



Nepal is famous for its magnificent scenery, home to verdant terraced valleys, rushing rivers and ice-blue lakes that originate in the snow-capped Himalayas. The soaring mountains are a favourite for mountaineers and adventurers, boasting some of the most challenging and scenic trails on earth. Other popular outdoor activities include white water rafting, elephant-back safaris or tiger tracking in the Royal Chitwan and Royal Bardia National Parks.

Although it is a great place to visit any time of the year, early spring (March and April) and late autumn (October and November) are the best times to visit Nepal, offering the clearest mountain views and good weather for outdoor activities. The rainy monsoon season is between June and September.

Further to its natural beauty, Nepal with its rich culture, offers a wealth of temples and shrines, wonderful handicrafts, and colourful religious festivals. The country is home to friendly and interesting people, and although it has become a popular tourist destination, it still retains an old world charm.

The Kathmandu Valley is surrounded by agricultural hills scattered with traditional villages, rich in ancient holy temples and shrines used by both Buddhist and Hindu worshippers, reflecting a great wealth of culture and tradition. Most of Nepal's ethnic groups are represented in the Valley, particularly in Kathmandu itself.

The Valley - made up of three cities: Kathmandu (The Capital), Patan, and the medieval city of Bhaktapur - is the cultural, political and commercial centre of Nepal. When visiting the fascinating city of Kathmandu, be prepared for sensory overload. This chaotic city with its incessant noise and pollution, 'interesting' smells and sights will etch themselves on your memory forever. Cows roam freely in the bustling streets lined with alleyways overflowing with spices, vegetables and craft shops. The tourist-oriented Thamel district of the city offers upmarket restaurants and smart hotels.



COMMUNICATIONS

The country code for Nepal is +977, and the outgoing code is 00, followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0027 for SA). City/area codes are in use, e.g. (0)1 for Kathmandu and (0)41 for Pokhara. GSM 900 network coverage is available in the main cities and towns. You will find an abundance of Internet cafes in the tourist centres of Kathmandu and Pokhara.

SIM CARDS

Nepal is quite strict about issuing SIM cards to us on other people's behalf. You are required to personally purchase your SIM cards when you land at the airport. Two SIM card counters – Nepal Telecom or N-Cell (both are good) are situated after the baggage scan area and right before you exit the airport. They will issue you with a SIM suitable for your phone/handset upon producing your passport, as well as a handing in a passport size photo of yourselves. Tammuz will provide you with 15\$ for the purchase of the SIM card with an unlimited data bundle and a small amount of airtime. Your phone will be activated instantly upon purchase. You **MUST** take the data package and ensure that your Whatsapp is working at all times.

When purchasing the SIM card TAKE NOTE of the rates and fees for international calls, as well as the important numbers to put in before dialing internationally to avoid large international connection fees. DO NOT use the hotel phone as charges are VERY expensive. You can purchase top-up airtime at any of the mobile stores or supermarkets around Nepal.

VISAS

South African citizens must have a valid passport upon arrival in Nepal. A tourist visa is required for all foreigners visiting the country, and can be obtained on arrival. These visas are valid for a maximum of 90 days, and cost between 25 USD and 100 USD (depending on the length of stay). All tourist visas are valid for Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara Valley and Tiger Tops (Meghauri airport) in Chitwan. However, if travellers wish to visit other places, or trek in Nepal, permits can be obtained from the Central Immigration Office. It is imperative that your passport has at least six months validity remaining after your intended date of departure from your travel destination.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

1 US Dollar (1\$) = 97.20 Nepali Rupee (NPR; symbol Rs)

1 SA Rand (R1) = 9.15 Nepali Rupee (NPR; symbol Rs)

You must exchange some of your Rands or USD to Nepali Rupees (NPR) at the Airport Currency Exchange counter for purchasing the SIM cards and small sundry expenses that you will incur. Currency Exchange counters are also situated at Thamel Market area (10 mins by taxi from your hotel) from where you can exchange the rest of the money you want to spend.

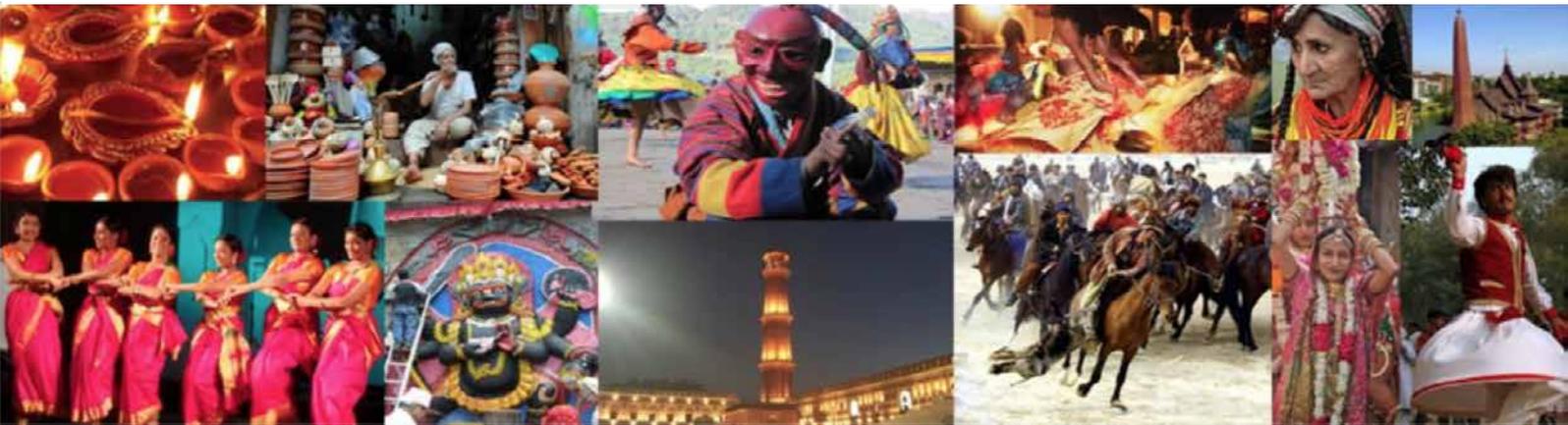
AIRPORT TRANSFERS

Airport transfers to and from the Hotel have been arranged. Keep your eye out for a placard with your name on it as soon as you exit the airport premises.

TAXIS

There are numerous taxis available throughout Kathmandu. They are usually white Maruti Suzuki 800 cars and are easy to spot. These taxis are used throughout Nepal but rules vary regarding fares. In some taxis the meters are in working order, while in others they are "broken", in which case you should use your bargaining skills.





Nepal is a city of beautiful landscapes, rich cultural heritage and ancient architecture. It is a developing country, so don't expect to find perfectly smooth roads and first class infrastructure, but be prepared to have a great time experiencing a very different culture and way of living. It is a brilliant opportunity to visit a world that is still relatively unspoilt. Go with an open mind, a positive attitude, respect for the locals and you will have a life-changing and enriching experience.

1. Nepal has four climatic seasons:

- Spring** (Mar - May): The temperature is mild in low lands while moderate in higher altitudes.
- Summer** (Jun – Aug): Hot an wet monsoon season. Expect frequent rain and occasional thunderstorms in the evening.
- Autumn** (Sep – Nov): Peak tourist season. Highly pleasant weather with guaranteed mountain views. Good for trekking.
- Winter** (Dec – Feb): Cool and clear with occasional snowfalls at higher elevations. Winter is good for trekking in lower elevations. The morning and night is cold and the days are warm when sunny.

2. Remember to pack:

- Hygienic wipes / Hand sanitizer / Tissues / Sunscreen.
- Enough warm clothes in colder Winter months.
- Summer clothes during Autumn, Summer and Spring (It's almost always warm enough for shorts). But include at least one pair of long pants/jeans for the chilly evenings when out and about at restaurants/cafes/hospital.
- Swim suits (towels provided by the hotel).
- Light warm tops and skirts (for hospital/scan days).
- An umbrella as rain can be rather uncertain. Umbrellas can be purchased in the city.
- A book/iPad/music/entertainment for your lock-down period in the hotel and for your scan trips to the clinic.

3. Out and about

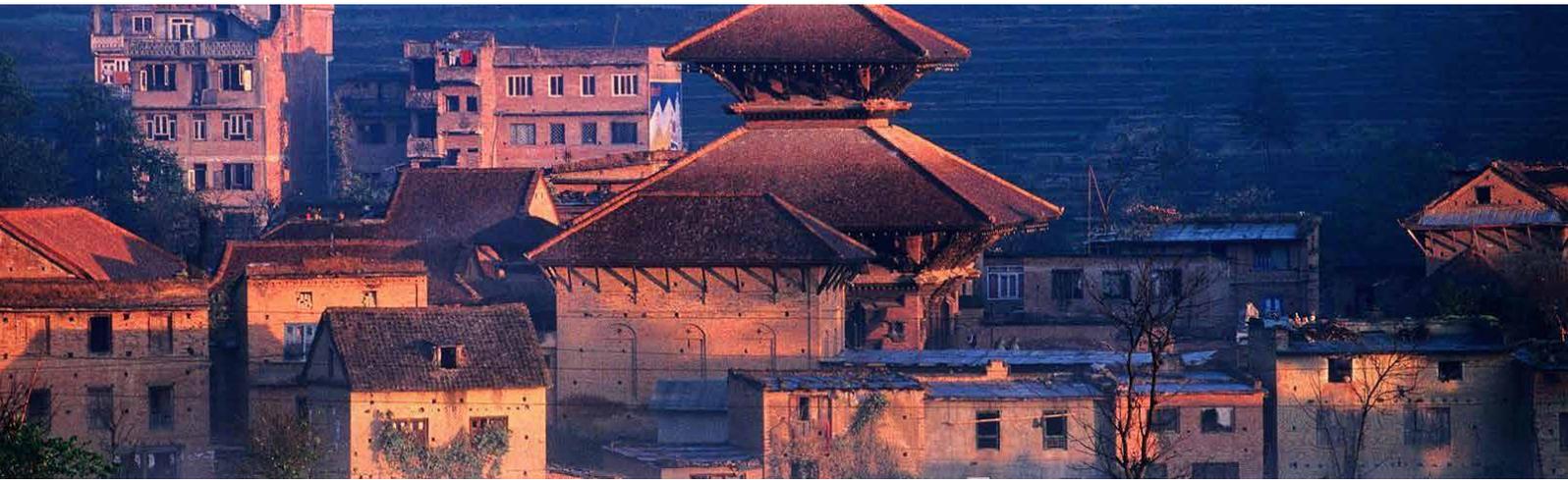
Kathmandu is very culturally rich. You can go sight-seeing to various temples, durbars, markets etc. Wear comfortable shoes as the roads are not the smoothest. We don't want you to trip and fall into one of the many potholes...

Ask your coordinator to arrange a guided tour day trip outside the city. There is lots of natural beauty to experience in Nepal!

4. Food

The food in Nepal is really good! Don't forget to try their Momos (Nepali version of dimsums) and the Nepali set thali (it's medium spicy so won't burn your tummy!). Thamel is a great area where you can find lots of nice places to eat and shop.





Very Important:

- Please be ON TIME for everything.
- Drink PLENTY of water - at least 3-4 liters a day - as well as 1 glass of water for every alcoholic beverage consumed.
- Try to eat egg whites. Start every day with an egg white omelette (4-5 eggs) for breakfast at the hotel. This provides your body with the protein it needs while you are taking your medication.
- Use ALL doses of Gonal F in each pen - do not start a new pen until the old one is finished. Remember every pen has a 900 dose (ie., 4 x 225, or 6 x 150 etc). There will be a tiny bit of liquid left in the pen (after 900 has been used) but this is NOT a dose! PLEASE check with us if you are unsure.
- Wear plenty of sunscreen! The Gonal F thins your blood and therefore you are more likely to burn.
- If you have pain, please see your coordinator. You may not “self-prescribe” painkillers (except panado) as they may interfere with the other meds you are taking.
- The retrieval day is a FULL DAY (8AM – at least 6pm).
- On your retrieval day you must eat all the food and drink all the liquids they give you, and WEE (seriously, you will not be discharged from hospital until you have had a wee!).
- Bring ALL of your paperwork in your folder to EVERY scan and EVERY hospital day.
- Bring a book/blackberry/ipad etc to scans and hospital days.
- Drips – DO NOT TOUCH THE DRIPS.
- Do NOT bring cameras on scan days as they will be confiscated at the hospital. Phones are fine, even if they have a camera.
- Be aware that Sakshi/Sahil may not be with you for every scan, but someone representing FertilityMate WILL be. Remember that for every donor, there is also a pair of recipients and a surrogate mother. Sakshi/Sahil must also be in Kathmandu to work with the recipients, the surrogates, and the embassy and consulate. Just because they aren't with you at a scan does not mean they are lazing by the pool! They are most likely working with another facet of the company.
- Take a card from reception at the hotel, so that when you venture out you can always get back.
- You MUST take all of your post-operative medications (antibiotics, vitamins, painkillers) that are provided for you. Even though some of them are only vitamins, you must take them to ensure your body and cycle returns to normal. If you do not take them and fall ill, it is very hard for FertilityMate to assist you.
- NEVER leave the hotel alone. There are enough of you to be able to go out in pairs.
- Keep your valuables safe at all times.
- Avoid lending/borrowing money from one another.
- Please make sure you pay in cash at hotel reception for all room service/phone calls made from your room. Avoid leaving it until the day you check out, as this may lead to arguments between roommates. Work out a system that works for both of you.
- If you have a question that is not related specifically to the donation, please ask the appropriate person. Eg., if you have forgotten what time dinner starts, please contact reception. That is what the hotel staff is there for.
- If anyone bothers you at the pool, please speak to security at the hotel.
- NO SMOKING in the hotel rooms.
- Come with a positive attitude... maintain a positive attitude...

Remember... negativity can lead to negative results. Positivity can help to create positive results and more donations in the future. HAVE FUN!



With its diverse ethnic groups and traditional beliefs, Nepal has numerous cultural practices that might seem unusual to foreigners. In the tourist areas there is a high degree of tolerance towards visitors, but away from these places foreigners should be sensitive to local customs. Please be considerate of the different cultural aspects of the country while enjoying their stay.

Here are some tips which may be helpful to you

1. Greetings:

- “Namaste” is widely used for greeting people.
- Shaking hands is more western than Nepali and, whilst you may shake hands with a man if he offers his hand first, you should not shake hands with a woman.
- Holding hands/hugging between opposite sexes in public can be offensive (Public displays of affection between men and women are frowned upon).

2. Food

- Never accept or offer anything, or eat with the LEFT hand.
- Do not eat from someone else’s plate or offer food from one’s own.

3. Dress

- Women should always dress modestly. Avoid shorts, skirts, low-cut dresses (and, in some areas, sleeveless dresses), open, tight-fitting clothes and see-through materials.
- Shorts are not acceptable for women, but men wear shorts at home.

4. Shoes/Feet

- Shoes and feet are considered to be unclean.
- Take your shoes off before entering the temple, religious buildings, kitchen, bedroom etc.
- Do not point at things/people with your feet.
- It is a sin to touch a book with your feet.
- Do not step over people, food, books etc.
- Do not put your shoes upside down.

5. Others

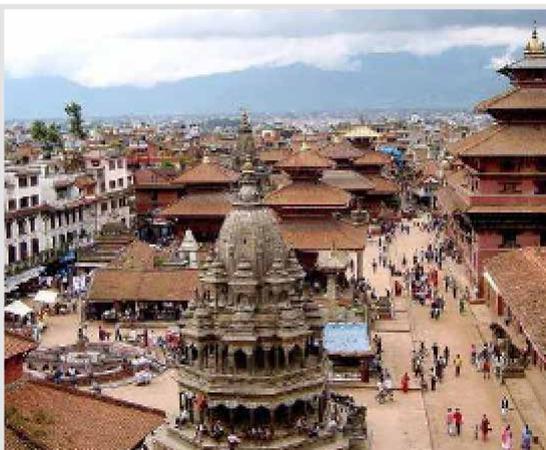
- Permission should be sought before taking photographs, particularly at religious sites.
- Learn to address a person according to the Nepali tradition of respect, status and age. E.g. daai, bhaai etc
- Do not associate people or their behaviour with the animal. E.g. “You eat like a monkey.”
- Heads are considered sacred; do not touch children on the top of their heads. Touch their cheek instead.
- Do not be embarrassed if someone remarks that you’ve gained weight. It is considered a compliment.
- Do not be embarrassed if someone asks about your age; whether you are married, and if not, why not(!?); your parents; and other seemingly private issues.
- Privacy does not exist in Nepal in the same way as you understand in the West. If you really want to be alone, try to explain that you want to rest or have some important work to do.

Bhaktapur:



Lying just 22 miles (35km) east of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, also known as the City of Devotees, was the capital of the Kathmandu Valley during the 14th to 16th centuries, and the wealth of fabulous architectural showpieces, soaring pagodas, richly ornamented houses and medieval layout is testament to this period. The whole town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is filled with palaces, temples, statues and squares connected by a maze of largely pedestrian-only streets. The main central square, Durbar Square, boasts many architectural attractions, including the Golden Gate, the 15th-century Palace of 55 Windows, and several statues of ancient kings. The second main square of Taumadhi is presided over by the graceful Nyatapola Temple, the tallest in the Kathmandu Valley, atop a five-story platform. Bhaktapur is also the centre of traditional pottery and weaving industries in the Kathmandu Valley. Visiting Bhaktapur is like stepping back in time as the population has largely preserved their ancient traditions, with frequent colourful festivals and a meticulously restored cityscape. Visitors to this magnificent ancient city are required to pay a fairly steep entry fee but it is worth every penny.

Durbar Square:



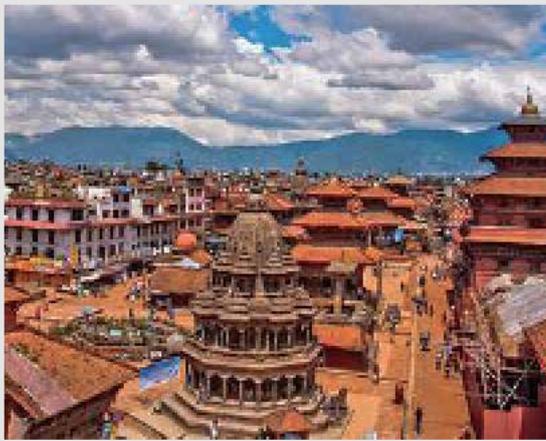
Protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Durbar Square is the religious and social heart of Kathmandu's old city and is a complex of palaces, temples, shrines, statues and courtyards built between the 12th and 18th centuries by the ancient kings of Nepal. The square is a queer assortment of the old and the new: elaborately carved architectural features and curving roofs provide shelter for cows, beggars and weary tourists; Brahman priests and painted Sadhus perform rituals and pose for photos; souvenir sellers and rickshaw drivers compete for attention among the crowds. Stone lions guard the gates to the Old Royal Palace that contains a number of courtyards and houses the Narayanhity Durbar Museum. Set into the palace wall is a 17th-century stone inscription written in 15 languages; it is believed that milk will flow from the spout below if anyone deciphers the entire inscription. On the other side of the square, the Kasthamandap Temple is an open pavilion topped by a pyramidal tower, said to be created from the wood of a single tree. It is purportedly the valley's oldest building, and the city of Kathmandu derives its name from this ancient temple, which is a very popular tourist attraction.

Patan:



One of the three royal cities in the Kathmandu Valley, Patan (officially called Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City) has a rich cultural heritage and is known for its fine crafts, evident in the elaborate architecture, stone carvings, and metal statues found all over the city. Patan is actually one of the biggest cities in Nepal but the historic attractions are mostly located near Durbar Square and this area is best explored on foot. Patan Durbar Square is a good place to see beautiful examples of palaces, temples and shrines, and the stunning stone carvings of the Sundari Courtyards. The entire city of Patan was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979 and it is a centre of both Buddhist and Hindu culture in Nepal. Patan is home to more than 1,200 monuments so tourists are spoiled for choice: one of the most stunning is the Krishna Mandir, a stone temple with magnificent friezes built in the 16th century, but there are many wonderful temples to explore. Some of the best temples, apart from those found on the main square, include the Mahaboudha Temple, the Rudravarna Mahavihar, the Machchhendranath Temple, the Golden Temple and the Kumbheshwar Temple. The Patan Museum is also a very popular tourist attraction.

Swayambhunath Stupa:



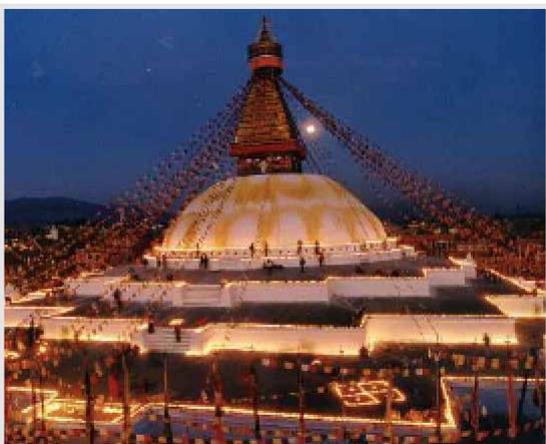
The golden spire of the 5th-century Swayambhu Stupa is adorned with a colourful fluttering of prayer flags; it crowns a hill overlooking the Kathmandu Valley and offers fantastic views over the city of Kathmandu. Swayambhunath is one of the most recognisable symbols in Nepal and the painted eyes of Buddha watch all those who ascend the worn stone steps. The Swayambhu Stupa is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the holiest Buddhist sites in Nepal, and is at the source of the Valley's mythical beginning. Legend has it that the history of the Valley began with the draining of an ancient lake by an Enlightened Being, when a lotus flower was transformed into the hill and the shining light became the stupa itself. Swarms of pilgrims and red-clad monks circle the complex, spinning the prayer wheels, while the scores of monkeys that give the temple its nickname, Monkey Temple, prance about in irreverent groups. Interestingly, the temple complex is scattered with shrines and statues of Buddhist and Hindu deities and the assortment of pilgrims from both faiths characterises the country's unique religious harmony. Visitors to this wonderful site should note that although they are often adorable and entertaining the monkeys can sometimes become aggressive if you have something they want.

Thamel Markets:



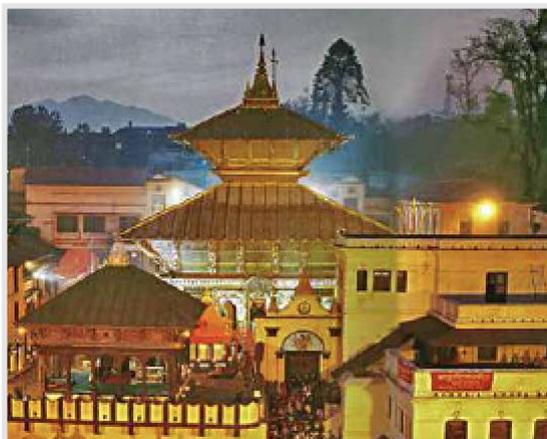
"Shop till you drop" should be your motto as Thamel is a shoppers' paradise. Satisfy your shopping urges in Thamel. You will be mystified by the amount of stuff on offer in Thamel from local handicrafts to woollen socks or hats, sleeping bags, walking gear, DVDs, backpacks, ponchos, chess sets, books, embroidered shirts, jewellery, bags, purses, travel agents and budget hotels. Particular, Thamel is a very good place to buy Handicrafts (Tibetan Paintings, wooden statues, puppets, etc). The remarkable choices of handicrafts made in Nepal are immensely popular throughout the world. You can get great bargains on a number items here including many types of hand crafted goods such as wooden carvings, carpets, paintings and hand-made paper items. The tourist board suggests that shoppers who are looking for expensive or custom-made items hire a Nepali shopper's assistant to go to the markets with them. Their services are available at most hotels, and their knowledge of the native language and bargaining process can be invaluable. Undoubtedly, Shopping in Thamel has to be one of the delights for its visitors. You will most probably find everything you want to buy in Nepal in Thamel. It's the experience of shopping here that people love to return to again and again.

Boudhanath Stupa:



With Kathmandu being such a hectic city of disarray, a sense of calm and spirituality can be found at Boudhanath Stupa. With a fusion of Buddhist and Tibetan culture, it is one of the holiest sites in Kathmandu. I suggest an early morning arrival (7-8AM); at that time you will see Tibetan monks in burgundy robes, elders, children and locals alike participating in morning prayers. It is a beautiful area, with the stupa in the middle with a circle of shops, monasteries and homes surrounding it. It is wonderful to watch people embrace their religion and go about this tradition. One thing to remember though, always walk with the crowd and always walk clockwise (its bad luck otherwise, and frowned upon). Join in the ceremonies - perhaps even get blessed by a monk - just enjoy the things that are going around you because this does not happen at home.

Pashupatinath Temple:



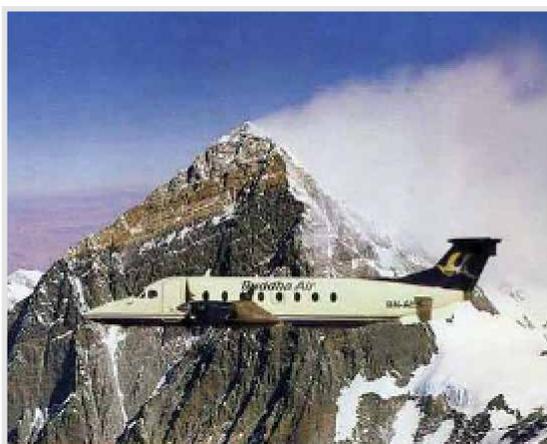
For me, this was one of the trip highlights. It is one of the most culturally interesting places to visit, and as long as you go with an open mind, and a respect for tradition, this could really be an eye opener. In Kathmandu this is one of the most significant Hindu temples, which is placed on the Bagmati River. The area seems to hold many smaller temples, which are 9 frequented by Sadhus (Holy Men). I think they may have been the most exciting part for me, such interesting people. What I found most interesting were the cremations though. The area along the river has designated stone slabs for funerals. It was so interesting to watch, and although in a way it seems morbid from a western standpoint, when you step back and realize that this is everyday life and you are just the viewer, it becomes fascinating to watch. From the distance you see mourning and celebration; death is welcome and not feared as it is in the west. It almost gives you a sense of peace. Again, this may not be how everyone views it, so take it as you do. A disclaimer though, the smoke from the cremating bodies is thick and everywhere, so you can't escape the involvement once there. I do suggest a visit, it is incredibly interesting and it gives a different perspective on Nepal's culture, and perhaps even life in

Garden of Dreams:



The Garden of Dreams, a neo classical historical garden, is situated in the midst of Kathmandu city, Nepal. The Garden was famous as the garden of Six Seasons which was created by late Field Marshal Kaiser Sumsher Rana (1892- 1964) in early 1920. After the completion of this Garden, it was considered as one of the most sophisticated private gardens of that time. However, it was a private garden of Kaiser Sumsher, it was beautifully designed inspired by the famous Edwardian style. Kishore Narshingh, a prominent architect who designed and constructed Singha Durbar in 1907, designed and supervised the construction of the Garden of Dreams. Within the Garden walls, Kaiser Sumsher created an exquisite ensemble of pavilions, fountains, decorative garden furniture and European inspired features such as verandas, pergolas, balustrades, urns and birdhouses. He erected six impressive pavilions, each dedicated to one of the six seasons of Nepal. These pavilions provided the Garden's architectural framework and lent a cosmopolitan flavour to the formal arrangement of flowers, shrubs and trees. Today, only half of the original garden is in existence.

Everest Fly Over:



When visiting Kathmandu, and your sole purpose is not to do a trek to Everest, another option to get a glimpse at the beast that is this mountain is to take a flight over it. I personally chose the trekking route myself (and I saw it on my way home from my plane). There are many charter companies that offer flights or helicopter rides towards Everest so you can get a good glimpse. Although not being quite as immersed, as you would be trekking, if you're short on time, but still want to see the top of the world, it's a pretty fabulous way of seeing it! Although you are limited to trekking within Kathmandu city itself, this place is the gateway to many various climbs, treks, hikes and walks. When visiting, be sure to do one of them. Some are long and hard, some short, and others just a stroll. Many local companies and guides can be hired at most times without notice and you can take part in. One of the most popular treks is of course the Everest Base Camp trek. It will take at least two weeks, however it is definitely worth the climb.