



nepal

TRAVEL TIPS

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Things to Keep in Mind For Visitors

Here are a few tips that should help the visitor get around the country at ease.

ARRIVAL AT TRIBHUVAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

After checking in at the immigration desk, passengers without any dutiable goods can proceed through the **Green Channel** for quick clearance without a baggage check. If you are carrying dutiable goods, you must proceed through the **Red Channel**.

GETTING A TAXI

There are taxi-drivers, travel agents and hoteliers waiting outside the airport terminal to offer their services to you. While hiring a taxi, be sure not to leave any of your belongings behind.

RESPECT BASIC NEPALESE CUSTOMS

Take off your shoes before entering a Nepalese home. Never leave your shoes or sandals upside down.

Nepalese are friendly by nature; you may accept a handshake offered by either a male or a female but never offer your hand first to a woman. Instead, you do a 'Namaskar' with folded palms. Nepalese men in general, Hindus in particular, avoid touching women and holy men. Although young boys and girls in urban areas mix up these days, public display of affection is still inappropriate.

Always use the right hand to give money or a gift to someone including a shopkeeper. Do not point your finger at a person or an idol/image/statue. Also it is discourteous to sit with your feet pointing at people or at religious objects.

VISITING A TEMPLE

It is customary to take off your shoes before entering a temple/holy places. Walking around the temples or stupas is traditionally done clockwise. Ask for permission before entering a Hindu temple as entrance to some temples, such as the Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, is prohibited for non-Hindus. Avoid smoking inside sacred and public places.

PHOTOGRAPHS

You can take photographs outside Buddhist stupas and Hindu temples and during festivals, but seek permission while taking photographs inside temples or of religious ceremonies. Many people, especially women, might not be willing to be photographed. So, seek their permission first.

DRESS

It is always better to be decently clad when going anywhere. Clothes that are not too revealing are advised for women especially when travelling outside the Kathmandu Valley. It is best, if briefs, shorts and bare shoulders and backs are avoided.

CURRENCY

The Nepalese currency is the Rupee and is divided into 100 paisa. Bank notes come in denominations of Rs. 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1,000. Coins are of 10, 25 and 50 paisa and 1, 2, 5 and 10-rupee denomination.

CREDIT CARDS

Major hotels, restaurants and curio shops accept AMERICAN EXPRESS, VISA and MASTERCARD. You can contact the banks for credit card services. There are ATMs in Kathmandu, Pokhara and other big cities of the country.

MONEY EXCHANGE

It is illegal to exchange foreign currency with persons and organizations other than those authorized such as banks, hotels and licensed money changers. In order to exchange surplus rupees at the time of your departure, please retain your encashment receipts.

The Indian Rupee, U.S. Dollar, European Euro, UK Pound Sterling, Swiss Franc, Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Singapore Dollar, Japanese Yen, Chinese Yuan, Saudi Arabian Riyal, Qatari Riyal, Thai Baht, UAE Dirham, Malaysian Ringgit, South Korean Won, Swedish Kroner, Danish Kroner, Hong Kong Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar and Bahrain Dinar are widely accepted in the banks here.

FOOD

Most Nepalese eat their meal by hand especially the Nepali food *dal*, *bhat* and *tarkari*. Food that has been eaten from a plate is considered impure and is called *jutho* in Nepali. So, do not offer food from your plate, nor eat from a common pot, and do not touch a shared drinking vessel with your lips.



TIPPING

If a Service Charge is already attached to your bill, as is customary in the restaurants these days, it is not necessary to tip. Otherwise, tip 10%. Porters, travel and trekking guides, and drivers when covering long distances expect a tip. Bellhops can be tipped modestly.

SHOPPING

To avoid fakes and being cheated, buy for designer goods at the departmental stores and shopping malls. Exclusive showrooms at Durbar Marg, Asan and Thamel in Kathmandu specialize in handicraft, gems, jewelry and pashmina items. Local handicraft items are good buys in Pokhara, Chitwan and Lumbini.

EXPORT

It is illegal to export anything older than 100 years out of the country such as sacred images, paintings and manuscripts. Visitors should, therefore, not buy such items. All such items must be cleared by the Department of Archaeology at Ramshah Path near Singha Durbar that they are not antiques before being allowed to be taken out of the country.

IMMUNISATION AND HEALTH

Although inoculations are not required to enter Nepal, it is wise to protect oneself against diseases such as hepatitis, meningitis and Japanese encephalitis etc. Malaria has been reported in the Terai plains. So take precautions against being bitten by mosquitoes. Please notify the authorities or the hotel of any symptoms of bird or swine flu or any endemic.

When in Nepal, eat thoroughly cooked food. Use only bottled mineral water or boiled and filtered water for drinking. Wear a mask when walking in the dusty streets.

POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Post offices sell stamps, post cards and aerograms. Express Mail Service (EMS) is available at the General Post Office located at Sundhara near the Dharahara tower in Kathmandu, and at Thamel, Basantapur and airport postal counters in Kathmandu. Kathmandu has the only Post Restante of the country. Airmail of parcels of upto 10 kg and surface mail of upto 20 kg can be booked at the foreign parcel counter of the main post office in Kathmandu.

Hotels and private communication centers provide long distance (ISD, STD) and e-mail as well as Internet services. The country code for Nepal is + 977 and the area code for Kathmandu is 01, for Pokhara 061, Chitwan 056 and Lumbini 071.

BEGGARS

Avoid giving sweets and money to beggars and children. However, a donation to a school, monastery or hospital would be greatly appreciated.

PUBLIC TOILETS

Public toilets charge a small fee for their use. But visitors are advised to use the toilets at the shopping malls, stores and restaurants which are cleaner.

CITY SAFETY

It is safe to take a walk around from morning till late in the evening, until the shops are open. You are responsible for the safety of your handbag, back-pack and items such as cameras.

DRUGS

Possession and use of drugs carry heavy penalties in Nepal, including long jail terms, and are, therefore, to be strictly avoided.

ELECTRICITY VOLTAGE

Electricity in Nepal is 230 volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. A voltage converter is needed for a device that does not accept 230 volts at 50 Hertz.

PET RULES

Cats and dogs must be accompanied by a health and rabies certificate from a veterinarian.



Safe Trekking

The main precaution that needs to be taken while trekking is not to go up too high too fast. Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is caused by thin air at high altitudes starting from 2500 meters upwards and may even lead to death. So the body should be given enough time to acclimatize.

If you suffer from initial symptoms like headaches, shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, inability to sleep, swelling of the face, hands and feet and loss of appetite, descend to a lower elevation immediately and seek medical help. Helicopter rescue service is available, but it is expensive. So comprehensive travel insurance is advised to cover emergencies like helicopter rescue and medical treatment in the event of an accident on the trail.

It is also advisable to carry a small medical kit and torch-light while trekking.

The **Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA)**, a non-profit organization, seeks to prevent casualties from AMS. It operates an information center at Thamel (Sagarmatha Complex) where visitors can attend talks on mountain sickness and learn about trekking, safety and related matters. Twice a year, it operates a small aid post in the Khumbu village of Pheriche at an altitude of 4280 meters during the trekking season by volunteer doctors. A permanent aid post in Manang is manned by volunteer doctors of HRA. HRA has published various pamphlets concerning mountain safety and are available in English, French, German, Hebrew and Japanese. For further information please contact, Tel: 01-4440293

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. TIMS cards are available from the NTB office, TAAN office and government registered trekking companies in Kathmandu and Pokhara.

All visitors who go trekking through a trekking company must pay US\$ 10, and free individual trekkers (FIT) must pay US\$ 20 per trekking route per person per entry. These amounts are payable in equivalent Nepalese rupees. 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 further information please contact Tel: 01-4443003, 01-4440920.

Other precautions to be taken:

- Do not trek alone. Trekking with a guide from a registered agency is the greatest security.
- Do not display your cash or expensive items. Always lock your room and baggage.
- Drink water that has been boiled or iodized only. Always wash your hands before eating. Do not eat unpeeled fruit or vegetables unless they have been thoroughly washed.
- Villagers might not be used to seeing visitors from abroad. So don't mind if you are being stared at. Just smile and enjoy.
- Show decency in dress and avoid any show of public affection.

Environment code: Do not litter the trail with trash. Pack all your bottles, tins, plastics, foil, batteries, etc. so that they can be disposed at the nearest disposal site or carry them to your campsite, lodge or hotel. Likewise, sanitary napkins and tampons should be properly disposed. Be a responsible tourist and use local products to avoid can food and the use of plastics where feasible.

If you are camping, request that cooking be done on kerosene or gas, not wood. Limit your hot showers to those heated by solar energy or hydroelectricity.

For More Information

The **Tourist Service Center** at Bhrikuti Mandap, to the east of the Tundikhel ground, has been established to help with the information needs of visitors. It has National Park entry fee/permit counter, Annapurna trekking fee counter (01-4222406) , Tourist Information counter Tel: 01-4256909; E-mail: info@ntb.org.np

There are information centers and counters of the Nepal Tourism Board at the Tribhuvan International Airport and at the Tourist Service Center at Bhrikuti Mandap (01-4256909). Information Centers of Tourism Board are available at Kakarbhitta (Tel: 023-562252), Pokhara (Tel: 061-465292), Bhairahawa, and Mahendranagar.

Tourist Police: Victims of crime can contact the Tourist Police, a unit of the Nepal Police dealing with security and travel-related problems of the visitors, at Bhrikuti Mandap in Kathmandu by dialling Tourist Police headquarters on 01-4247041 (Email: policetourist@yahoo.com / policetourist@nepalpolice.gov.np). A Tourist Police officer is also on duty at Thamel and at other major tourist sites.

