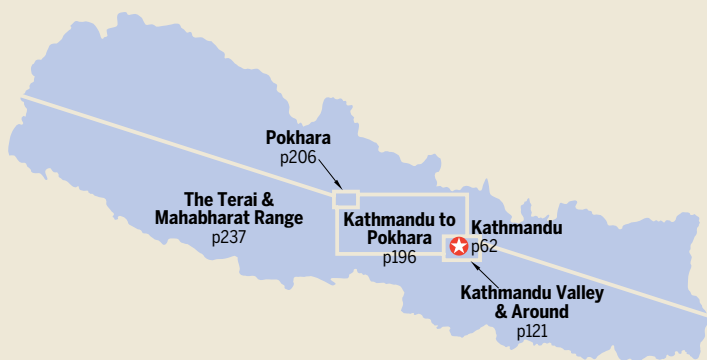




# Nepal



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Bradley Mayhew,**  
**Lindsay Brown, Stuart Butler**

## PLAN YOUR TRIP

<b>Nepal &amp; the 2015 Earthquakes</b> .....	4
<b>Welcome to Nepal</b> .....	6
<b>Nepal Map</b> .....	8
<b>Nepal's Top 15</b> .....	10
<b>Need to Know</b> .....	18
<b>If You Like</b> .....	20
<b>Month by Month</b> .....	23
<b>Itineraries</b> .....	27
<b>Planning Your Trek</b> .....	31
<b>Outdoor Activities</b> .....	43
<b>Volunteering &amp; Responsible Travel</b> ...	53
<b>Regions at a Glance</b> ....	59

## ON THE ROAD

### KATHMANDU ..... 62

<b>Around Kathmandu</b> .....	117
Swayambhunath .....	117

### KATHMANDU VALLEY & AROUND ..... 121

<b>Around the Ring Road</b> .....	124
Pashupatinath .....	124
Chabahil .....	127
Bodhnath (Boudha) .....	128
<b>The Northern &amp; Northwestern Valley</b> ...	134
Ichangu Narayan .....	134
Nagarjun Hill (Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park) .....	134
Budhanilkantha .....	135
Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park .....	136
<b>Patan</b> .....	137
<b>Bhaktapur</b> .....	152
<b>Around Bhaktapur</b> ...	167
Suriya Binayak Temple .....	167
Thimi .....	167
Changu Narayan Temple .....	168

<b>The Northeastern Valley</b> .....	170
Gokarna Mahadev .....	170
Gokarna Forest .....	171
Sankhu .....	172
<b>The Southern Valley</b> ...	173
Kirtipur .....	173
Chobar .....	174
Pharphing .....	175
Bungamati .....	178
Khokana .....	178
Chapagaon .....	179
Godavari .....	179

<b>The Valley Fringe</b> .....	181
Nagarkot .....	181
Banepa .....	185
Dhulikhel .....	186
Panauti .....	189
<b>Beyond the Valley</b> .....	191
Arniko Highway to Tibet .....	191
The Road to Langtang .....	194

<b>KATHMANDU TO POKHARA</b> .....	196
Kathmandu to Abu Khairani .....	198
Gorkha .....	199
Bandipur .....	201
Dumre .....	205

### KATHMANDU TO POKHARA ..... 196

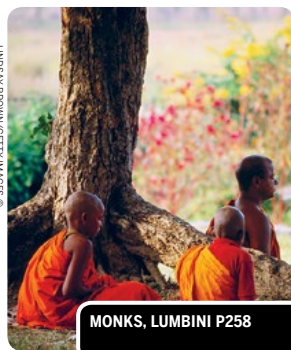
<b>POKHARA</b> .....	206
<b>Around Pokhara</b> .....	228
Sarangkot .....	228
Bat Cave & Mahendra Gufa .....	230
Begnas Tal & Rupa Tal .....	230
<b>The Road to Jomsom</b> ...	231
Pokhara to Beni .....	231
Beni to Tatopani .....	231
Tatopani to Marpha .....	232
Marpha .....	234
Jomsom .....	234

### POKHARA ..... 206

<b>THE TERAI &amp; MAHABHARAT RANGE</b> .....	237
<b>Central Terai</b> .....	241
Narayangarh & Bharatpur .....	241
Chitwan National Park .....	242
Sunauli & Bhairawa .....	256
Lumbini .....	258
<b>The Siddhartha Highway</b> .....	264
Butwal .....	264
Tansen (Palpa) .....	265
<b>The Tribhuvan Highway</b> .....	268



EVEREST BASE CAMP  
TREK P292



MONKS, LUMBINI P258

# Contents

## UNDERSTAND

Hetauda .....	268
Daman .....	269
<b>Western Terai .....</b>	<b>269</b>
Nepalganj .....	270
Bardia National Park .....	272
Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve .....	275
Mahendranagar .....	276
<b>Eastern Terai .....</b>	<b>277</b>
Birganj .....	277
Janakpur .....	279
Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve .....	283
Biratnagar .....	284
Dharan to Hile .....	285
Ilam .....	286
Kakarbhitta .....	287

## TREKKING ROUTES ..... 289

<b>Choosing a Trek .....</b>	<b>290</b>
Shorter Treks .....	290
<b>Life on the Trail .....</b>	<b>291</b>
Routes & Conditions .....	291
Sleeping & Eating .....	291
Organised Treks .....	292
<b>Everest Base Camp Trek .....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>Annapurna Circuit Trek .....</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Annapurna Sanctuary Trek .....</b>	<b>306</b>
<b>Other Annapurna Treks .....</b>	<b>307</b>
Ghachok Trek .....	307
Ghandruk Loop .....	308
Panchase Trek .....	308
Annapurna Panorama .....	308
Khopra Ridge .....	308
<b>Restricted-Area &amp; Other Treks .....</b>	<b>309</b>

## BIKING, RAFTING & KAYAKING ..... 310

<b>Mountain-Bike Routes .....</b>	<b>311</b>
The Scar Road from Kathmandu .....	311
Kathmandu to Pokhara .....	311
Upper Mustang – Jomsom to Lo Manthang .....	313
Muktinath to Pokhara .....	314
Kathmandu Valley Loop via Nagarkot & Namobuddha .....	314
The Rajpath from Kathmandu .....	315
Pokhara to Sarangkot & Naudanda .....	316
<b>Rafting &amp; Kayaking Routes .....</b>	<b>316</b>
Trisuli .....	316
Bhote Kosi .....	317
Upper Sun Kosi .....	317
Seti Khola .....	318
Upper Kali Gandaki .....	318
Marsyangdi .....	318
Karnali .....	319
Sun Kosi .....	319
Tamur .....	320

<b>Nepal Today .....</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>History .....</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>People &amp; Culture .....</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>Religion .....</b>	<b>344</b>
<b>Arts &amp; Architecture ...</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Environment &amp; Wildlife .....</b>	<b>356</b>

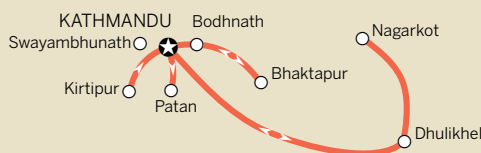
## SURVIVAL GUIDE

<b>Directory A–Z .....</b>	<b>368</b>
<b>Transport .....</b>	<b>382</b>
<b>Health .....</b>	<b>390</b>
<b>Language .....</b>	<b>396</b>
<b>Index .....</b>	<b>405</b>
<b>Map Legend .....</b>	<b>415</b>

## SPECIAL FEATURES

<b>Nepal &amp; the 2015 Earthquake .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Planning Your Trek .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Outdoor Activities .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Trekking Routes .....</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>Biking, Rafting &amp; Kayaking .....</b>	<b>310</b>

# Itineraries



## The Kathmandu Valley

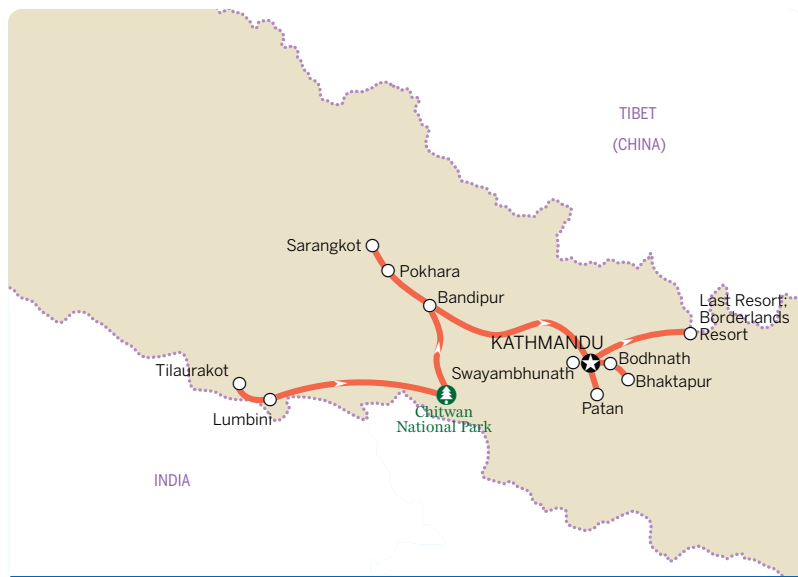
A week gives you time to see the great cultural highlights of the Kathmandu Valley, including no less than six Unesco World Heritage Sites.

Start off in **Kathmandu** with our walking tour south from Thamel to the stunning medieval temples and palaces of Durbar Sq. On day two, walk to the towering stupa of **Swayambhunath** and the quirky National Museum. You can fill the afternoon with a walk around the famous stupa at the Tibetan centre of **Bodhnath**.

Make time for a day trip to **Patan** for its spectacular Durbar Sq and Patan Museum, combined with another great backstreet walking tour and dinner in Jawalakhel. Complete the trilogy of former royal kingdoms with a full-day visit to **Bhaktapur**, ideally with an overnight stay.

Next get your Himalayan kick with dawn mountain views at **Nagarkot** or **Dhulikhel** before returning to Kathmandu on foot via the temple at Changu Narayan. Fill another day by mountain biking to **Kirtipur** and neighbouring towns in the southern valley.

On your last day, take time for some serious shopping in Kathmandu or the fair-trade shops of Patan.



## From Buddha to Boudha

Mixing contemplative temple tours with a healthy dose of wilderness and adventure, this 500km route across Nepal is one part meditation mixed with two parts adrenaline.

Kick off at **Lumbini**, the birthplace of the Buddha, 20km from the border crossing with India at Sunauli. Take your time exploring this world map of Buddhist temples, then spend the next day at the little-visited archaeological site of **Tilaurakot**, where the Buddha once ruled as a pampered prince.

From Lumbini make a beeline for **Chitwan National Park**, budgeting two or three days to allow dawn and dusk safaris among the tigers, rhinos and gharial. Even if you don't spot a rhino, you can still get up close and personal with some megafauna by helping out at elephant bath time.

From Chitwan take the day-long tourist bus to **Pokhara** for your first proper peek at the mountains. After enjoying the shops and cocktail bars of Lakeside, savour the views of Machhapuchhare from the World Peace Pagoda or lofty **Sarangkot**, or glide past the peaks at eye level on a tandem paraglide.

Another long bus trip will take you to **Kathmandu**, where you can fill up three or four days with the pick of the Kathmandu Valley itinerary. If you want to break the trip, consider a detour to the charming and historic hill town of **Bandipur**.

Once in the valley, make time to explore the backstreets of **Bhaktapur** on our walking tour, gain a deeper understanding of Buddhist art at **Patan Museum** and enjoy the views over the city at dusk from **Swayambhunath**. To escape Kathmandu's traffic and pollution, consider basing yourself in Bodhnath, Bhaktapur or Patan.

There should just be time for a two-day adrenaline rush near the Tibetan border – post-earthquake reconstruction permitting – at the **Last Resort** or **Borderlands Resort**, both a half-day drive from the capital.

On your last day, give thanks for a head-spinning trip at **Bodhnath** (Boudha), where you can buy a Buddha statue or a bundle of prayer flags to take home.



**3-4  
WEEKS**

## Once Around the Middle

This off-the-beaten-track, 400km-loop route combines the best of Nepal's seldom-visited Middle Hills and offers lots of opportunities for great day hikes.

Start with a few days visiting the temples and stupas of **Kathmandu**, then book a rafting trip or kayak clinic on the **Trisuli River** en route to Pokhara, staying in one of the riverside adventure camps.

Next stop is **Bandipur**, a little-visited gem of a village where you can stroll to eerie caverns and relax among some wonderfully preserved traditional Newari architecture. From here, roll on to **Pokhara** for a row-boat ride around Phewa Tal and a quick jaunt across to **Begnas Tal**.

Take the winding Siddhartha Hwy southwest to charming **Tansen**, the base for some great day hikes. Continue south to peaceful **Lumbini** in the sultry Terai plains to amble around the Buddhist monasteries by bicycle.

Having come this far, it would be a shame to miss **Chitwan National Park**. If your budget allows, stay at one of the lodges deep inside the park for the most atmospheric digs. You might also consider a reflective stroll to the village of **Devghat**, at the sacred confluence of the Trisuli and Kali Gandaki Rivers.

The logical return route to Kathmandu would be to follow the snaking Tribhuvan Hwy north to **Daman**, one of Nepal's most impressive viewpoints, and rise at dawn for a 300km-wide panorama of majestic Himalayan peaks.

Alternatively, if your ultimate destination is India, you could dive off the beaten track, heading east to the temple town of **Janakpur** (aim for the Sita Bibaha Panchami festival in November or December) and then on to **Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve** for Nepal's best birdwatching opportunities. Continue east to the tranquil tea fields of **Ilam** for some off-map adventure before continuing to the Indian border and the delights of Darjeeling and Sikkim beyond.



## Kathmandu & Everest

With a month to spare, you can explore the Kathmandu Valley and fit in a trek into the mighty Himalaya.

From Kathmandu, fly east to **Lukla** to start the **Everest Base Camp** trek. Despite some earthquake damage, this is still the definitive Himalayan trek, climbing from teahouse to teahouse among neck-craning peaks to the base of the tallest mountain on earth. The trek takes at least two weeks because of the gain in altitude.

With an extra week to play with, consider doing an Everest loop, detouring to the spectacular glaciers and lakes of the **Gokyo Valley** en route to Base Camp for a total trek of 21 days.

Because of the changeable weather in Nepal, it's wise to leave yourself a buffer at the end of the trip in case flights are cancelled. Finish off by exploring the highlights of the Kathmandu Valley itinerary, but do your sightseeing *after* the trek, not before.

After the thrills and chills of the mountains, finish off with a four-day excursion to steamy **Chitwan National Park**, where you can scan the jungle for rhinos and tigers.



## Annapurna Circuit Trek

The most popular alternative to Everest is the Annapurna region. From **Pokhara** (or Kathmandu) take the morning bus to **Besi Sahar** or Bhulbule to set off on the Annapurna Circuit. The full circuit takes about 20 days but you can shorten it to 12 days by flying or taking public transport back to Pokhara from Jomsom.

The highlights of the trek are around **Manang**, and it's worth tacking on a few extra days to walk the high route between **Pisang** and the lovely village of **Bragha**. The trek's major physical challenge is crossing the 5416m-high pass of **Thorung La**, and it's vital that you acclimatise sufficiently between Manang and the pass.

**Muktinath** on the other side of the pass is a major Hindu pilgrimage site and there are some fine short walks to the Tibetan-style villages of Jhong and Purang. The medieval village of **Kagbeni** is another highlight, as is the charming village of **Marpha** and nearby Chhairo Gompa.

Back in Pokhara it's worth taking it easy for a couple of days. Get clean clothes, enjoy a hearty yak steak and have a shave and/or head massage at the barbers.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Bradley Mayhew

**Coordinating Author, Itineraries, Planning Your Trek, Kathmandu, Kathmandu Valley & Around, Trekking Routes, Nepal Today, History, Religion, Health** A self-professed mountain junkie, Bradley has been travelling to Nepal and the Himalaya for almost 20 years, including several months each in Pakistan, Ladakh, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. Bradley has coordinated several editions of this guide and is also the coordinating author of Lonely Planet *Tibet, Bhutan,*

*Central Asia* and *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya* guidebooks. For this edition he focused on Kathmandu, the valley and the Everest region. He was most recently seen starring in a 10-part Arte TV documentary following Europe's most beautiful long-distance trails. See what he's up to at [www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com](http://www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com).

Read more about Bradley at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad)



### Lindsay Brown

**Need to Know, If You Like..., Month by Month, Volunteering & Responsible Travel, Kathmandu to Pokhara, Pokhara, The Terai & Mahabharat Range, Trekking Routes, People & Culture, Arts & Architecture, Environment & Wildlife** Nepal is a favourite destination for Lindsay, from the Terai's steamy jungles to the high-altitude mountain trails. A former conservation biologist and Publishing Manager at Lonely Planet, Lindsay first visited Nepal over 25 years ago and

has spent the last decade or so regularly visiting the country. He has trekked, jeeped, ridden and stumbled across many a Himalayan mountain pass and contributed to Lonely Planet's *South India, India, Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra, Nepal* and *Pakistan & the Karakoram Highway* guides, among many others.



### Stuart Butler

**Outdoor Activities, Kathmandu Valley & Around, The Terai & Mahabharat Range, Trekking Routes, Biking, Rafting & Kayaking, Directory, Transport** Stuart first travelled to Nepal over twenty years ago and has been a frequent visitor to both Nepal and the greater Himalaya region ever since. He has co-authored numerous Lonely Planet guides to South Asia but getting to spend weeks hiking the Nepalese Himalaya for this book made this project extra special. His travels for

Lonely Planet, and for a wide variety of magazines and photo projects, have taken him beyond Nepal to the shores of the Arctic, the deserts of Asia and the forests of Africa. His website is [www.stuartbutlerjournalist.com](http://www.stuartbutlerjournalist.com).

Read more about Stuart at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/stuartbutler](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/stuartbutler)

### Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

10th edition – Dec 2015

ISBN 978 1 74321 007 9

© Lonely Planet 2015 Photographs © as indicated 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Singapore

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, except brief extracts for the purpose of review, and no part of this publication may be sold or hired, without the written permission of the publisher. Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: [lonelyplanet.com/ip](http://lonelyplanet.com/ip).

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.



© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'