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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

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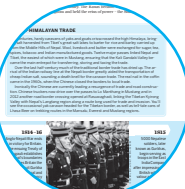
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UNDERSTAND NEPAL

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

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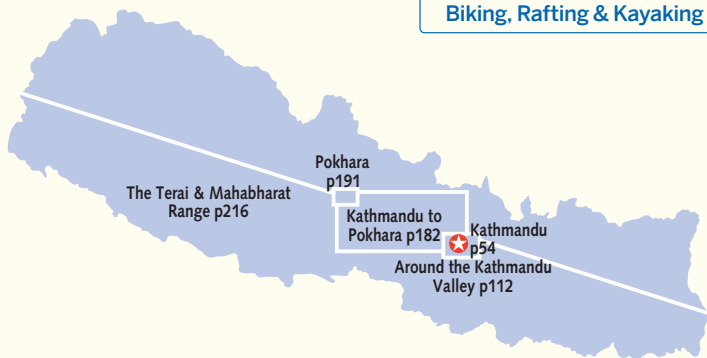
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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Bradley Mayhew,
Lindsay Brown, Trent Holden

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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Nepal



Langtang National Park
Alpine valleys, community trails and sacred lakes (p283)

Swayambhunath
Iconic 'Monkey Temple', with views over Kathmandu (p107)

Kathmandu's Durbar Sq
Temples, pagodas and old-town walks (p55)

Bodhnath
Asia's largest stupa and a home to Tibetan exiles (p118)

Everest Base Camp
Admire the iconic peak (p267)

ELEVATION



Patan
Hidden temples and fascinating backstreets (p126)

Bhaktapur
Nepal's best-preserved medieval architecture (p140)

Chitwan National Park
Track rhinos and tigers on elephant-back (p221)



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 Melbourne, London and Oakland, 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, Kathmandu, Around the Kathmandu Valley, Trekking

Routes 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 guides to *Tibet, Bhutan, Central Asia* and *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya*. For this edition

he focused on the Kathmandu area but still managed to sneak off for treks around Manaslu and the Tamang Heritage Trail. He was most recently seen starring in a five-part Arte TV documentary retracing the route of Marco Polo.

Read more about Bradley Mayhew at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/nepalibrad



Lindsay Brown

Pokhara, The Terai & Mahabharat Range (Central and Western), Arts & Architecture, Environment & Wildlife Nepal is a favourite destination for Lindsay, a former conservation biologist and Publishing Manager at Lonely Planet, who is as much at home on a mountain trail as on the back of an elephant swaying through the jungle. Lindsay has trekked, jeeped, ridden and stumbled across many a mountain pass, and has contributed to Lonely Planet's *Bhutan; South India & Kerala;*

India; Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra; and *Pakistan & the Karakoram Highway* guides, among others.



Trent Holden

Around the Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu to Pokhara, The Terai & Mahabharat Range (Eastern), Biking, Rafting & Kayaking During his travels, Trent has found that nowhere quite compares to the craziness and serendipity of the subcontinent, so it was with great delight that he returned to Nepal to update another edition of this title. His first trip here was in 2001, which coincided with the tragedy of the royal-family massacre. Despite that shocking event, Nepal is a place

that never fails to impress him more upon each visit. A freelance writer from Melbourne, Trent is currently based in Laos. This is his seventh assignment for Lonely Planet; other titles he's co-authored include *India* and *East Africa*.

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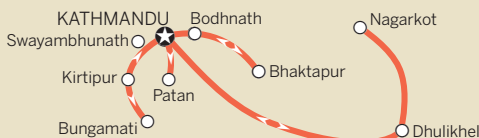
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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



One Week 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 the 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 temples at Changu Narayan or Sankhu. Fill another day by mountain biking to the southern valley towns of **Kirtipur** and **Bungamati**.

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



Two Weeks

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.

To catch some culture as you head northeast from the Indian border to Kathmandu, kick off at **Lumbini**, the birthplace of the Buddha, 20km from the border crossing. Take your time exploring this world map of Buddhist temples, then spend the next day at the little-visited archaeological site of **Tilaurakot**, where Siddhartha Gautama, later to be known as the Buddha, once ruled as a pampered prince.

From Lumbini make a beeline for **Chitwan National Park**, budgeting two or three days to make dawn and dusk safaris among the prolific wildlife. Even if you don't spot a rhino, you can still get up close and personal with the wildlife 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. While enjoying the shops and cocktail bars of Lakeside, take a few days to hike up to the World Peace Pagoda, enjoy the views at 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 an overnight stay at either Bandipur or the charming and little-visited historic hill town of **Nuwakot**.

Once in the valley, make time to explore the backstreets of **Bhaktapur** on a walking tour, gain a deeper understanding of Buddhist art at Patan Museum in **Patan** and enjoy the views over the city at dusk from **Swayambhunath**.

Figure on three or four nights in Kathmandu or, better still, base yourself in Bodhnath, Bhaktapur or Patan to escape the traffic and pollution.

There should just be time for a two-day adrenaline rush near the Tibetan border, combining some white-water rafting and canyoning 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 hit the shops and pick up a Buddha statue or a bundle of prayer flags to take home.



- » (above) Street scene, Bhaktapur (p140)
- » (left) One-horned Indian rhinoceros, Chitwan National Park (p225)



Three to Four Weeks Once Around the Middle

Many of Nepal's most interesting and seldom-visited attractions are scattered like pearls around the dense hills of central Nepal. This off-the-beaten-track, 400km-loop route combines the best of the hills and the plains 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**, staying in one of the riverside adventure camps. After a day or two churning on the rapids or canyoning down rushing waterfalls, enjoy a smoother ride on the **Manakamana** cable car to experience the medieval atmosphere of this blood-soaked Tantric temple.

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 the lake 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 guided uphill tramp to the **Chepangh hills** or 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** (especially during the Sita Bibaha Panchami festival in November or December) and then on to **Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve** for some fine birdwatching opportunities. Continue east to the tranquil tea fields of **Ilam** for some off-map adventure before continuing to the border and the delights of Darjeeling and Sikkim, beyond, in India.



One Month 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** (book return flights from Lukla to Kathmandu before arriving in Nepal) to start the **Everest Base Camp** trek. This is perhaps the definitive Himalayan trek, climbing from teahouse to teahouse among snow 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 about 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.

One Month 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 to Pokhara from Jomsom, or taking the bus back from Tatopani (16 days).

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 Mungji and visit the lovely village of **Bragha**. The trek's major physical challenge is crossing the 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 nearby 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.

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