

*Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys*  
Destination Information Guide

# Nepal



*The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.*

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## Welcome to the World of Big Five!

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



### Kathmandu, Nepal

Elevation: 4385 feet    Latitude: 27 42N    Longitude: 085 22E

#### Average Temperature

Years on Record: 12

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	65	50	54	60	67	71	75	75	75	72	67	59	52

#### Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 12

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	72	60	63	70	77	79	80	79	79	78	74	68	61

#### Average Low Temperature

Years on Record: 12

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	57	40	44	50	57	63	69	70	70	67	59	49	42

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## CLIMATE

Nepal's weather is generally predictable and pleasant. There are four climatic seasons: March to May (spring), June to August (summer), September to November (autumn) and December to February (winter). The monsoon is approximately from the end of June to the middle of September. About 80 per cent of the rain falls during that period, so the remainder of the year is dry. Spring and autumn are the most pleasant seasons; winter temperatures drop to freezing with a high level of snowfall in the mountains. Summer and late spring temperatures range from 28°C (83°F) in the hill regions to more than 40°C (104°F) in the Terai. In winter, average maximum and minimum temperatures in the Terai range from a brisk 7°C (45°F) to a mild 23°C (74°F). The central valleys experience a minimum temperature often falling below freezing point and a chilly 12°C (54°F) maximum. Much colder temperatures prevail at higher elevations. The Kathmandu Valley, at an altitude of 1310m (4297ft), has a mild climate, ranging from 19-27°C (67-81°F) in summer, and 2-20°C (36-68°F) in winter.

## TIME ZONE

GMT + 5.75

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

**Passports:** For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

**Visas:** The Nepal government now provides multi-entry visa for foreigners, Effective July 16, 2008, there are three categories of visas—15 days, 30 days and 90 days, which cost US\$ 25, US\$ 40 and US\$ 100.

If you are traveling to more than one country, please check appropriate sources to determine if you need other visas as well for any of the countries you are visiting. Big Five has appointed Zierer Visa Service ([www.ZVS.com](http://www.ZVS.com)) to process required visas for our passengers. A Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet. You can also download the necessary

forms from the website, where you will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

**Important:** Please look at your passport before you submit it to ZVS to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

**Please note:** Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

## AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage, escort you to your hotel, and assist with check-in.

## CUSTOMS

The following goods may be imported into Nepal without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or equivalent of other tobacco articles; 1x1.5l bottles of alcoholic beverage; a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use.

- (a) All baggage must be declared on arrival and departure.
- (b) Certain goods including cameras, videos and electronic goods may only be imported duty free if they are exported on departure. They may not be left in Nepal.
- (c) It is illegal to export goods over 100 years old.
- (d) Export certificates need to be obtained from the Department of Archaeology for the export of any metal statues, sacred paintings and similar objects.

## US CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest

Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

## **HEALTH REQUIREMENTS**

Anyone traveling internationally should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Also, discuss your general fitness level for participating in the activities related to your specific tour (i.e. snorkeling, hiking, nature walks, etc.). **This is especially true when considering high-altitude locations such as Nepal.**

**Yellow Fever:** Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

**Other Risks:** Vaccinations against Japanese B encephalitis, meningococcal meningitis, tuberculosis and hepatitis B are sometimes recommended.

**Altitude sickness** is a hazard for trekkers. It is important to increase altitude gradually, and return to a lower altitude immediately if experiencing headaches, nausea or dizziness. Further advice can be obtained from the Himalayan Rescue Association. It is advisable, particularly when in rural areas, to carry a medical kit.

**Please note:** If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

**Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.** Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-

CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

## **CLOTHING**

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

During mid-September to March, light clothing is fine in Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. Evenings and early mornings, a heavy woolen sweater or jacket will be necessary. From April to September, only light clothes, preferably cotton, are needed in Nepal. Cold lowland nights in December and January make a sweater and jacket essential. Special gear for trekking can be hired or bought in Kathmandu in standard Western sizes. The same applies for sweaters, ponchos, caps, and other woolen or down clothing. **Good-quality walking shoes are a must!** The Himalayas can be cold in extreme altitudes. The trick to assembling your wardrobe is triple layering. The layer next to your skin should be made of synthetic fibers that carry moisture away from your skin. Cotton soaks up perspiration and makes you wet. The second layer, should be wool, fleece or a synthetic fabric knitted into thick pile. The third layer can be a well-made, generously sized windbreaker or lightweight, insulated parka that not only allows moisture to escape but is waterproof, not merely water-repellent. In winter, you need light wool clothes. A high-altitude trekker needs down jacket, windproof jacket, wool shirts & trousers, lightweight trekking boots (plastic boots for peak climbing), wool or wool-blend socks, sun & snow goggles, sun hat and glasses, light rain coat (for monsoon season), gloves, scarves, and water bottle. Remember that what is appropriate in the West isn't necessarily acceptable in the East. Only children can get away with short shorts. Men should dress in comfortable jeans or long shorts. Tee shirts are okay. If it's warm, women should stick to skirts and lightweight slacks. To enter a holy shrine, women should

wear a below-the-knee skirt, dress, or neat pants. No revealing tops. While many women wear shorts in the mountains or coastal areas, women in cities who reveal any bare legs will attract undesired attention. Bathing suits should be conservative.

## LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary with destination and type of planes used. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final itinerary.

## MONEY

**Currency:** Nepalese Rupee (NPR) = 100 paisa. Notes are in denominations of NPR1,000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 25 and 10 paisa.

**Note:** (a) Visitors should bear in mind that foreign visitors other than Indian nationals are required to pay their airline tickets, trekking permits and hotel bills in foreign currency. (b) The import of local and Indian currency is prohibited, except for nationals of Nepal and India.

**Currency Exchange:** It is illegal to exchange currency with persons other than authorized dealers in foreign exchange (banks, hotels and licensed money changers). Visitors should obtain Foreign Exchange Encashment Receipts when changing currency and keep them, as these will help in many transactions, including getting visa extensions and trekking permits.

**Credit/Debit Cards and ATMs:** American Express is widely accepted, with MasterCard and Visa in tourist shops, hotels, restaurants and agencies. ATMs are widely available in Nepal.

**Traveler's Checks:** Accepted at banks and major hotels. If trekking, it is important to bear in mind that cash is necessary. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take traveler's check in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

## LANGUAGE

The official language is Nepali, spoken by 49 percent of the population. There are many other languages, including Maithili and Bhojपुरi. English is spoken in business circles and by people involved in the travel trade.

## ELECTRICITY

220 volts AC, 50Hz. There are frequent power cuts.

## FOOD & DRINK

All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth, cleaning contacts, or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Milk is unpasteurized and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

**National Specialties:** Dal Bhat (lentils and rice), Tarkari (spiced vegetables), Gurr (a Sherpa dish of raw potatoes, pounded with spices, then grilled like pancakes on a hot, flat stone ground and mixed with milk, tea or water), Rotis (flat pancake-like bread made from wheat or rice flour).

**Note:** If you have food allergies or special / restricted dietary requests, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we

may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

### **TIPPING**

Tipping is common only in tourist hotels and restaurants. Taxi drivers need only be tipped when they have been particularly helpful. 10 percent is sufficient. Tipping should be avoided elsewhere.

### **SHOPPING**

There are bargains for those careful to avoid fakes and the badly made souvenirs sold by unscrupulous traders. Popular buys include locally made clothes such as lopsided tops (caps), knitted mittens and socks, Tibetan dresses, woven shawls, Tibetan multicolored jackets and men's diagonally fastened shirts; and pashmina (fine goat's-wool blankets), khukri (the national knife), saranghi (a small, four-stringed viola played with a horse-hair bow), Tibetan tea bowls, paper mâché dance masks, Buddhist statuettes and filigree ornaments, bamboo flutes and other folk objects.

*Always insure that your purchases will be allowed back into the U.S. Information is available at the U.S. Customs & Immigration website: [www.customs.ustreas.gov](http://www.customs.ustreas.gov).*

### **OVERVIEW OF NEPAL**

In 1951, the Nepalese monarch ended the century-old system of rule by hereditary premiers, and instituted a cabinet system of government. Reforms in 1990 established a multiparty democracy within a framework of a constitutional monarchy.

Nepal, a tiny exotic kingdom, lies nestled in the majestic Himalayas. This mountain range stretches uninterrupted for 1,500 miles along the northern border of India, extending from Afghanistan to Burma. According to the theory of continental drift, the Indian peninsula was once part of the prehistoric super continent Gondwanaland.

This vast territory drifted away from the super continent and impacted with the Asian landmass. When the two continental plates collided about 50 million years ago, a violent upward thrust along the edge of the Central Asian Tableland created the Himalaya Mountains. This unbroken chain of mountains has more than thirty summits that rise to heights exceeding 24,000 feet. The vast permanent snowfields on its peaks attest to its name, Himalaya or "snowy abode."

No other country on earth has a greater variation in altitude than Nepal. Near the Indian border, Nepal has a fertile tropical jungle known as the Terai that is close to sea level. Near the country's northern border lies the extraordinary peak of Mount Everest -- the highest point on Earth.

More than one-fourth of Nepal's land is above 10,000 feet. Steep slopes prevent large glacial formations and cause deep gorges to be cut by torrential run-offs. During summer, terraces of emerald agricultural fields dominate the landscape. Potatoes and barley are farmed at heights exceeding 13,000 feet.

Nepal has more than 24 million people, who are as diverse as its geography. Mountain people called "Sherpas" live mostly in eastern Nepal and are renowned for the services they provide to mountaineers. The temperate middle hills are inhabited by many different tribes, but most of them are farmers. Farming is also the main livelihood of the Terai people, whose rigid system of values and attitudes make them more conservative than the hill people.

Many religious rites are still practiced as they have been for the last 2,000 years. In the north, Buddhism is influential but Hinduism predominates in the middle hills and the south. In the Kathmandu Valley, festivals and places of worship are shared by both religions and many of the people profess both faiths.

## **SUGGESTED READING LIST**

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc.. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

### **THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS**

**by Kiran Desai**

Kiran Desai's first novel, Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard, was published to unanimous acclaim in over twenty-two countries. Now Desai takes us to the northeastern Himalayas where a rising insurgency challenges the old way of life. In a crumbling, isolated house at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga lives an embittered old judge who wants to retire in peace when his orphaned granddaughter Sai arrives on his doorstep.

### **SOLD**

**by Patricia McCormick**

Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut in a mountain village in Nepal. Her life is made up of simple pleasures like going to school and spending time with her loving ama and baby brother. But these happy times are undercut by the desperate poverty that threatens the lives of the villagers.

### **TREKKING IN THE NEPAL HIMALAYA**

**by Stan Armington**

Everest, Annapurna, Kanchenjunga, Makalu, Machhapuchhare,-- a roll call of inspiration awaits trekkers in the Nepal Himalaya. Discover its famous peaks and unique culture in this authoritative guide by one of the region's most experienced trekkers.

### **THE CONTEST**

**by Gordon Korman**

They come from all across America to be the youngest kid ever to climb Everest. But only one will reach the top first. The competition is fierce. The preparation is intense. The challenge is breathtaking. When the final four reach the higher peaks, disaster strikes -- and all that separates the living from the dead is chance, bravery, and action.

### **Violet Shyness of Their Eyes: Notes from Nepal**

**by Barbara J. Scot**

The Violet Shyness of Their Eyes is a moving account of a Western woman's transformative sojourn in Nepal. Barbara Scot demonstrates insight into cultural difference while confronting the complex issues of development work and the status of women in Nepal. In vivid descriptions of mountain climbs, moving stories of the Nepalis and the retelling of her personal memories, Scot challenges readers with women's global struggles while nurturing a deep empathy and respect for the Nepali people. Scot updates her travels in this revised edition.

### **WAITING LAND: A SPELL IN NEPAL**

**by Dervla Murphy**

In The Waiting Land seasoned travel writer Dervla Murphy affectionately portrays the people of Nepal's different tribes, the customs of an ancient, complex civilization and the country's natural grandeur and beauty. With her special brand of Irish understatement, she revels in the unpredictability of her journey and in the surprises which make her travels in that unique country such a stirring experience. Having settled in a hamlet in the Pokhara Valley to work at a Tibetan refugee camp, she makes her home in a tiny, vermin-infested room over a stall in the bazaar. In diary form, she describes her various journeys by air, by bicycle, and on foot into the remote Lantang region on the border of Tibet. Murphy's charm and sensitivity as a writer and traveler reveal not only the vitality of an ancient culture facing the challenge of Westernization, but the wonder and excitement of her marvelous adventures.

## **SUITABLY MODERN: MAKING MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE IN A NEW CONSUMER SOCIETY**

**by Mark Liechty**

Suitably Modern traces the growth of a new middle class in Kathmandu as urban Nepalis harness the modern cultural resources of mass media and consumer goods to build modern identities and pioneer a new sociocultural space in one of the world's "least developed countries."

## **TIGER MOON: TRACKING THE GREAT CATS IN NEPAL**

**by Melvin E. Sunquist**

Tiger Moon is the powerful, poetic story of the two years Fiona Sunquist and Mel Sunquist spent studying tigers in Nepal - traveling by elephant, avoiding a rhino attack, and learning to recognize individual tigers by roar. A new afterword tells the story of a promising new effort to reconnect fractured Nepalese and Indian tiger habitats by developing an arc of protected areas that allows tigers and their prey to move more freely through the large territories they need to survive.

## **DON'T LET THE GOATS EAT THE LOQUAT TREES**

**by Thomas Hale**

Thomas Hale writes about being a missionary surgeon in the same delightful way James Herriot writes about being a country veterinarian. Dr. Hale's incredible experience in tiny, mountainous Nepal are surpassed only by his talent for telling about them. Imagine, for example, the culture shock of moving to a Hindu country under such rigid religious control that it is not only illegal to proselytize, but illegal to change religions as well. Imagine further the shock of moving to that country as a missionary doctor. Thomas Hale and his wife, Cynthia, also a physician, too on that awesome challenge in 1970.

## **AMONG FLOWERS: A WALK IN THE HIMALAYA**

**by Jamaica Kincaid**

"Anyone familiar with Jamaica Kincaid's work knows that the natural world and, in particular, plants and gardening are especially close to her heart. Along with such acclaimed novels as Annie John and Lucy, she's also the author of My Garden (Book), a collection of essays. Now, in this travel memoir, she invites us to accompany her on a seed-gathering trek in the Himalayas."

## **DARK PLACES**

**by Jon Evans**

Paul Wood is a modern vagabond, a man who chooses to leave the comforts of San Francisco to spend months backpacking through some of the world's most challenging terrain: Cameroon, Indonesia, Nepal. While hiking in the Himalayas, Paul gets more of a rush than he bargained for when he finds the body of a murdered hiker, the victim mutilated in a way that Paul has witnessed once before, years ago and thousands of miles away.

## **A HOUSE IN KATHMANDU**

**by Harold James**

During World War II service with the Gurkhas, Harold James had his first sight of the Himalayas. Fifty years later he returned to Nepal and began dreaming of owning a house in the capital, Kathmandu. This account of how the dream was fulfilled is accompanied by descriptions of Nepal and its people, and of the Gurkha soldiers and the war in 1815 that brought about their fierce loyalty to their British conquerors.