot, Kudan, Gotihawa, Niglihawa, Sagarhawa, Aurorakot, Devadaha and Ramagrama all bearing significance to the life, enlightenment and death of Buddha.

- ✦ Tilaurakot has been identified by archaeologists as the actual capital of Kapilvastu and the home of King Suddhodhan, father of Prince Siddhartha who later went on to become the Buddha. This is believed to be the place where Lord Buddha spent the first 29 years of his princely life. Chinese travelers who visited Tilaurakot more than 2,500 years ago reported seeing numerous stupas, monasteries and palaces. The Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang noted that they saw Kapilavastu in complete ruins and counted 10 deserted cities within Kapilavastu. King Virudhaka, who massacred the Shakyas during the last days of Lord Buddha, is said to have destroyed the cities.

➤ *Archaeological remains at Tilaurakot, the ancient Kapilvastu.*



©NTB

Located about 27 km west of Lumbini and 3 km from Taulihawa town, a joint effort by Nepali and Japanese archaeologists recovered the royal town of Tilaurakot, the elaborate gateway in the western side, the twin stupa of the Buddha's parents, and King Siddhodhan's palace in and around the Tilaurakot mound.

Historically, Kapilavastu was named after Saint Kapil. The Buddha visited Kapilavastu several times during his life. The first nunnery in Buddhist history was also established in Kapilavastu.

The earth rampart, the brick fortification, the ancient habitation, and the 13 layers of human depositions dating between 8 B.C. and 2-3 A.D are the most noteworthy things in the historic ruins. The Kapilavastu Museum exhibits coins, pottery and toys dating back to the 7th century B.C. and 4th century A.D. including a collection of jewelry and ornaments. The terracotta

→ *Excavated terracotta piece.*

©NTB



figures recovered at Tilaurakot belong to pre-Mauryan, Mauryan, Sunga and the Kushana periods.

- ✦ Kudan is located some 4.5 km south of Tilaurakot. It is a huge mound of structural ruins and a pond nearby appears to be the ruins of stupas and monasteries. These are believed to be the Kasaya Stupa, where a Kasaya (yellow robe worn by monks) was presented to Lord Buddha. This is where King Suddhodhana met Lord Buddha for the first time after he returned from cosmic enlightenment.
- ✦ Gotihawa is an important religious site for the Buddhist world community and also historically and archaeologically important. Located about 3 km

✦ *Kudan, where Lord Buddha met his father for the first time after Enlightenment.*

©Gyanin Rai



southwest of Taulihawa, it is believed that Krakuchanda Buddha, who came before Shakyamuni Buddha, was born in Gotihawa and attained Nirvana there. Brick structures of stupas and monasteries can be seen in the area outside modern Gotihawa village. At the center of the main mound the remains of a broken Ashokan Pillar lie on a slab. Adjoining the pillar on the northeast side is a huge stupa with rings of wedge-shaped ancient bricks, identifying the Nirvana Stupa of Krakuchanda Buddha. The villagers are still using an ancient well in the center of the village.

The development of the site is believed to have started in the 6th century B.C. Rectangular and wedge-shaped



bricks containing a large amount of rice husk, straw and vegetation dating back to the 3rd century B.C. from the first phase of the stupa. The bricks are ill baked and a few of them bear marks of crosses within circles internally barred.

The second period is marked by the supplement of two more rings and a new Pradaksina Path at a higher level than the earlier. The new rings are of rectangular bricks only. It is speculated that the enlargement of the stupa was carried out during the Sunga and Kushana period (end of the 1st century B.C. to the 2nd and 3rd century A.D.)

- ✦ Niglihawa is a significant archaeological site about 7 km north of Taulihawa where the remains of a broken Ashokan Pillar lie close to a large pond. Emperor Ashoka built a stupa and set up a pillar when he visited the site during his pilgrimage. Discovered by renowned archaeologist, Dr. Alois Fuhrer in 1895, this pillar is 15-feet tall with inscriptions on its upper portion. It is believed that Kanakmuni Buddha was born, enlightened and met his father in this place and is regarded as a very

➞ *Depiction of Prince Siddhartha's first sojourn into the outer world in the Lumbini Garden premises.*



© Susheel Shrestha

important religious place for Buddhists and research scholars. The Ashokan Pillar attests that Emperor Ashoka enlarged the stupa enshrining the relics of the Kanakmuni Buddha. Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang also describe the Kanakmuni Stupa and Ashokan Pillar in their travel accounts.

- ✦ Sagarhawa is the forest site where the ruins of an ancient pond were excavated in 1895. Archaeologists have identified this site as the "Palace of the Massacre of the Shakyas." The ruins of the ancient site lie on the west and south banks of the large rectangular pond locally known as Lumbu Sagar or long pond in Niglihawa village. Sagarhawa is about 12 km north of Taulihawa.
- ✦ Aurorakot is a large rectangular fortified area with the remains of an ancient moat and brick fortifications east of Niglihawa, and about 10 km northeast of Taulihawa. A walled fortress in ancient times, this citadel was believed to be the natal town of Kanakmuni Buddha.
- ✦ Devdaha, 54 km east of Lumbini across the Rohini

➤ *Mayadevi Temple in the Lumbini Garden premises.*

© Susheel Shrestha



River, is the ancient capital of the Koliya kingdom. It is the maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi, Prince Siddhartha's mother, Prajapati Gautami, his stepmother, and Princess Yasodhara, his consort. This is where Prince Siddhartha spent his childhood. Seven years after his Enlightenment, Lord Buddha visited Devdaha and ordained the followers of Jain Sadhu Nirgrantha Nathputra. There are several other sites around Devdaha such as Kumarbarti, Khayardanda, Bairimai/Kanyamai, Bhabanipur/Devidamar, Mathagadi (ancient weapons).

- ✦ Ramagrama is a brick mound on the bank of the Jharahi River. It is a 7-meter high brick stupa containing one of the eight Astha Dhatu (relics) of Lord Buddha. The king of Ramagrama, the eighth king to obtain the Buddha's relics, built the stupa. History mentions that Emperor Ashoka wanted to open it to multiply into eight four thousand stupa. However, the Dragon King of Ramagrama stupa did not permit.

➞ *Ramgram*



©Gyanin Rai

Village Tour/ Walk

A walk through the villages surrounding Lumbini interaction with the warm and hospitable local people, buying their authentic handicraft products and observing their traditional rituals will bring one closer to understanding the diversity of Terai cultures in Nepal. Tour of villages also gives opportunity to observe Terai landscapes and vegetation found in the outskirts of the settlements. The people in these traditional villages offer a peek at their agro-based rural lifestyle, colorful costume, festivals which they celebrate with much joy and enthusiasm and gracious hospitality. They belong to different religions, cast and creed, with agriculture as main occupation. The main festivals celebrated by the people are Nagpanchami, Holi, Dasain and Tihar. Tourists can visit the local temples and mosques or partake in the cultural ceremonies. The wetland areas, lakes and ponds in the villages also offer bird watching opportunities. Visitors have the option of choosing to walk through the villages, riding through a local rikshaw or bullock cart.

- ✦ Ekala offers cultural sightseeing in the village and bird watching at Lake Karbolaha that has a crane sanctuary

➞ *Nepali tourists touring on the local ride, a bullock cart.*



nearby. Visitors can also visit religious sites of Shiva Mandir, Kalimaisthan and local mosque. They live in traditional stone or tent-houses. The main ethnic groups found here are Yadav, Harijan, Chamar, Gupta and the Muslims. The languages spoken are Bhojpuri and Nepali.

- ✦ Khudabagar offers cultural sightseeing in the village and bird watching at Punnihawa Lake which is a wetland area. The main groups living here are Tharu, Yadav, Lodh, Harizan, Kurmi, Gupta and Muslims. Tourists can also visit the recently set up Tharu museum.
- ✦ Tenuhawa offers peek at the Muslim culture and bird watching at crane sanctuary near Karbolaha Lake toward the north-west of the village. Here you can observe women working at indigenous crafts making colorful baskets, handicraft items that are also available on sale at different sales outlets. One can also pay visit to the mosque in the village.
- ✦ Lumbini Adarsha has archaeological sites that date back to the 4th and 5th century. Visitors can also visit the Shiva shrines and observe customary traditional costumes, the local agro-based lifestyle. Lumbini Adarsha leads to the ancient villages of Padariya, Manauri and Khungai. The people living here are mostly Yadav, Mallah, Shreevastav, Kohar, Murau, Muslim and Goshami.
- ✦ Madhuvani also offers sightseeing of rural Terai life and bird watching at Haththihawa and Tharunia lakes. Dhaulagiri and Annapurna ranges in the north can also be seen during clear winter mornings. In addition one can also visit temples of Durga, Shiva, Kalikasthan and Samaimaisthan, in the village. Tharu, Yadav, Harijan, Brahmin, Chhetri and Muslim are the main groups found here. Local handicrafts are available at sales center and hotels. Biraha culture is one of the main cultural attraction here.

Suggested Itineraries for Lumbini Buddhist Circuit and Village Tour

Option 1 (4-5 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu – Bhairahawa – Lumbini	Flying from Kathmandu-Bhairahawa. Driving from Bhairahawa-Lumbini. Observing Lumbini Gardens and surrounding areas.	30 min. (Flying) 30 min (Driving)	Lumbini (Hotels, lodges)
Day 2	Lumbini	Visit the Mayadevi Temple and tour of surrounding areas of LDT. Visit the surrounding villages and observe rural lifestyle.	2-3 hrs. or more (LDT tour) 2-3 hrs (Village tour)	Lumbini (Hotels, lodges)
Day 3	Lumbini-Gotihawa-Kudan-Tilaurakot-Lumbini	Driving and visiting religious and archaeological sites at Gotihawa, Kudan, Tilaurakot and Lumbini.	6-8 hours (Tour)	Lumbini (Hotels, lodges)
Day 4	Lumbini – Devadaha – Ramagrama – Bhairahawa – Kathmandu	Driving and visiting religious and archaeological sites at Devadaha, Ramagrama and then driving to Bhairawa. Fly back to Kathmandu from Bhairawa.	3-4 hrs. (Visit) 30 min (Flying)	Kathmandu

Option 1 (4-5 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Kathmandu - Lumbini	Driving Kathmandu-Lumbini. Visiting the Mayadevi Temple and LDT surrounding areas.	8-10 hrs. (Driving)	Lumbini (Hotels, lodges)
Day 2	Lumbini	Visiting the Mayadevi Temple and LDT surrounding areas. Visit the surrounding villages and observe rural lifestyle.	2-3 hrs. or more (LDT tour) 2-3 hrs. (Village tour)	Lumbini (Hotels, lodges)
Day 3	Lumbini-Gotihawa-Kudan-Tilaurakot-Lumbini	Driving and visiting religious and archaeological sites at Gotihawa, Kudan, Tilaurakot and Lumbini.	6-8 hrs. (Circuit tour)	Lumbini (Hotels, lodges)
Day 4	Lumbini – Devadaha – Ramagrama – Chitwan	Driving and visiting religious and archaeological sites at Devadaha, Ramagrama. Driving to Chitwan.	3-4 hrs. (Visit)	Chitwan (Hotels, lodges)
Day 5	Chitwan – Kathmandu	Driving from Chitwan – Kathmandu.	5-6 hrs. (Driving)	Kathmandu

Lumbini Handicrafts

The community members of Lumbini are also ingenious craftsmen. The handicrafts of Lumbini include:

1. Flower and fruit baskets, tray and tea mats, kitchen table place mat, pen stand, paper tray, floor mat, bags- ladies, dry flower

pots, Christmas accessories - bells, decorative items, jewelry boxes, key chain and small give away, cloths and dust bucket . These are made from natural fiber-based handicrafts made from the locally available banana fiber, elephant grass, muj grass.

2. Clay Sculpture of Pancha Buddha, Lord Buddha, Little Buddha, Mayadevi Temple, Shakya Muni made from the soil of Lumbini are available. The raw material used, the holy soil of Lumbini - birthplace of Lord Buddha, adds value to these items.

These natural fiber-based handicrafts are made by Terai women from Rupandehi villages namely Ama, Khudabagar, Lumbini Adarsha, Madhubani, Ekala and Tenuhawa VDCs. These women who are among the marginalized and disadvantaged group, are rich in their Terai culture and indigenous skills. Production of these handicrafts is part of their culture as they produce them to offer gifts to brides to take to their new home.

The handicrafts, relatively less expensive despite the immense effort that goes into the making, are popular among tourists. Tourists buy them as souvenirs for friends and relatives back home. The fact that they are made of natural and local raw materials adds value to these items. Buying these items and handicraft products, contributes to the livelihood of poor and disadvantaged women of community. The handicraft items are available at Mahilabar Bazaar and Visitors' Information Center, gift and accessory shops of Lumbini Development Trust (LTD).

Getting There

Lumbini is in Rupandehi district of Lumbini zone.

There are regular flights to Bhairahawa (also called Siddharthanagar) from Kathmandu. Bhairahawa is the nearest town to Lumbini. The flight takes about 35 minutes. You can

take a taxi, three-wheeler, or a bus from Bhairahawa airport to Lumbini - a distance of 22 km. Traveling the 300-km distance from Kathmandu to Lumbini by road takes about 10 hours.

Tourist Services

There are many budget hotels and lodges, as well as modern class star hotels, in and around Lumbini. Information Center of LDT for visitors is located inside the Sacred Garden. All hotels make arrangement of local guides on request. The hotels also provide vehicle, bicycle and organize cultural programs if requested by guests. The handicraft sales outlets are in Mahilabar and in LDT ground premises at the Visitors' Information Center and gift shops.

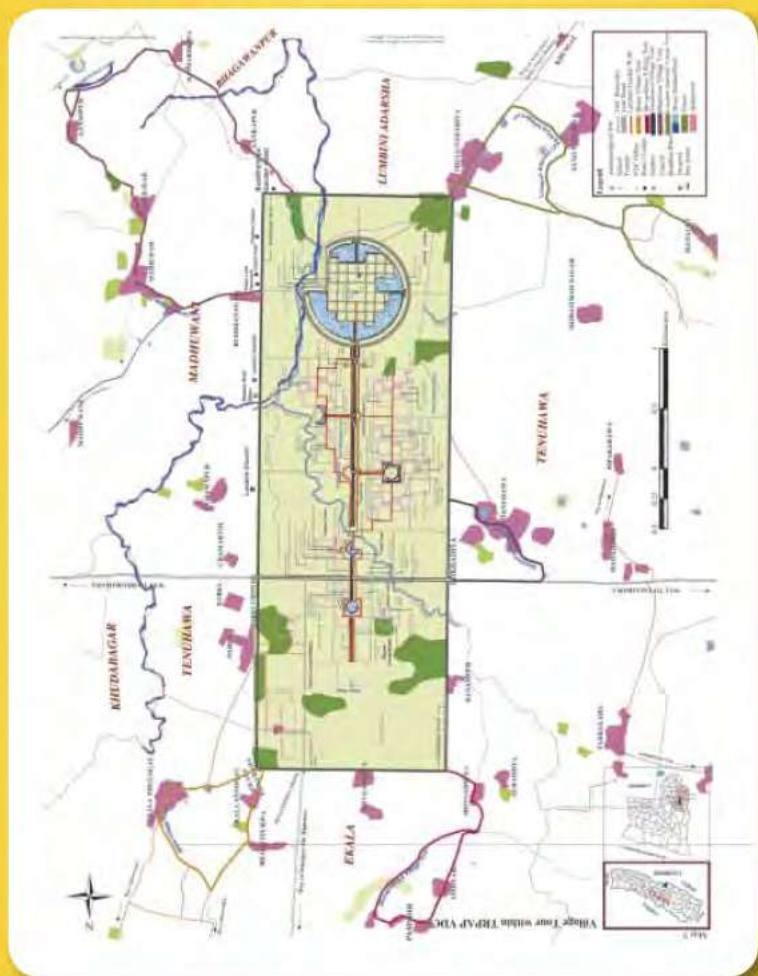
Further details about Lumbini and the surrounding region will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

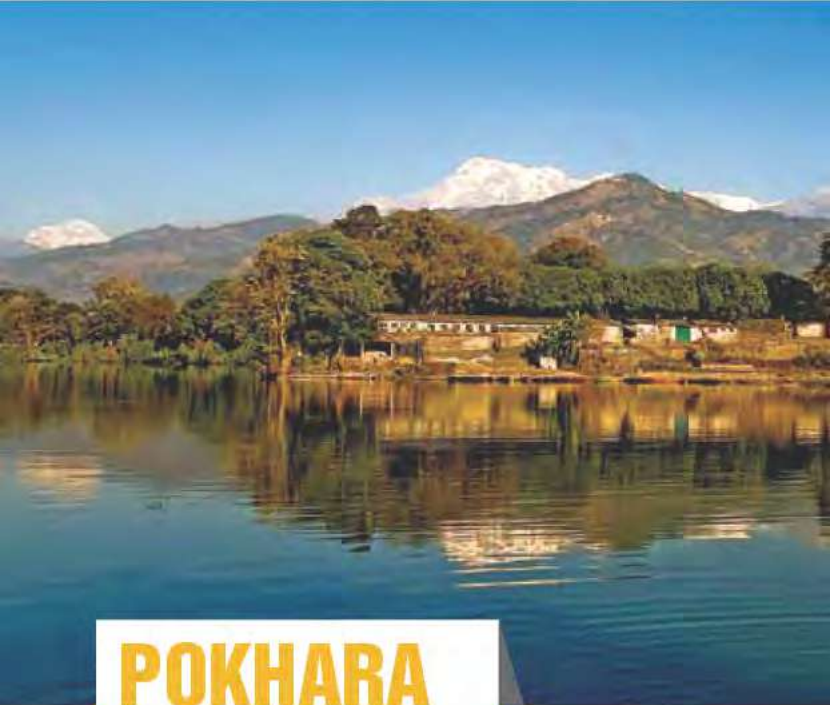
➤ *The Eternal Peace Flame in the Lumbini Garden premises.*



©Gyanin Rai

Village Tour around LDT
(Village Tour trails are colored)





POKHARA

(K a s k i)

Pokhara is a popular and well-known tourist destination in Nepal. Even novelist Han Suyin was enamoured by the Pokhara Valley - in her book "The Mountain is Young" the "Bongsor Valley" is based on Pokhara.

Situated virtually in the geographical center of Nepal, it is possible to explore the land around the Annapurna Massif including the Annapurna Sanctuary or travel to as far as Mustang, Dolpa, Jumla and Lake Rara in Mugu from Pokhara.

It is doubtful if there is another place other than Pokhara from which the great Himalayan peaks can be admired from such a close range - Annapurna I (8,091m) and its adjoining peaks lie only 50 kilometres away. Macchapuchhare (6,994 m) shoots straight up, without a single intervening ridge between it and



© Susheel Shrestha

➞ *Fewa Lake and Mt. Machhapuchhare, Pokhara.*

Pokhara, only 30 kilometres away. The horizon spans 140 kilometres from Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) to Himalchuli (7,893 m).

The valley of Pokhara itself lies at about 900 m above sea level. The land is lush with vegetation due to a subtropical climate and a heavy monsoon rainfall. Vegetation includes citrus trees, bananas and cacti dot rice and mustard fields. Intricate terraces and gorges cut by the Seti River mark the valley floor.

While you can enjoy a relaxing holiday with incomparable mountain views by staying in Pokhara itself, there are many other "soft adventure" possibilities near and around Pokhara to enable you to see exquisite views of the central Himalayas and participate in the lifestyle of the local people.

People

Pokhara Valley is the contact zone of two cultures, the Hindu caste groups from the Terai plains and the Lamaistic tribal groups from the flanks of Annapurna. Populated mainly by

Gurungs, Magars, Brahmins and Chhetris, the people share similar lifestyles, though they speak different languages and have varying histories and cultural backgrounds. Most of them are Hindus, but some in the more isolated villages still worship the older local gods and practice Bon and Tantric Buddhism. Seven ethnic groups live side by side wearing distinctive dress, revering different deities, speaking their own languages, and yet living in harmony. As you trek along the Kali Gandaki gorge, the deepest gorge in the world, lowland farming communities stock give way slowly to the highland trading communities of the Magar, Gurung and Bhotia people of Mongoloid stock.



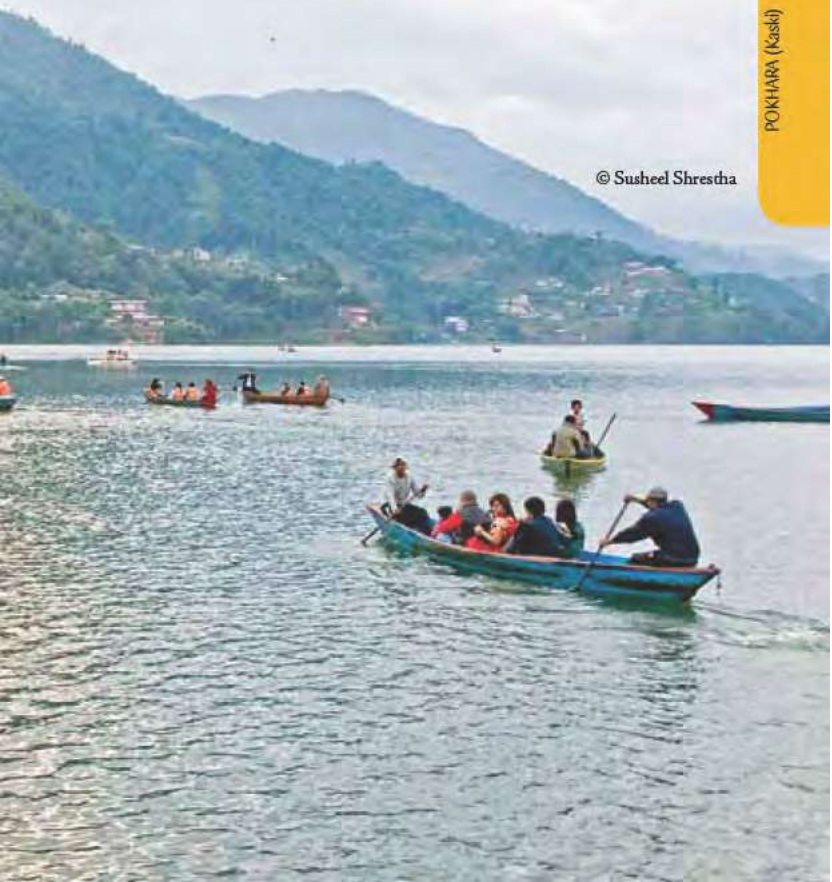
Experience

Phewa Lake

Phewa Taal (lake) is one of eight lakes in the Pokhara Valley. Other popular lakes in the area are Rupa and Begnas. Many find Machhapuchhare's razor-edged "Fish Tail" peak piercing the skyline or reflected in the still waters of Phewa Lake to be their most lasting impression of Nepal. Rowboats and a few sailboats can be rented along the shore for exploring the 2 ½ km long lake and to visit the temple of Varahi on an island in the center of the lake. Local fishermen take visitors to the island temple in their dug out canoes.

➞ *Boating in Fewa Lake is a favorite activity in Pokhara, tourists and locals alike.*

© Susheel Shrestha



Ancient Caves

Mahendra Gupha (cave) is part of the ancient limestone caverns carved by subsurface lakes. The locals interpret the stalactite and stalagmite features as images of deities.

Siklis

Siklis is one of the early southern Gurung settlements. Here traditions still run strong with the Jhankri (Shaman priest) and Lama (Buddhist priest) each having a place in the Buddhist community - in marriage, death, and dealing with ill-fate. The village elders oversee an effective forest management system. Siklis looks north on Annapurna IV, and east to Annapurna II and Lamjung Himal. A two-day trek to Siklis continues west to the Piper Pheasant Reserve.

➡ *Tourists paragliding from Sarangkot Hill.*

© Susheel Shrestha



Royal Trek

The Royal Trek route acquired its name after Britain's Prince Charles visited Gurkha recruits' homes in 1980. He trekked to Kalikasthan and Syaglung on a ridge paralleling the east-west Annapurna Himal, and then descended to the Rupa and Begnas lakes in the eastern Pokhara valley. The route encompasses village life and striking mountain panoramas.

Sarangkot

Sarangkot, a fortress site, along the crest toward Naudanda circles south and returns via the Harpan valley. An overnight visit to Sarangkot offers a grandstand view of both sunset and sunrise over the Annapurnas, Dhaulagiri and Machhapuchhare.

Pumdi and Bumdi

Pumdi and Bumdi are two villages above Phewa Lake's southern rim for exceptional views of the mountains. They have the old style oval-shaped, red clay houses.



Annapurna Conservation Area

The Annapurna Conservation Area has been claimed as one of the best trekking areas in the world. It is also the most visited trekking area in the country. The area spreads around Kaski, Mustang Manang and Lamjung districts. Beginning 790 m, the area reached high as 8,091 m of Annapurna.

The land beyond the Pokhara Valley has immense variations in altitude and ecological diversity. From the tropical Pokhara Valley to the frozen tips of the some of the world's highest peaks, the region brims with natural beauty.

As a convergence of bio-geographical zones east and west, the Annapurnas have a wide

assortment of flora and fauna. The southern flanks of the range of mountains have lush deciduous forests. Fir, pine and juniper cover the upper slopes while the high valleys are kept brown due to the mountains' rain-shadow effect.

The once abundant wildlife has been driven to remote corners by widespread land clearing and hunting. However, the rhesus and langur monkeys, jungle cats and wild boar give way to mid-elevation black bear, musk deer and yellow-throated marten. The longhaired Himalayan tahr (mountain goat), blue sheep and snow leopard can still be found prowling the higher elevations. Among the 440 recorded bird species are the monal and Impeyan pheasants, and some 40 migratory varieties which take refuge en route to and from Tibet.

Further Afield

- ✦ Ghorepani and Pun Hill is a combination that is inseparable. The area, north of Pokhara, called "Ghorepani" offers some of the most dramatic close-up views of the highest and most beautiful mountains in the world. The trek passes through rhododendron and mixed forest filled

➡ *Tukuche, Mustang*



with ferns and birds. The trail passes through spectacular villages of the Gurkha soldiers with their Himalayan back drops and leads to Ghorepani (2,834 m). A sunrise over Machhapuchhare from Poon Hill becomes the most vivid memory of the area.

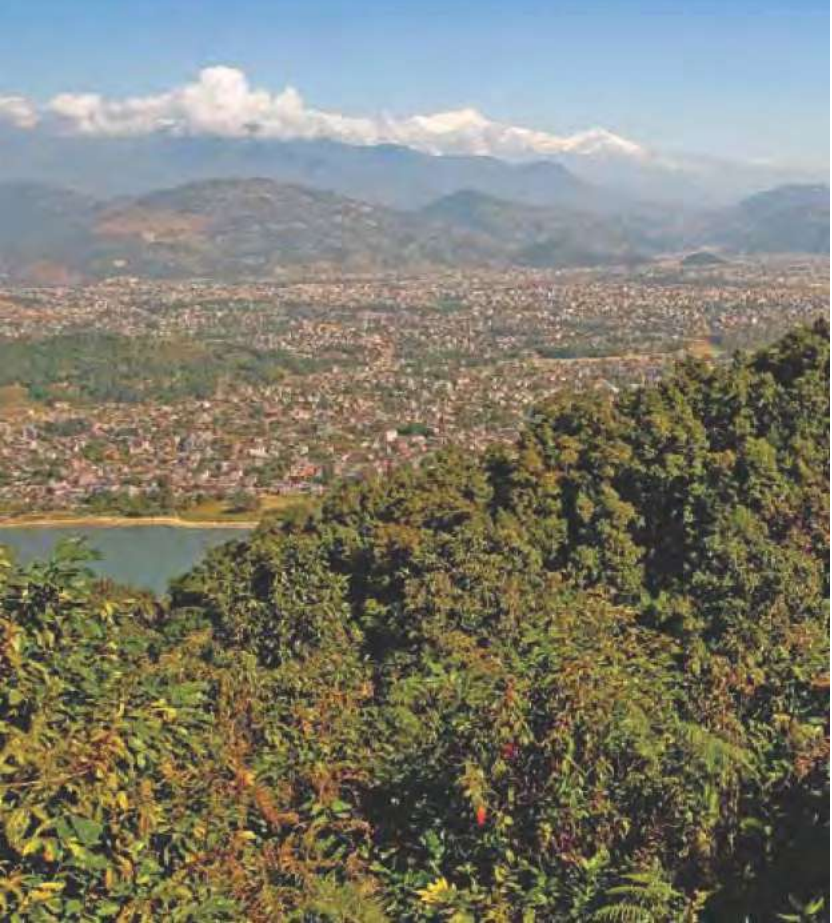
- ✦ Ghandruk (1,990 m) with about 270 families is the second-largest Gurung settlement in Nepal with closely spaced, slate-roofed houses, and neatly terraced fields both above and below the town. Older maps spell the village 'Ghandrung', but Ghandruk is the currently accepted spelling. Continuing on from Ghorepani to Ghandruk is a very rewarding extension. The trek from Ghorepani to Ghandruk can be done in one day. The trail tunnels through an incredible rhododendron forest. Annapurna South from here is outstanding while Machhapuchhare, seen in its fish-tail aspect, peeps over a forested ridge. The ACAP visitor center provides information about its activities and screens daily video shows.
- ✦ Mustang and Manang are destinations further from Pokhara for those with sufficient time. The famous temple

➞ *Bindyabasini Temple, Pokhara*



© Susheel Shrestha

of Muktinath (3,749 m) in Mustang is a popular destination for pilgrims and trekkers to the region. Mustang has trans-Himalayan landscape and the upper part of Mustang offers exotic Himalayan cultural experience. Mustang is protected area and travel to the area requires special permit. Neighboring district of Manang is also equally enticing in its exotic Himalayan experience. Close-up views of the Annapurna range, varied ecosystems, diverse cultures and an ever-changing landscape - lush, green paddy fields and oak forests, and arid deserts makes this one of the most popular treks.



Getting There

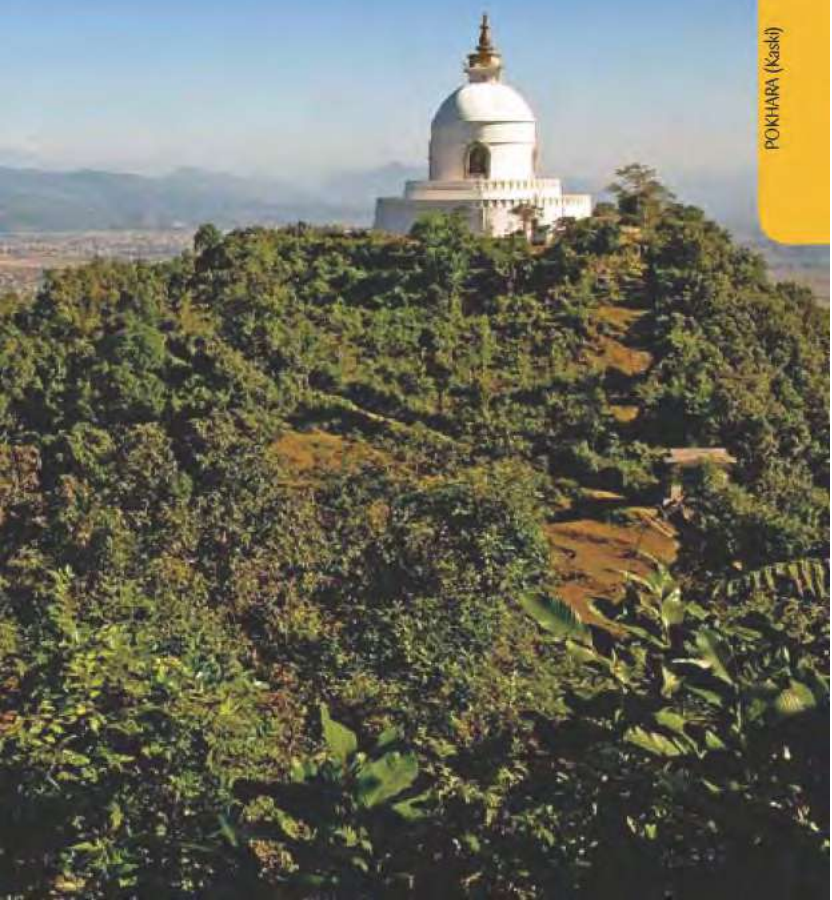
Pokhara is in Kaski district of Gandaki zone.

A number of daily scheduled flights are available from Kathmandu. The flight takes about 45 minutes along the central and eastern Himalaya. Regular bus services are also available from Kathmandu and Chitwan. It is also possible to rent vehicles for the drive to Pokhara. To get to nearby areas, it

→ *The Peace Stupa.*

© Susheel Shrestha

POKHARA (Kaski)

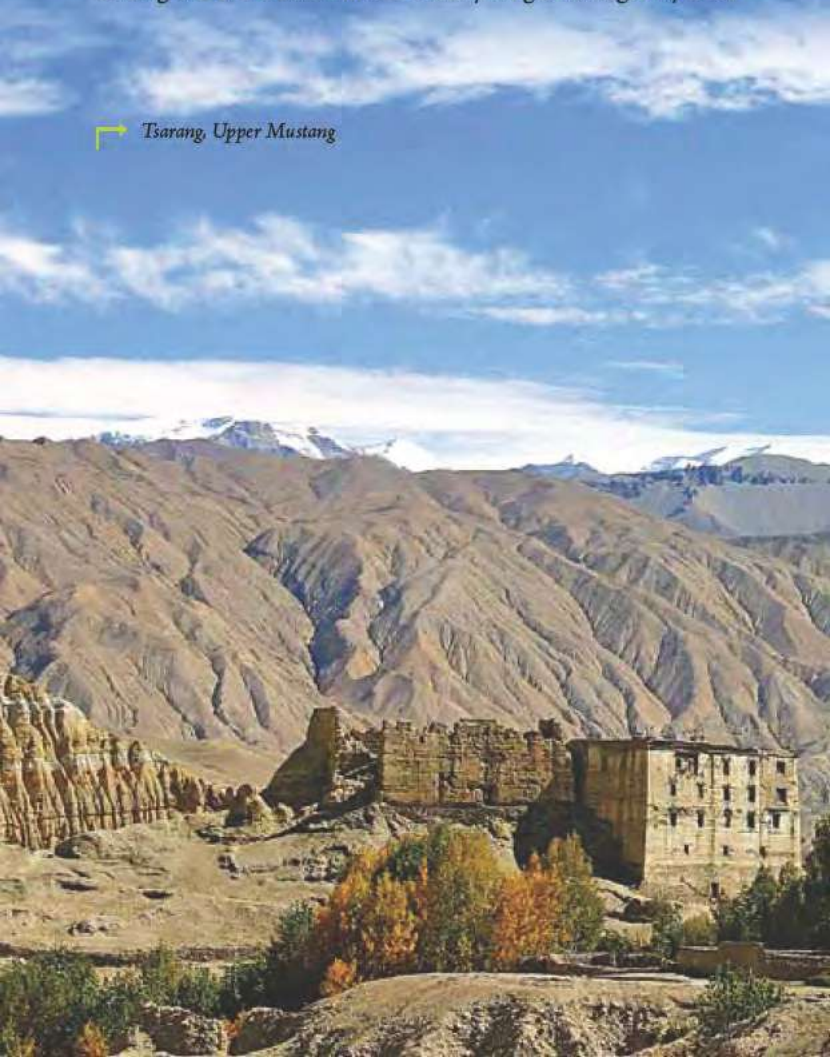


is possible to drive, while to experience the Annapurna region, one may have to trek for several days depending on the itinerary. There is also an airport in Jomsom for access to Mustang, and an airport at Chame for access to Manang.

Tourist Services

Being the second most popular tourist destination of Nepal, Pokhara has an extensive variety of hotels and lodges offering meals and facilities that cater to every budget. Along the trails leading out of Pokhara there are many lodges managed by local

➞ *Tsarang, Upper Mustang*



villagers providing clean accommodation and meals. In the last few years, the non-governmental Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) has been organizing villagers to take up measures of resource management, low-tech conservation, alternative energy schemes and community development programs, which have produced inspiring results.

Further details about Pokhara and the Annapurna Conservation Area region will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

© Sirish B.C.



Tansen

(P a l p a)

One of the few "off-the-beaten-track" destinations in Nepal is the ancient hill town of Tansen. Midway between the Indian border and Pokhara, Tansen's old artistic Newari houses, and cobbled streets, are waiting to be discovered.

A picturesque hill town lying on the lap of the Shreenagar Hills, Tansen is the headquarters of Palpa district and the hub of the mid west culture of Nepal. The district varies from 250 to 2,000 m in elevation.

The town has houses strongly influenced by traditional Newari architecture. The name "Tansen" has its origin in the Magar language, meaning "northern settlement." Palpa with its diverse culture and religion falls in the twelve Magar regions of West Nepal.

Palpa was the seat of the Sen kingdom that ruled over this region from 16th century for almost 300 years. Tansen offers enchanting walks leading to interesting sites, whether it is a day - traverse around Shreenagar Hills, or few days backpacking along the Kali Gandaki River. Tansen also attracts many pilgrims to its several Hindu shrines.





© Susheel Shrestha

→ Rani Mahal, Palpa

Tansen can be visited at any time of the year. While the climate of Palpa varies from tropical to moderate, Tansen is moderate to warm with temperatures between 28 degree Celsius maximum during summer and 8 degree Celsius minimum in the winter. The months of June and July have maximum rain.

People

The percentage of the Magar and the Newar population in the district is high. Other inhabitants of Palpa are the Brahmin, Chhetri, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Gurung, Tamang, and Limbu.

Newars, originally from the Kathmandu valley, followed opportunities of trade and craft and migrated to different parts of Nepal. In Tansen they found an important crossroad of trading routes and administrative headquarters. Though today's

migration movement due to urbanization and decrease in agriculture brings people from all ethnic groups to Tansen, the Newari people still make up a high percentage of the population in the core area. There are also predominant Magar settlements in some parts of Palpa district. The Magars are assumed to be the first settlers in this area.

Experience

Shreenagar Hill

The hill provides excellent views of the Himalayas Annapurna, Dhaulagiri range and the surrounding valley. Tansen Bazaar to the summit of Shreenagar Hill is a short, pleasant hike through forests passing through several Hindu religious sites. Following a blacktopped road you reach the northern slope of Shreenagar Hill. From here, on a clear day, beautiful views of the Himalayan range from Dhaulagiri in the west to Ganesh Himal in the east can be seen all the way to the saddle to the east of the hill. The huge Kali Gandaki River Valley can be made out between Dhaulagiri and Nilgiri leading north to Tibet. The trail continues through a pine forest and a deciduous forest of rhododendrons to the entrance gate to Shreenagar Park.

➞ *Bhagawati Temple, Tansen*



© Sirish B.C.

There is a statue of Lord Buddha, donated by Thai monks, at the eastern end of Shreenagar ridge. The images of a monkey and an elephant commemorate a part of the Buddha's life. Legend has it that a monkey and an elephant served the Buddha in many ways while he was meditating in a jungle for nearly three months.

The return journey to Tansen is a descent on a staircase to reach an unpaved road on the edge of the forest. The pleasant valley behind is the Madi Valley - on clear mornings clouds and fog blanket the Valley forming a "white lake," an impressive sight during sunrise.

Ranighat

Ranighat on the banks of the Kali Gandaki River is reached from Tansen by walking along a steady downhill slope passing through a narrow gorge. En route is a small settlement called Hatti Dhunga (Elephant Stone). Here an elephant-shaped stone is worshipped by the local people. The ruins at the bank of the Kali Gandaki River is the palace built by Khadga Shumshere in memory of his wife Tej Kumari. The palace was designed by British engineers from Calcutta.

TANSEN (Palpa)

➞ *Shital Pati, Tansen Bazaar*

© Susheel Shrestha





➤ Local houses, Tansen Bazaar

Ramdi

Ramdi is a half days walk through a fertile landscape shaped by terraced rice fields, is famous for its cave temples where farmers from nearby villages offer milk for the protection of their cattle from leopards.

Tansen Bazaar

The main bazaar of Tansen also known as Makhan Tole, is the focus of the town's commercial activities notably the selling of Dhaka. This cloth of woven cotton or muslin is characterized by jagged, linear designs originally made famous in Dhaka, Bangladesh. With principal colors of red, black, and white the cloth is used to make saris as well as topis such as Palpali topi, the Nepali cap which is an integral part of the national dress for men.

Exploring Tansen town with its traditional houses strongly influenced by Newari architecture, the sale and display of Dhaka cloth, the bronze and brass works, and the local lifestyle is an experience in itself.



→ Baggi Dhoka, Tansen Bazaar

The main gate to Tansen Darbar, a former palace and today's district administration headquarters, Baggi Dhoka is tall and majestic and is said to be the largest of its kind in Nepal. Chariots of religious festivals have to pass through this gate.

Temples and Pilgrimage Sites

On the west of Tansen is the temple of Bhairabsthan marked by a huge trishul (trident). The statue of Bhairab in the temple is hidden, because the sight is said be frightening. Even priests here offer puja (worship) from behind curtain. The temple is reputed to be the oldest temple of the town, as the date of erection is not known. Though not a deity the Newari people worship Bhimsen for protection of their property and safety on business journeys.

Amar Narayan Temple is the largest temple of Tansen. The whole ensemble with the temples, ponds and the park was created under the reign of Amar Singh Thapa, who was the first governor of Palpa. Also to his credit goes the erection of Ganesh temple. According to legend a holy spring or lake is hidden under the 3-storey pagoda style Amar Narayan Temple. The

remarkable huge dry stone masonry wall surrounding the whole premises is called the Great Wall of Palpa.

Deule Archale, believed to be a sacred pond, has several temples. The Siddheshwar Gupha (cave) is a popular pilgrim site at Siddheshwar on the bank of the Ridi Khola (stream).

Interesting Places Nearby

Tanhu is an attractive village with a mixed culture and beautiful scenery of the mountains, forests, and terraced fields. It is 32 km from Tansen and can be reached from the Siddhartha Highway.

Taksar is the neighborhood where for centuries the famous bronze and brass works of Tansen, such as Karuwa (water jug used in ceremonies), Hukka (water pipe), and Antee (jug for home-distilled alcohol), used to be produced for a living by more than 60 percent of the houses. Today, due to shrinking demand and cheaper factory production, only three houses handcraft these famous articles.

A typical Magar culture can be seen in Chilangdi. The people of Chilangdi are simple and singing and dancing forms an important part of their charming lifestyle. Chilangdi is located at the southern lap of Shreenagar Hills.

Madan Pokhara is a very prosperous village near Tansen. This beautiful valley is also culturally rich and has several temples that attract many pilgrims. Madan Pokhara is linked to the Siddhartha Highway.

Ghorvandakumal Gau (Potter's Village) is inhabited by the Kumal people. The Kumals are an ethnic group in this village who continue to make pottery in their own unique traditional way. Elsewhere in Nepal potters use a relatively small potter's wheel driven by foot. Here the Kumals spin a cart-sized wheel. Once the desired spin speed is reached the potter has to work fast as after a short while the wheel begins to stagger and comes to a stop. The potters produce traditional water pitchers, pots,

and Handa (a vessel with holes in the bottom; used for brewing local alcohol).

Arghali is considered the Benares of Nepal and it is where the Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere spent his retired life. The remains of his palace can still be seen in Arghali. A village of mountains, forests and farmlands, Arghali is situated close to the Kali Gandaki and Ridi rivers.

Butwal near Tansen is worth a visit and this can be combined with visit to Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Buddha. The short trek, most suitable for wintertime, is to follow the old trade route from Tansen, down the Sisnu Khola and finish in Butwal. The trek will involve one night on the trail and if tents are not available then local teahouse accommodation must be used.

Further Afield:

- ✦ Ridi Bazaar is considered one of the holiest places by Hindus in Nepal. Located at the confluence of the Ridi Khola (stream) and the Kali Gandaki River. Pilgrims from Nepal and India visit Ridi Bazaar for holy dips and to worship in the temples and at the Rishikesh Mandir (temple). Local folklore claims Mukunda Sen, the first King of Palpa, established the Rishikesh Mandir. The temple has lost its original shape due to several

Temple at Ridi.



ensuing renovations. The walk down to Ridi takes about five hours through terraced fields and beautiful landscape.

An annual fair held here for three days during the month of January-February is considered the most important fair for this region. Apart from the religious significance of gaining merit by taking a dip in the confluence, the fair is also an opportunity to buy and sell local handicrafts.

- ✦ Satyawati Lake (1,400 m) takes its name from Goddess Satyawati from Hindu mythology and is a popular pilgrimage site in the area. The trek is enjoyable and the destination highly worth a visit. Migratory birds can be seen here during some months of the year. You can enjoy beautiful views of the Himalayas on the way to the lake. The nearly 2-hour uphill trek to Lake Satyawati starts from Siddhartha Highway, about 19 km from Tansen. The trail first descends to the valley of the river Tinau and then climbs steeply through dense forests to this lake on the top of a mountain ridge. A fair is held each year in honor of the goddess during a full moon night in October-November. It begins in the evening and is over before sunrise so as not to offend the Goddess.

➞ *Srinagar Hill, a short hike up Tansen Bazaar.*

© Susheel Shrestha



Getting There

Tansen is in Palpa district, Lumbini zone.

There are regular buses from Kathmandu to Tansen - 296 km from Kathmandu via Butwal and about 324 km from Kathmandu via Pokhara. You can take a daily-scheduled flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara or Bhairahawa. Tansen is conveniently near Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, and the popular tourist destination of Pokhara. It is about 3-4 hours drive from either of these cities.

Tourist Services

There are a number of good to moderate hotels and lodges in Tansen to suit every budget and need. The hotels and lodges are clean and the staff hospitable. The modern restaurants serve excellent Nepali meals and some even serve continental cuisine.

Further details about Tansen and the surrounding region will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

➞ Tansen Tundikhel

© Susheel Shrestha





SIRUBARI (S y a n g j a)

Sirubari is without doubt one of the most attractive villages in Nepal.

The village is neat and clean, very colorful and warm, while the people are friendly, well educated and are enthusiastic about tourism. Sirubari is a compact farming community village. The unique attraction of Sirubari is that it is a model of a growing new trend in tourism in Nepal – a trend that takes the visitor “within”.



© Nepal Village Resort

➡ View of Sirubari.

Experiences stemming from observation have always attracted visitors to Nepal. For the adventurous, Nepal has been synonymous with trekking, mountaineering expeditions, jungle safaris, and river rafting. For those seeking spirituality there are temples and monasteries. But the real attraction for the visitors has always been the people and the culture.

Sirubari, a village in Syangja district southwest of Pokhara, is a short drive from Pokhara followed by comfortable walk. The village is on a south-facing slope at 1,700 m above sea level.



➞ Local house in Sirubari village.

The climate is ideal at all times of the year with no snow ever falling in the village itself. However, the ideal time to visit is between September and June. Houses are mostly built from local materials and are well constructed and comfortable. The overwhelming impression of the village is one of order and cleanliness but with a warm and welcoming feel to it. Foot trails through the village are all stone paved.

The villagers' love for flowers can be seen in year-round riot of colors. Being on the southern slopes of the ridge the village enjoys long sunny days and is ideal for agriculture.

In May 2001, Sirubari in conjunction with Nepal Tourism Board was awarded the PATA Gold Award in recognition of its efforts to preserve the culture and heritage of Nepali rural life.

PEOPLE

Sirubari is a compact settlement of Gurung people most of who have army service background. The village is neat and clean and at the same time colorful and warm. The people practice a religion that is a mixture of Buddhism, Hinduism and



→ Tourist at Sirubari.

Shamanism but most visitors see them as being Buddhist. They are warm, friendly and well educated and take a certain well-deserved pride in the tourism development in their village.

The community is basically a farming community whose income is supplemented by army pensions and tourism. Other local communities are made up of Brahmin and the working castes of Damai, Sarki and Kami.

EXPERIENCE SIRUBARI VILLAGE

On arrival visitors are welcomed into the community and invited to stay in one of the village homes. The accommodation is simple but comfortable, and food is delicious as visitors share each meal with the family members. “Home-stay” in Sirubari has a meaning of its own. Each night there is entertainment of traditional Gurung and Nepali dancing and singing and visitors are encouraged to join the revelry.

Majority of the people of Sirubari village are Buddhists. Thus, it is but natural for the host family to invite their guests to visit the village monastery and receive blessings from the resident lama.

For many visitors the time spent at the village Buddhist temple is one of their enduring memories as the temple is the center of community life. It is where guests are first welcomed and from where they are eventually bid farewell.

During the day, visitors can participate in the daily chores of the family by helping to tend livestock, or in the fields. Visitors can also take short hikes up to the Himalayan viewpoint above the village, visit local schools and interact with students and teachers, or simply wander around the village viewing day to day activities and join those sitting in the sun talking with neighbors.

Sirubari, at about 450 m below the ridgeline, does not offer instant views of the Himalayas. However, the new point at Thumro (2,300 m) is an easy one-hour walk above the village. This is the highest point south of Pokhara and on a clear day Himalayan views from here are spectacular- a breathless panorama of more than 350 km – Manaslu, Machhapuchre, the Annapurnas and Dhaulagiri and all the lesser peaks in between. Rolling foothills dotted with isolated farming communities spread out below.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

ROCK CLIMBING

There are some rock faces above the village that provide challenging climbs for experienced climbers having their own equipment.

BIRDWATCHING

The jungle above Sirubari is rich in bird life. A day or more can be set aside for serious ornithologists to spend time here. Animal life is also abundant.

MEDITATION/ BUDDHISM STUDY TOURS

The Gurung villagers around the valley all follow a particular style of Tibetan Buddhism. Scholars or recent converts alike can spend time in meditation in the peaceful atmosphere of the village and its surrounds.

GETTING THERE

Access to Sirubari is a 5 to 7-hour jeep/ bus drive on ungraveled road from Pokhara via Syangja Bazaar or Nagdanda Bazaar.

TOURIST SERVICES

The basic concept used at Sirubari is one of home-stay tours where guests stay as part of an individual family. The accommodation is in specially modified sections of the houses and is comfortable and secure. Hygienic toilets and bathrooms adjacent to each room afford comfort and privacy. Food is prepared in local style – varied and delicious but suited to visitors' palate. The host family not only provides genuine cultural and rural life experience but the experience also helps to develop a relationship with the family.

For further details about Sirubari, please refer to other travel books, log on to www.welcomnepal.com or www.nepalvillageresort.com or contract registered travel/ trekking/ tour agencies.

Suggested itinerary for sirubari (4-5 days)

Day	To – From	Activities	Time	Overnight
Day 1	Pokhara -Sirubari	Driving from Pokhara – Sirubari via Badkholo, Darau. Lunch and welcome ceremony at Sirubari and blessing by village lama (priest). Interact with home-stay families. Dinner with home-stay families.	6-7 hrs. (Driving Pokhara-Sirubari)	Sirubari (Home-stay)
Day 2	Sirubari	Village tour. Visit to Panchamal High School. Lunch back with families at home-stay. Interact with home-stay families and watch cultural shows.	Day activities	Sirubari (Home-stay)
Day 3	Sirubari	Hike to Maidan Kharka and Thumro, observe sunrise view. Lunch with families at home-stay. Group activity at village gampa followed by cultural program. Dinner with families at home-stay.	Day activities	Sirubari (Home-stay)
Day 4	Sirubari-Pokhara-Kathmandu	Farewell at village gampa. Depart for Pokhara via Karkinetta, Seti, Dabhan and Naudanda. Lunch en route. Afternoon flight from Pokhara-Kathmandu.	6-7 hrs. (Driving Sirubari-Pokhara) 30 min. (Flight Pokhara-Kathmandu)	Kathmandu

Mid and Far West Nepal





DOLPA

(D o l p a)

Standing in the midst of the rugged natural landscape of Dolpa in all its beauty, and experiencing its remoteness you cannot help but feel that this is Shangri-la - a region with an aura of mysticism about it. Dolpa, also called "Ba Yul" or the Hidden Valley, has fascinating villages and is still a land of mystery, scenery and peace.



©NTB

→ *Lake Phoksundo, Dolpo*

Isolated and secluded from the outside world by spiraling high mountain passes and restricted entry, mysterious Dolpo has long fascinated and frustrated travelers. David Snellgrove first revealed the mysteries of Dolpo in his book *Himalayan Pilgrimage* (1961). Peter Matthiessen's description of Shey Gumpa ("Crystal Monastery") in *The Snow Leopard* (1979) further piqued readers' interest.



→ Yaks near the Phoksundo Lake.

In 1988, the valleys leading to Dolpa's Shey Phoksundo National Park were de-restricted to organized trekking groups who are self-sufficient in food and fuel. Lake Shey Phoksundo is the major attraction of Dolpa. The newly developed Dolpa Experience Circuit links Phoksundo experience with the natural beauty and cultural experience of Dho. Another newly developed trail Dolpa Heritage Circuit takes one through the many monasteries and Buddhist gompas (monastery). There are altogether 130 gompas in Dolpa, some of their histories going back to very early times.

The medicinal plant, Yarchagumba (*Coerdiopsis sinensis*) a type of wild mushroom is found in abundance in this region. Extracts from Yarchagumba are believed to significantly improve health and fitness.

Shey Phoksundo National Park, Lake Phoksundo and Shey Gumpa are the the prime attractions of this region. Newly promoted circuits which encompass the prime attractions and also offer other uniquely Dolpa experiences are: Dolpa Experience Circuit and Dolpa Heritage Circuit.



→ Bhotiya people of Dho playing music for guests.

People

While Lower Dolpa is home to Thakuris, Chhettris, Brahmins, Upper Dolpa is home of the Bhotiyas and Sherpas. While much of northern Dolpa is the domain of Buddhism, both Hindus and Buddhists revere areas in southern Dolpa, such as the temple of Bala Tripura Sundari in Tripurakot VDC where a large number of devotees from the surrounding region offer worship. Some parts of Dolpa is inhabited by people practicing the pre-Buddhist religion called "Bon Po."

The inhabitants subsist on buckwheat, wheat and potatoes, a prosperous existence compared to the people of Upper Dolpa who depend on barley as sole crop. The stalwart yak is a vital source of food, transport and dung fuel. They also trade salt for grain with those from far away Hurikot and Jumla to compensate their dwindling winter supply of food.

The remoteness of the area has helped conserve ancient cultural traditions of Buddhists and can be experienced firsthand. The local people still dress in religious and traditional costumes during times of feasts and festivals. Some still practice the pre-Buddhist Bon religion that disappeared from Tibet in the 9th century.

New Experience

Dolpa Experience Circuit

The Lower Dolpa circuit trek is one of the most popular treks as it visits Phoksundo Lake, featured in Eric Valli's Oscar nominated movie "Caravan." Phoksundo, also known as the Blue Lake, cuts one of the deepest gorges in Nepal but contains no aquatic life.

It is possible to visit Phoksundo Lake on a one-week trek, but taking the 15-day trail is more satisfying. Beginning from Juphal the trail continues to Dunai and then heads north along the Dho-Tarap Khola (river) to Dho Tarap village (4,040 m) - an area inhabited by people practicing the pre-Buddhist religion called "Bon Po." The trail crosses the two high passes of Numa La (5,190 m) and Baga La (5,070 m) before reaching the hamlet of Ringmo on the southern end of the lake.

The hikers' first glimpse of Lake Phoksundo, set in a cleft between rocks that rise 2,000 m into the clear mountain skies, reveals a scene of unearthly beauty - a white glimmer of silver

➡ *Chhortens along Lake Phoksundo.*



birch edges the lake's radiant turquoise-blue waters. Kanjiroba (6,883 m) one of the highest mountains in the region, can be seen from the tops of the surrounding peaks.

The trail back to Dunai is along the Phoksundo River as it flows south carrying the waters of Lake Phoksundo on their long passage via the Ganges into the Bay of Bengal. The river cuts a narrow gorge - by early May rimmed with primulas, violets and gentians and shaded by tall spruce, a magnificent waterfall tumbles 1,670 m down a series of rock shelves. Blue sheep, musk deer, goral, snow leopard, Himalayan tahr and bear inhabit the Shey Phoksundo National Park set aside to protect an ecosystem typical of the high arid Tibetan plateau.

Dolpa is restricted area. Trekking permit fee to visit Phoksundo Lake region is equivalent to US\$ 10 per week for the first four weeks and US\$ 20 per week after that. However, trip to Upper Dolpa to visit Shey Gumpa has higher permit fee. Please refer to information at the back of this book for details about the trekking fee.

➞ *Typical village house in Dolpa's Juphal village, where a STOL airport is situated.*

©NTB



Dolpa Heritage Circuit

This 20-days or longer circuit provides a unique cross-section experience of both Upper Dolpo. With more than 130 gompas (monasteries) in the area the route passes through a predominantly Buddhist area. The famous Shey Gumpa of Peter Matthiessen's in *The Snow Leopard* (1979) fame also falls in this region. There is a gumpa in every settlement, with some of the oldest monasteries in the Himalayan region of Saldang, Dho, Chharka and Bhijer. Some of these gompas are more than 700 years old. On the Dolpa Heritage Circuit the coexistence and harmony of both Hindu and Buddhist religious practices form an intrinsic part of the daily life of the people.

Added Attractions:

Shey Phoksundo National Park

The Shey Phoksundo National Park is in one of the most remote districts of mid-western Nepal and is the largest national park. With diverse terrain and altitude variation, the Park, established in 1984 with an area of 3,555 sq. km., spreads over Dolpa and Mugu districts and supports a broad range of wildlife and vegetation. It is one of the few areas protecting trans-Himalayan ecology.

The Park has 286 flora species of botanical importance, and is home to sheep, ghoral, musk deer, leopard, wild dog, marmot, weasel, mouse hare, rhesus and langur monkeys, Himalayan tahr, Himalayan black bear and jackals. The upper region is the habitat of the rare snow leopard. Over 200 species of birds including the yellow-throated marten, Tibetan partridge, wood snipe, white-throated tit, wood accentor, and crimson-eared rose finch are also found in the park. Other species of birds found here are the impeyan and cheer pheasant, chough, ravens, Tibetan snow cock, Tibetan twit, brown dipper Himalayan griffon and lammergeyer. Apart from these, the Park is home to six species of reptiles and 29 species of butterfly.

Phoksundo Lake is one of the deepest and the second largest lake in Nepal. The entrance to the Shey Phoksundo National

Park is at Suligad. The Park office is at Sumduwa. The ancient settlements of Jagdullah, the Shey Phoksundo National Park, ancient monasteries over 700 years old and other high altitude lakes, hot water springs, wide glacial valleys, high passes and crystal blue fresh water lakes are the main attractions of Dolpa.

Sundaha Nature Trek

A popular short trek, this circuit follows the Juphal-Dunai-Sundaha-Sahartara-Dunai -Juphal trail. While views of the Dhaulagiri, Mukut, Kanjiroba and Putha peaks are the main attractions of this high altitude trek the surrounding hills showcase rhododendrons and other high altitude fauna and herbs.

Sahartara Detour

Sahartara, near Dunai is a popular destination for tourists. The indigenous population of the region claim they are of Magar descent, following Tarali culture and speak the Kaike language - a language spoken only in this region of Nepal.

Natural Hot Springs

The natural hot springs in Sahartara and Rupgad are believed to have healing qualities and that bathing in these waters ease away aches and pains.

River Rafting and Kayaking

Feasibility studies have indicated possibilities of river rafting and kayaking opportunities on the Bheri River - this would mean a different perspective to the land and the lifestyle of the people of Dolpa.

Further Afield

You can continue southward along the Bheri to Jajarkot and Surkhet, and then by road to Nepalgunj, or continue westward to Jumla.

Pokhara is reached by trekking southeast to Tarakot, crossing the Jangla pass (4,542 m) and continuing to Dhorpatan. The

Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve is the only area in Nepal where licensed hunting is allowed. From Dhorpatan you can continue east over the Jaljala pass (3,415 m) to Beni, Baglung and then to Pokhara, or head south to Tansen. Pokhara is the access point to the Annapurna Conservation Area claimed as one of the best trekking areas in the world.

However, weather will be a major factor as high passes can be snowbound between late October and early May.

Getting There

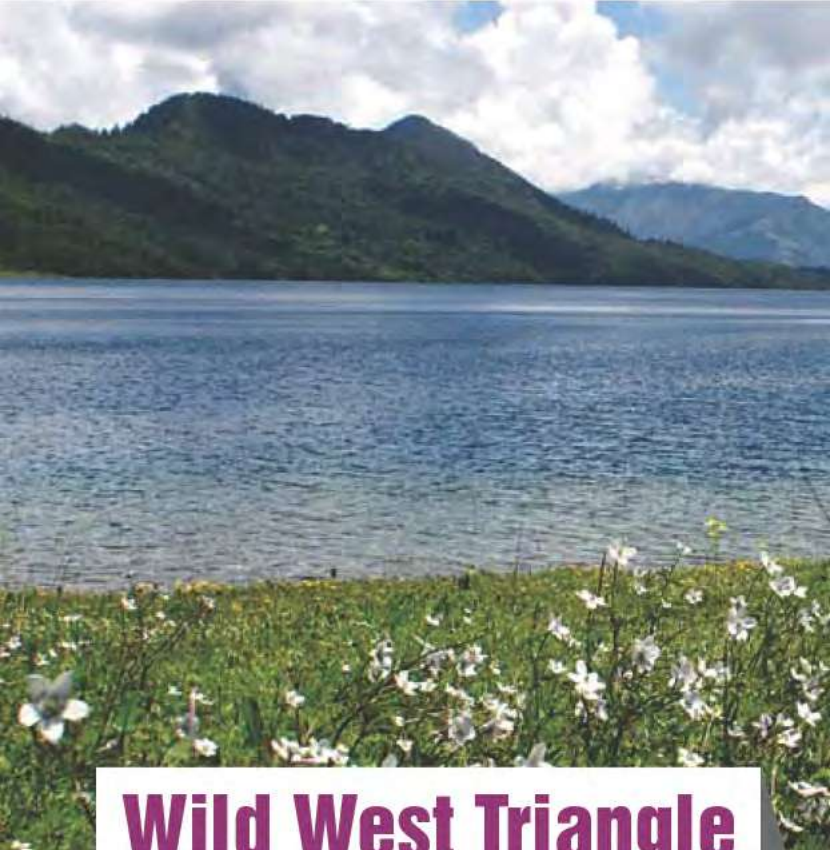
Dolpa is in Karnali zone.

Regular and chartered flights from Nepalgunj or from Pokhara to Juphal airport are available. From Juphal, district headquarters Dunai is 3 to 4-hour walk. One can take a scheduled flight from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj or travel by public bus from Kathmandu or from Pokhara.

Tourist Services

Tourist services are available in Dunai valley, which is the headquarters of the district. Along the trail, it is recommended trekkers be self sufficient in terms of food and accommodation needs, and hire registered trekking agency for management of the tour.

Further details about the Shey Phoksundo National Park and the surrounding region will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.



Wild West Triangle

(Mugu, Kanchanpur, Bardia)

Nepal's mid and far western regions offer an array nature, culture and adventure experiences. The Rara National Park and surrounding areas, Bardiya National Park and Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and surrounding areas, together promoted as the Wild West Triangle are among the treasures of this region. The special promotional packages offer combined visit to Rara Lake, Bardiya National Park and Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve.



© Dharm Bandhu Thapa

→ Lake Rara, Mugu

Rara National Park (Mugu)

The little Rara National Park in the far northwestern part of the country offers a representative sample of the region's flora and fauna. Sprawled over Mugu and Jumla districts the heart of the Park is the country's biggest lake, Lake Rara, from where the Park gets its name. The Park is mainly covered with coniferous forest while the area around Lake Rara is dominated by blue pine. More than 500 different kinds of flowers, more than 20 different species of mammals and 214 species of birds could be observed at Rara National Park. The rich vegetation of the Park is home to the endangered red panda, musk deer, Himalayan

black bear, leopard, jackal, Himalayan tahr, yellow-throated martin, wild dog, wild boar, common langur, rhesus macaque and common otter. During winter the Park abounds in bird varieties like coots, great-crested grebe, black-necked grebe, red crested pochard, mallard, common teal, merganser and gulls. Migrant water fowls and gallinaceous birds can also be seen during certain seasons. The best time to visit the Park is autumn, spring and summer.

Lake Rara (2,990m) from which the park gets its name, is as deep as 167 m. at some places, and drains into the rivers Mugu Karnali via Nijar Khola. Here, tourists can enjoy the beauty of the pristine lake and enjoy boating, hiking, horse riding, fishing. As for water life in the Lake, the snow trout, is the fish variety recorded so far. This blue Lake is surrounded by richly forested hills. Chuchemara Hill (4,087 m.) is the best vantage point to get the magnificent views of the deep blue clear Lake and highly forested hillside as well as the snow capped peaks around it.

➞ *Lizard at Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve.*



Shuklaphanta (Kanchanpur)

The open grasslands and numerous waterholes of the Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve render it an ideal setting for game viewing and jungle safari for visitors. The Shuklaphanta in Kanchanpur district falls on the Indo-Nepal western border near Mahendranagar. The Park is a vast expanse of plain grasslands and Sal forests, while marsh vegetation is found along rivers and lakes. The Reserve that was originally a hunting area was later converted to wildlife reserve to protect swamp deer. The Reserve now shelters almost 2,000 swamp deer, around 50 wild elephants and 30 tigers. Other animals found here are spotted deer, blue bulls, barking deer, hog deer, wild boar, leopards, jackals, langurs and rhesus monkeys. Among birds the Reserve provides habitat to sarus crane, swamp francolin, grass owl, warblers, flycatchers, and the endangered Bengal Forican. Reptiles species include marsh mugger crocodile, cobra and python. The Reserve can

➤ *Swamp Deer at Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve.*





© Sushel Shrestha

➞ *Black Buck at Khairapur, Bardiya.*

be reached by driving to Mahendranagar, from where the Reserve headquarter is only 8 km south. Another option is to fly to Dhangadi the capital and then drive to the Reserve via Mahendranagar.

Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve contains South Asia's largest grasslands and reptiles that are nationally and globally threatened. In its surrounding areas of Kanchanpur district tourist can visit other natural sites like Betkot Tal (lake), Jilmila Tal and various Tharu villages, where tourists meet with local communities and witness aspects of their lifestyle.

Bardia National Park (Bardia)

The Bardia National Park is the largest and most undisturbed protected area in the Terai and is home to the endangered Bengal tiger and Nepal's famous one-horned rhinoceros. The National Park located in the far western district of Bardia, is bordered by River Karnali in the west, the Churia range in the north, while the River Babai flows right through the Park. The varied geographical factors together with the cover of Sal, Savannah forests and grasslands render this region ideal as wild



© Susheel Shrestha

➞ A herd of Elephants on the jungle trail with mahouts, Bardiya National Park.

animal habitat. The Park hosts 30 different mammals, more than 250 species of birds, and several varieties of reptiles and water animals. Some of the other animals found here are elephant, swamp deer, blackbuck, gharial crocodile and marsh mugger crocodile. The exotic Gangetic dolphin is also sometimes seen in River Karnali. Birds include endangered varieties of Bengal florican, lesser florican, silver-eared mesia and sarus crane. The Park offers the rare opportunity of fishing at River Karnali and River Babai. The best time to visit the Park is autumn, winter and early summer when the weather is warm and dry. The best way to reach the Bardia National Park is via Nepalgunj in Banke district. Nepalgunj is connected by air and by road to the capital and other cities in the west. The Park's headquarters Thakurswara is approximately an hour's drive away from the Nepalgunj-Surkhet road. Another option to reach the Park is from Birendranagar in Surkhet district which is also connected by air to Kathmandu.

In the surrounding areas of the National Park, tourists can also experience white-water rafting in the longest river of Nepal-Karnali. One may even spot dolphins or gharial in the river. The river was recently marked seventh place in white-water rafting category.

Added Attraction

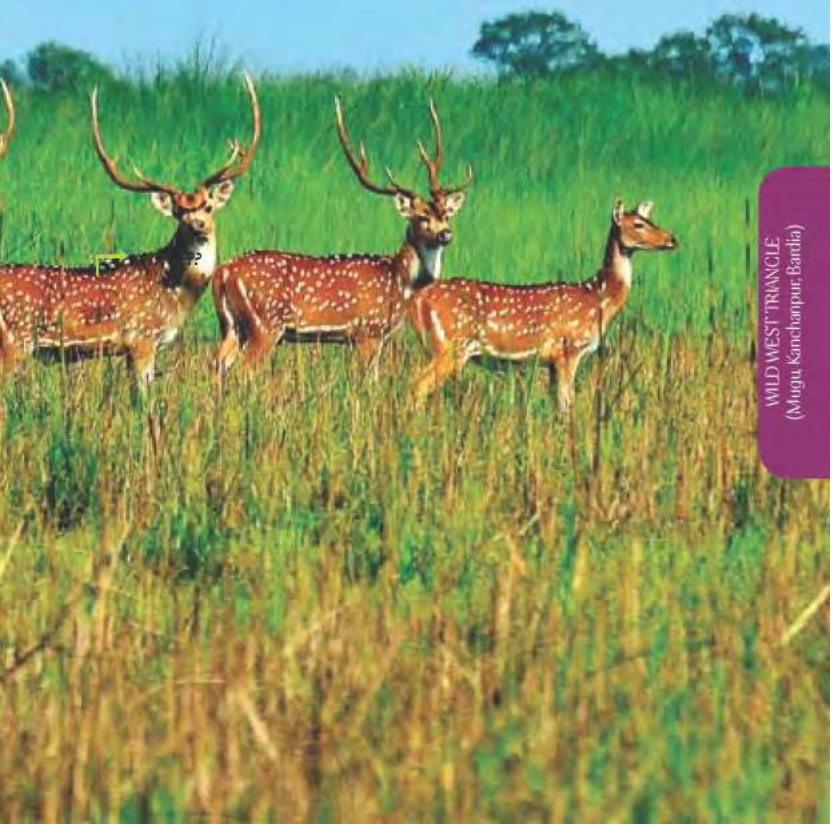
- ✦ Experiencing the Rana and Dangora Tharu lifestyle and culture in Bardiya National Park.
- ✦ Observing cultural shows in the entire three destinations, including Deuda dance, Dhami dance, Panche dance and Tharu dance, which reflect the typical culture of mid and far western regions.
- ✦ Visit to one of the famous Hindu Temple Siddhanath Baba Temple in Mahendranagar. Enjoy the local food during the visit.



- ★ Sales and exhibition of local products including handicrafts, herbal products and handicrafts, herbal products and handmade garments etc.
- ★ Mt. Kailash, believed to be the abode of Lord Shiva by Hindus, lies in Tibet and can be reached via Simikot in Mugu, the Rara Lake region. Simikot, can be accessed either by flying in from Nepalgunj, or trekking for about 7-8 days from Lake Rara.

➡ *Spotted Deer at Shuklaphanta National Park.*

© Susheel Shrestha



WILD WEST TRIANGLE
(Mugu, Kanchanpur, Bardia)

Getting There

The most common way to get to Rara in Mugu is to take a flight from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj and then to Jumla, from where it is 2-3 days trek to the Park. The Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve can be reached either by flight from Kathmandu to Dhangadi or by road to Mahendranagar, from where the Reserve can be driven to. Bardiya National Park can be reached by road via Nepalgunj or by flight to Nepalgunj or Surkhet from where the Park can be driven to. Packaged itineraries also include following options:

- ♦ Kathmandu-Pokhara-Chitwan-Bhairahawa-Nepalgunj-Mahendranagar (Kanchanpur) by bus and Rara Airport by charter flight.
- ♦ Kathmandu-Nepalgunj or Dhangadi by schedule flight, Nepalgunj-Rara by charter flight.
- ♦ Delhi-Banbasa (Indian border) by bus and train then to Gaddachowki, Mahendranagar (Nepal border) by jeep.

➤ *The Royal Bengal Tiger found in the Terai jungles of Nepal.*



© Thomas L. Kelly

Tourist Services

Groups should travel with a recognized trekking agency that will provide all the necessary food, staff and equipments. At Lake Rara and Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve one can spend the night in tented camps, while lodge accommodation is available at the Bardia National Park. The nearest cities from here, where other tourist services are available are Nepalgunj and Mahanedranagar.

Treks in the west of Nepal are quite different from treks to other parts of the country. The region is less touched by modern changes makes trekking much more of an exploration type. It is also considerably more expensive to trek in the remote parts of the west.

Further details about these national parks will be easily available in other travel books about Nepal.

➞ *Tharu Cultural Museum, Bardiya.*



© Susheel Shrestha



KHAPTAD

(Achham, Bajhang, Bajura, Doti)

Khaptad is a land of grasslands and forests. Its rich geography ranges from high mountains to deep gorges and mid-elevation plateaus. The diverse landscape of Khaptad is filled with subtropical, temperate and sub alpine vegetation. Khaptad offers: treks that range from short easy hikes to strenuous ones, religious sightseeing with its several sacred sites, quiet rejuvenation in its pristine surroundings and the rich cultural experience of far west Nepal.



© Bal Krishna Thapa

→ Kedar Dhunga, Khaptad

One of the main attractions of Khaptad is the Khaptad National Park established here in 1984. Located in the mid-mountains, the Park is a rich natural habitat and has also gained religious significance as the home of Khaptad Swami, the renowned hermit. There are several places of religious and natural significance inside and outside the National Park in Khaptad.

The best time to visit Khaptad is during autumn and spring, October-November and March-May. During autumn several festivals are held here. A fair is held at Tribeni near Khaptad, every Dashain (annual Nepali festival) which falls in October and another fair is also held at Khaptad Daha (lake) around the same time at the end of summer.

Summer here is cool and wet with temperatures ranging from 0 to 18-degree Celsius, while winters are cold and dry with temperature that falls below -18 degrees. The monsoon rains occur between May - September. Snowfall occurs during the extreme winter months.

People

The main ethnic groups living here are Brahmin, Chettri, Thakuri, Damai, Kami and Sunuwar. The predominant culture is Hindu.

Khaptad is a place of high religious value. The religious and cultural values of this place were highly enhanced after Khaptad Swami settled here 53 years ago. The area is believed to have been the center of the civilizations that covered South West Tibet, Far West Nepal, Kumaon and Garhwal.

Experience

Khaptad National Park

The Khaptad National Park (about 3,000 m) is rich in its flora and fauna variety. The National Park is covered by subtropical forest of Chir pine at lower altitude, and sub alpine forests of fir, hemlock, oak and rhododendron in the higher areas. The area boasts of 224 species of medicinal herbs and is described as the living garden of herbs and a museum of natural



history. It is estimated that about 567 species, 11 percent of flowering plants of Nepal, are found in Khaptad.

The Park also offers excellent bird-watching opportunities, with 270 species of birds, the common ones being different varieties of Impheyan pheasant, partridges, flycatchers, bulbuls, cuckoos and eagles. The Park is also fairly rich in its variety of wild animals, common ones being barking deer, wild dog, wild boar, ghoral, Himalayan black bear, yellow-throated marten, rhesus monkey and langur monkey.

Other areas in the National Park of interest to tourists are Khaptad Daha, Nag Dhunga and Upper Tribeni. Khaptad National Park also offers religious sightseeing.

➞ *Performer and locals during annual festival, Khaptad.*

©NTB





Ashram of Khaptad Baba

Added Attractions



➞ *Khaptad during festival.*

©Bharat Bandu Thapa

KHAPTAD
(Achham, Bajhang, Bajura, Doti)





→ *The green hills of Khaptad.*

©Bharat Bandu Thapa



Getting There

KHAPTAD
(Achham, Bajhang, Bajura, Doti)



is available at Attariya Chowk. Another option is to take a flight to Dhangadi from where one can drive to Silgarhi Bazaar.

Khaptad National Park can also be reached easily from the west entry point of Nepal at Gadda Chowki, Mahendranagar. Silgarhi Bazaar is approximately 10-hour drive from Mahendranagar, while Mahendranagar is 30-minute drive from the Indian border town of Banbasa, from where buses depart to Delhi every hour of the day.

Tourist Services

Trekkers and travelers to Khaptad National Park should be self sufficient in terms of food and accommodation as there are not many commercial lodges that cater to tourist needs. Various campsites are available and home-stay could be possible if arrangements are made beforehand. A government guest house is available near Khaptad Swami Ashram.

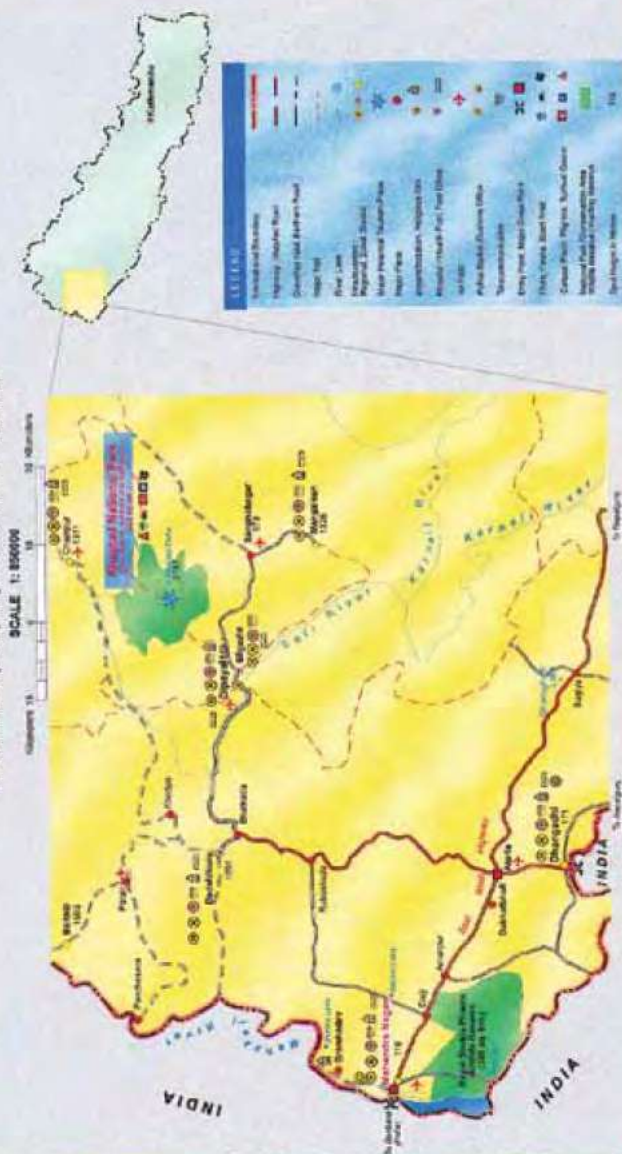
Further details about the Khaptad National Park will be available in other travel books about Nepal.

➡ *Khaptad Daba*



©Bharat Bhatta Thapa

**NEPAL TOURISM BOARD
TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AREA
PHASE - II B
KHAPTAD (Dott, Bajura, Achham, Bajhang)**



Major Tourist Activities

Nepal is considered one of the best adventure destinations in the world. Nepal's geography packs an extremely varied landscape into a small area.

The immense contrasts in altitude and climates found here support a spectacular mix of lifestyles, vegetation and wildlife. Nepal is probably the only country in the world where you can climb the highest mountains in the world, trek in the scenic countryside with the icy pinnacles always in the background as well as enjoy jungle safari in forests considered to be the densest in the entire South Asian region.

Mountaineering

The 800 km stretch of the Nepal Himalayas is the greatest in the world with eight peaks that rise above 8,000 m including the highest in the world, Mt. Everest. Ever since the country opened its peaks to climbers in 1949, the Nepal Himalayas have become a great theater of mountaineering activity and the drama of success and failure have provided impetus to thousands of men and women to meet the ultimate challenge.

Trekking

The best way to experience Nepal's unbeatable combination of natural beauty and cultural riches is to walk through them. One can walk along the beaten trails or virgin tracks. Either way you are in for an experience of a lifetime. Along with forests of rhododendron, isolated hamlets, and small mountain villages, birds, animals, temples, monasteries and breathtaking



→ Trekking

landscapes, you will also encounter friendly people of different cultures – offering an experience of traditional rural life.

Trekking is possible any time of the year depending on where you are going. The popular seasons are spring and autumn. During the monsoon season, you can trek in the rain shadow areas north of the Himalayas like Mustang, Upper Manang and Dolpa. These places are out of reach of the rain clouds because of the high mountains and are unaffected by the monsoon. The best part about trekking in this season is that the routes are less crowded and if you happen to be a keen botanist, you will revel in lush vegetation as meadows blossom in full swing. To ensure quality service and safety, it is advisable to make the trekking programs through a government recognized trekking agency.

Rafting/ Kayaking/ Canyoning

Rafting is one of the best ways to explore the typical cross section of natural as well as cultural heritage of the country. There are numerous rivers in Nepal which offer excellent rafting or canoeing experience. You can glide on calm jade waters with magnificent scenery all about or rush through roaring white rapids, in the care of expert river-men employed by government authorized agencies. One can opt for a day of river running or

more. So far, the government has opened sections of 10 rivers for commercial rafting. The River Trishuli (grade 3+) is one of the most popular of Nepal's raftable rivers. The Kali Gandaki (5-5+) winds through remote canyons and deep gorges for 5 days of intense rapids. The Bhote Koshi (4-5) is 26 km of continuous white-water and the raging Marshyangdi is four days of uninterrupted white water. The Karnali River (4-5) provides some of the most challenging rapids in the world. The Sun Koshi (4-5), 270 km, requiring 8-10 days to complete, is a big and challenging river. Adventurers are provided with world-class services by rafting agents. Agencies here provide life jackets, camping gear and the standard rafting paraphernalia needed by word-class rafters. An extremely popular sport in Europe, canyoning is now available in Nepal. Canyoning gives you the freedom to explore some of the most ruggedly beautiful, yet forbidden places in the world.

Jungle Safari

National parks located specially in the Terai region in Nepal attract visitors from all over the world. A visit to these parks involve game-staking by a variety of means – foot, dugout canoe, jeep, elephant back. One is bound to sight a one-horned rhino, wild boars, samburs, spotted deer, sloth bear, 4-horned antelope. A Royal Bengal tiger may surprise you by his majestic appearance.



© Thomas L. Kelly

→ Jungle Safari

Nature walk or jungle walk is another way of experiencing the wilderness. In fact, jungle walk gives close-up opportunities to view animals as well as observe their tracks, signs, and sounds. Early morning and late afternoon walk is the best to avoid mid day heat.

Dugout–canoe trips down the Rapti River offer views of water birds: brilliant blue Eurasian kingfishers, egrets, osprey and ruddy sheldrakes. A pair of binoculars is a must for birdwatching. A jeep safari through the jungle provides more game spotting opportunities than might be expected otherwise because it goes deeper into the jungle, beyond the beaten track. After the thrill of elephant rides, nature walks and jeep safaris, visitors can splash around in the swimming pools that some of the resorts offer.

Rock Climbing

For all those cliff hangers out there, Kathmandu offers a roster of stone walls that make for an experience of a lifetime. Now of late, rock climbing has become a popular sport in Kathmandu which offers some really terrific places for rock climbing. Nagarjun, Balaju, Shivapuri and Budhanilkantha are some of the places where you can try this sport.

Mountain Biking

The best way to explore the Kathmandu Valley is on a mountain bike. Nepal's diverse terrain is a mountain biker's dream adventure come true. Mountain biking offers an environmentally sound way of exploring the magnificent country, its landscape and living heritage. There are plenty of dirt roads and trails in Nepal to meet every mountain biker's wildest fantasy. Mountain biking is specially recommended if you wish to explore urban centers of Nepal such as Pokhara and Kathmandu as well as the countryside. Adventurous souls may plan extended trips to such



→ Mountain Biking

exotic locales as Namche Bazaar and western Nepal. You could even do the entire length of Nepal across the plains. Mountain bikes are available for rent by the day or longer in many of the bicycle rental outlets in and around the city.

Birdwatching

Nepal is a paradise for bird lovers with over 848 species (almost 8 percent of the world total) of birds. And among them almost 500 hundred species are found in the Kathmandu Valley alone. The most popular bird watching spots in Kathmandu are Phulchoki, Godavari, Nagarjun, Bagmati River, Taudaha and so on. Get your binoculars and look forward to a rewarding experience.

Mountain Flight

Only awe-stricken silence can come close to matching the experience of going on a mountain flight to encounter the tallest mountains of the earth. Mountain flights offer the closest possible aerial views of Mt. Everest, Kanchenjunga and the Tibetan Plateau. Mountain flights appeal to all category of travelers and have become a popular tourist attraction of Nepal. For those who are restricted by time or other considerations



→ Birdwatching

from going trekking, these flights offer a panoramic view of the Himalayas in just one hour.

Ultralight Aircraft

Ultralight aircraft take off from Pokhara and offer spectacular views of the lakes, mountains and villages. This is an ideal way to see life from a new perspective. The choice of Pokhara Valley for ultra-light aircraft is appropriate chiefly because of the proximity of the mountains, and the scenic lakes. For those who wished they could fly like birds when growing up, this flight is a must. It might be lonely at the top, but the spectacular view from up high certainly makes it all worth it. Flights are from the Pokhara airport beginning September through June. The flights take place from sunrise to 11 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to sunset every day during these months.

Meditation, Yoga and Ayurveda

Nepal provides the solitude and environment for meditation which is unparalleled in this part of the world. Nepal has much to offer to those interested in meditation, yoga and Ayurveda. There are guided and residential courses for meditation and yoga and the effects are far reaching and cumulative. Kathmandu, in particular, is where most of these activities happen.



@Sirish B.C.

➞ *Bungee Jumping*

Bungee Jumping

The ultimate thrill of a bungee jump can now be experienced in Nepal at one of the best sites that this sport can boast of anywhere in the world. Nepal's first bungy jumping site is situated 160 m. over the Bhote Kosi River, inviting you to experience the ultimate adrenaline rush in the surroundings of this amazing place. The jump, at 160 m., is staffed and operated by some of the most experienced jumpmasters in the business.

Cable Car

Cable car is recent phenomenon in Nepal that has become extremely popular with the locals and tourists alike. The 10-minute cable-car ride takes the visitor to the temple of Goddess Manakamana who is believed to have the power to fulfill wishes. The temple of Manakamana is 125 km to the west of Kathmandu. Cable car ride starts at Cheres, 104 km from Kathmandu on the highway to Pokhara.

Paragliding

Paragliding in Nepal can be a truly wonderful and fulfilling experience for the adventure seeking. A trip will take you over

some of the best scenery on earth as you share airspace with Himalayan griffin vulture, eagles, kites and float over villages, monasteries, temples, lakes and jungles with a fantastic view of the majestic Himalayas.

Gliding is a weather dependent sport and the flying season in Nepal commences from November through February, the best months being November and December. The take-off point for these flights is Sarangkot (1,592 m) which also offers prime views of Phewa Lake and the mountains at sunrise and sunset (provided the skies are clear) and the landing is by the lake. No previous experience is required as qualified pilots provide a short briefing before launching.

Village Tours

Village tours allow visitors to experience a stay in a typical Nepali village. You will get to stay in home of one of the villagers and during your stay, you will get delicious local food and drink and comfortable accommodation provided by your host family. You will also get a chance to interact with the villagers and get to know their culture, tradition and way of life first hand. Besides, you will be contributing directly to the welfare of the village. Village Tours can be experienced at Langtang, Chitwan, Lumbini, Solukhumbu, Ilam, Tansen, Sirubari, Ghalegaun, Gorkha among others.

Special Interest Tours

Special interest tours are conducted in Nepal throughout the year to match all tastes. Lepidopterology, is one, since eleven of the 14 families of butterflies are found in Nepal. These exotic species are specially visible in summer and the monsoon seasons. Similarly, fossil hunting, archaeological, zoological, geological, mythological, meteorological, historical tours, game hunting and other special interest tours take place throughout all seasons.

For details about these activities, please refer to other travel books.

Fees and Permit

Nepal is considered one of the best adventure destinations in the world. Nepal's geography packs an extremely varied landscape into a small area.

Trekking Permit Fees to Restricted Areas

The Department of Immigration located at Kalikasthan, Kathmandu (Tel: 4429659) issues permit for the tourist who intend to trek to areas that have been classified as Restricted Areas by the Government of Nepal. Trekking permit fee for different trekking areas are fixed as follows as of September 2011. For further details please contact the Department of Immigration office.

Permits are issued for trekking in any part of the country except in areas restricted for foreigners by government regulation. A trekking permit is a must to visit restricted areas mentioned below.

S. No.	Areas	Fee (per person)
1	i) Dolpa district a) Areas of lower Dolpa b) Areas of Upper Dolpa	Per week per person US\$ 10 or equivalent convertible foreign currency. For the first 10 days per person US\$ 500 and After 10 days per day per person US\$ 50
2	ii) Taplejung District Kanchanjanga Region (Areas of Olangchunggola, Lefep, Papung and Yomphudin Village Development Committee)	Per week per person US\$ 10 or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
3	iii) Mustang district. Upper Mustang	For the first 10 days per person US\$ 500 and After 10 days per day per person US\$ 50.
4	iv) Gorkha District: A. (Manaslu Area)	From September to November per week per person US\$ 70 and After 7 days per day per person US\$ 10 and From December to August per week per person US\$ 50 and After 7 days per day per person US\$ 7 /or equivalent convertible foreign currency.

S. No.	Areas	Fee (per person)
	B. (Chhekampar & Chunchet VDC (Sirdibas-Lokpa-Chumling-Chhekampar-Mile-Chhule Area)	From September to November per person US\$ 35 for first 8 days and From December to August per person US\$ 25 for first 8 days Or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
5	v)Dolakha District (Gauri Shankar & Lamabagar)	Per week per person US\$ 10 Or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
6	vi)Humla District (Simkot and Yari):- Areas of Limi and Muchu village Development Committee, and area way to Tibet via Tangekhola of Darma Village Development committee.	For the first 7 days per person US\$ 50 and After 7 days per day per person US\$ 7 Or equivalent convertible foreign currency..
Trekking fee of other restricted areas imposed by Nepal Government		
7	vii)Rasuwa District :- Thaman and Timure	per week per person US\$ 10, Or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
8	viii)Sankhuwasabha District (Makalu Region):- Areas of Kimathanka, Chepuwa, Hathiya and Pawakhola Village Development Committee.	For the first 4 weeks per week per person US\$ 10 and After 4 weeks per week per person US\$ 20, Or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
9	ix)Solukhumbu District (Everest Region):-All north-west area way from Thame to Nangpala of Namche Village Development Committee	For the first 4 weeks per week per person US\$ 10 and After 4 weeks per week per person US\$ 20, Or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
10	x)Manang District:- Areas of Nar, Phu, and Northern area of Tulche Village of Thochhe Village Development Committee	From September to November per week per person US\$ 90 and December to August per week per person US\$ 75 Or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
11	xi)Mugu District:- Areas of Mugu, Dolpu, Pulu and Bhangri.	For the first 7 days per person US\$ 90 and After 7 days per day per person US\$ 15 or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
12	xii)Baihang District:- Areas of Kanda, Saipal, Dhuli.	For the first 7 days per person US\$ 90 and After 7 days per day per person US\$ 15 or equivalent convertible foreign currency.
13	xiii)Darchula District:- Areas of Byas Village Development Committee.	For the first 7 days per person US\$ 90 and After 7 days per day per person US\$ 15 or equivalent convertible foreign currency.

****In other trekking region, except the region as mentioned above s.no.1 to 5, the trekking fee is as prescribed by Nepal Government in the notification published in the Nepal Gazette time to time.**

★ Fees can be paid in Nepal currency. Notwithstanding anything contained in serial numbers 1,2,3,4 and 5, the

Indian national can pay the fee in Nepalese currency equivalent to US dollars as mentioned in the same serial numbers.

- ★ To get a group trekking permit an application form with other relevant documents should be submitted through any registered trekking agency of Nepal.
- ★ This information has been made available from <http://www.immi.gov.np/appendix> (Official web site of the Department of Immigration).

TREKKERS' INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TIMS)

In a bid to control illegal trekking operations and ensure the safety and security of the trekkers in the general trekking areas, Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN) have made it mandatory for trekkers to sign up for the Trekkers' Information Management System (TIMS) Card from April 1, 2010. TIMS cards are available from the

NTB office, TAAN office and Nepal Government registered trekking companies in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

Under the new rule, all visitors who go trekking through a trekking company must pay US\$ 10 and free individual trekkers (FIT) US\$ 20 per trekking route per person per entry in equivalent Nepalese Rupees only. Part of the collection will go into maintaining the trekkers' database and in the rescue of trekkers in need of emergency services. The fund will also be spent on infrastructure expansion, conservation and maintenance of existing trekking trails. For information, contact (Tel: 444 3003, 444 0920) or visit www.timsnepal.com

ENTRANCE FEES TO NATIONAL PARKS

Park entrance fees is regulated by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) (Tel: 4220850). Entrance fees for mountain national parks can be paid at ACAP Counter at Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu. For other national parks entrance fees and for further details please contact DNPWC office. Entrance fees for different National Park are fixed as follows as of June 2012.

	Natural World Heritage Sites	Nepali	SAARC	Foreigners	Child discount
1	Chitwan National Parks	100 per day per entry	750 per person per day	1500 per person per day	Below 10 yrs free
2	Everest National Parks	Free	1500 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
	National Parks				
1	Bardiya National parks	50 per day per entry	500 per person per day	1000 per person per day	Below 10 yrs free
2	Khaptad National parks	Free	1500 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
3	Langtang national Park	Free	1500 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
4	Makalu-Barun National park	Free	1500 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
5	Rara National Park	Free	1500 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
6	Shey- Phoksundo National Park	Free	100 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
7	Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park	10 per person per entry	250 per person per entry	250 per person per entry	
	Wildlife Reserves				
1	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve	50 per day per entry	500 per day per entry	1000 per day per entry	Below 10 yrs free
2	Parso Wildlife Reserve	50 per day per entry	500 per day per entry	1000 per day per entry	Below 10 yrs free
3	Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve	50 per day per entry	500 per day per entry	1000 per day per entry	Below 10 yrs free
	Conservation Areas				
1	Annapurna	Free	200 per person per entry	2000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
2	Conservation Area	Free	200 per person per entry	2000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
3	Kanchenjunga Conservation Area	Free	200 per person per entry	2000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
	Manaslu Conservation Area	Free	200 per person per entry	2000 per person per entry	Below 10 yrs free
	Hunting Reserve				
1	Dhorpatan	Free	1500 per person per entry	3000 per person per entry	Hunting license required for hunting purposes

****For more information about hunting at Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve, please contact Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (Tel: 4220850).**

For More Information:

Tourist Information Counter

Tribhuvan International Airport (Arrival)

Tel: +977-1-2061011

Pokhara Tourist Service Center

Pardi, Pokhara

Tel: +977-61-465292, 463029, E-mail: pntb@ntb.org.np

Tourist Information Center - Kakkarbhitta

Tel: +977-23-562252, E-mail: infontbkbt@ntc.net.np

Tourist Information Center - Belhiya, Bhairahawa

Tel: +977-71-520197, E-mail: infontbbhw@ntc.net.np

Tourist Information Center - Gaddachowki, Mahendranagar

Tel: +977-99-523773, E-mail: ntbgaddachauki@ntb.org.np

©NTB

