



ADVANTAGE

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VOL 13 ➤ 2021

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A LAND OF MANY FACES

A bucket-list destination for many, Nepal combines outdoor adventure with a rich tapestry of cultural sites and unique spiritual traditions

Home to eight of the highest peaks in the world including Mount Everest, Nepal is a magnet for intrepid trekkers. However, you don't need to be an extreme alpinist to enjoy the region's network of breathtaking trails, many forged centuries ago by traders and pilgrims. In addition to hiking, there's paragliding, river rafting, canyoning, mountain biking, and wildlife safaris to give adrenaline junkies an auxiliary shot of adventure.

Wherever the journey takes you, you won't get far without happening upon a temple or monastery strung with colorful prayer flags revealing the piety of Nepal's populace. "The culture is fascinating," said Catherine Heald, founder of Remote Lands, a luxury outfitter that specializes in the region. "The religion is a cross between Hinduism and Buddhism, which is totally unique in the world. There's such a tranquility to the people."

Saddled between India and Tibet, Nepal's terrain is surprisingly diverse for its size. Its rocky deserts, Himalayan peaks and subtropical forests are all within a traveling distance of 100 miles, making it relatively easy to piece together an epic itinerary.

Kathmandu

The entry point for most travelers to Nepal is the country's capital of Kathmandu. For some, the city's chaotic pace can be a shock to the senses. Head straight to Dwarika's Hotel to escape the fray. The family-run heritage property comprises several Newari houses hewed from red brick, terracotta and carved wood. Its 80 rooms, courtyard pool and Ayurvedic spa are restful sanctuaries infused with traditional touches. Dine at the hotel's restaurant, Krishnarpan, for a 22-course introduction to Nepali cuisine.





In 2015, the country experienced a devastating earthquake that damaged a range of ancient monuments, but many remain intact or have been rebuilt. Pay an early morning visit to the UNESCO-listed Durbar Square. The well-preserved historic quarter is packed with cultural sites and temple architecture dating back to the Malla dynasty. Later, wander Kathmandu’s bustling cobbled streets, half-hidden shrines and colorful bazaars to appreciate the capital in all its glory.

To immerse yourself even further in Nepal’s cultural treasures, branch out into the Kathmandu Valley. Explore the well-preserved medieval city of Bhaktapur; visit the Tibetan Buddhist community of Boudha to see South Asia’s largest stupa; and head to the holy riverbank in Pashupatinath, where you’ll find end-of-life cremation ceremonies taking place in burning ghats, as well as one of the most sacred temples in the Hindu world.

Wellness warriors should plan a stopover at Dwarika’s sister resort in Dhulikhel to balance their chakras while enjoying a humbling view of the spectacular Himalayas range. Activities include Ayurveda sessions, meditation, yoga, pottery and mandala classes, rock salt therapy, and trekking to surrounding sights.



EMBRAER TIP

Navigate Nepal’s notoriously challenging runways with ease thanks to the Praetor 500’s full fly-by-wire digital controls, the only midsize aircraft with this technology.

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The Himalayas

The holy grail for climbers, Mount Everest allures seasoned mountaineers looking to test their mettle on the world’s tallest summit. For non-hikers, Heald recommends soaring over Base Camp in a helicopter. “You can only stay for eight minutes at 18,000 feet, but personally, it’s among the most thrilling eight minutes I’ve ever spent,” said Heald. “Then we fly you down to 14,000 feet for a beautiful Champagne breakfast in the shadow of Everest at Yeti Mountain Home in Kongde before flying back to Kathmandu Airport or your hotel’s helipad.” Remote Lands can also arrange for your trip to be accompanied by the grandson of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, who will regale you with stories of his grandfather’s first successful Everest ascent with Sir Edmund Hillary in 1952.

Those conquering the mountain on foot can organize Sherpa-guided treks with their bags carried from lodge to lodge (referred to as teahouses). Locally owned Yeti Mountain Home’s five Himalayan properties offer warm hospitality and basic comforts as you explore the region’s cinematic terrain. Expect yak farms, emerald paddy fields, rhododendron meadows, snow-dusted summits, icy rivers, and cliffside monasteries.

The Annapurna Circuit is another spectacular hiking route best accessed from the adventure-centric city of Pokhara, set on the scenic shores of Phewa Lake. Choose between two new luxury resorts—The Pavilions Himalayas or Lost Horizons Resort (opening 2022)—for a lavishly pampered retreat.



Left page
Boudha Stupa in Kathmandu is one of the largest spherical stupas in Nepal and the world, surrounded by countless monasteries

Right page (top)
The Pavilions Himalayas boasts farm and lakeside villas with renewable energy and farm-fresh produce

Right page (bottom)
The Annapurna Circuit is a spectacular hiking route best accessed from the adventure-centric city of Pokhara, set on the shores of Phewa Lake

Upper Mustang

Head north to the ancient kingdom of Mustang for a window into one of the last strongholds of traditional Tibetan culture existing in the world. The medieval fortress city of Lo Manthang, hidden behind walls on a remote plateau in the foothills of the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri massifs, was restricted to foreigners until 1992 (a special permit is still needed to visit). The village's warren of white-washed mud and stone homes, cow-trodden alleyways, spinning prayer wheels, and centuries-old Buddhist monasteries have it on track to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Soon the Chinese and Nepali governments will connect the two countries via a new highway that traces an old salt trading route right into Mustang. While increased accessibility will bring contemporary conveniences to local Lobans (think running water, plumbing and modern goods), some of its age-old cultural heritage may be lost in the modernization. Get there before development does and bed down in Jomsom at the freshly minted Moksha Mustang hotel facing jaw-dropping views of Mount Nilgiri. Its top-notch spa, hot spring-fed pool and cozy mountain architecture don't disappoint.



Nepal is widely known for its frosty climes and high-altitude zeniths, but the country is also home to balmy low-lying jungles along its border with India.



Left page
Take a private helicopter flight over the Annapurna mountain range, one of Nepal's most heavily glaciated regions

Above
The lush forests and grassy plains in the Terai region were frequently used as royal hunting grounds before Chitwan National Park was established in the 1970s

Right page
Over 80% of Nepal's people practice Hinduism, making it, along with Bali, one of the only Hindu-majority nations in the world outside of India

IMAGES (left page) © Unsplash / Titas Gurung, (above) © Unsplash / Vince Russell, (right page) © Jay Tindall



Chitwan National Park

Nepal is widely known for its frosty climes and high-altitude zeniths, but the country is also home to balmy low-lying jungles along its border with India. The lush forests and grassy plains in the Terai region were frequently used as royal hunting grounds before Chitwan National Park was established in the 1970s. A 360-square-mile UNESCO World Heritage site, the park is thriving with more than 45 wildlife species including one-horned rhinos, elephants, deer, monkeys, exotic birds, and the famous Royal Bengal tiger. The Taj Meghauri Serai, set on the edge of the park along the banks of the Rapti River, provides all the creature comforts expected of a top-caliber wildlife lodge, including ranger-led Jeep and canoe safaris. Don't go home without catching a traditional stick dance in a local Tharu community.

The best time to travel to Nepal depends on the adventures you're planning to undertake. Trekking is best done in the spring and fall, rafting and cycling are ideal in October and November, and wildlife safaris are pleasant from October to March. While it's true that the weather in Nepal is notoriously unpredictable, the country's ability to deliver a once-in-a-lifetime journey is anything but. ←