

Best things to do in Nepal

by Ami Bhat (Lonely Planet Author)
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Nepal is a curtain of fluttering prayer flags
Image courtesy: @Jennifer Sheppard/Getty Images

For a small landlocked Asian country, this Himalayan neighbour of India can be quite an enchanting destination for travellers. No matter what kind of a traveller you are – an adventure lover, a heritage buff, a foodie or even a wildlife enthusiast – Nepal has something to offer you. Here are 10 things that you can do when in Nepal.

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Nyatapoli Deval – Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Kathmandu
Image courtesy: ©Ami Bhat

Take a heritage tour of Kathmandu

Kathmandu was the erstwhile capital of the Newari Kings and, while they no longer rule, their kingdoms still exist in the form of three Unesco heritage sites known as the Durbar Squares. Despite several earthquakes and collapsed buildings, a lot is still left for a history lover to experience. Discover the tallest temple in Nepal – Nyatapoli Deval at Bhaktapur Durbar Square and visit the royal 55 windows palace and the stunning peacock windows here. At the Patan Durbar Square, the art lovers will enjoy the exquisite wooden carvings of the Newari homes and the Keshav Narayan Chowk. Visiting the Kumari Mahal – the palace of the Living Goddess, is unmissable at the third site – the Kathmandu Durbar Square.



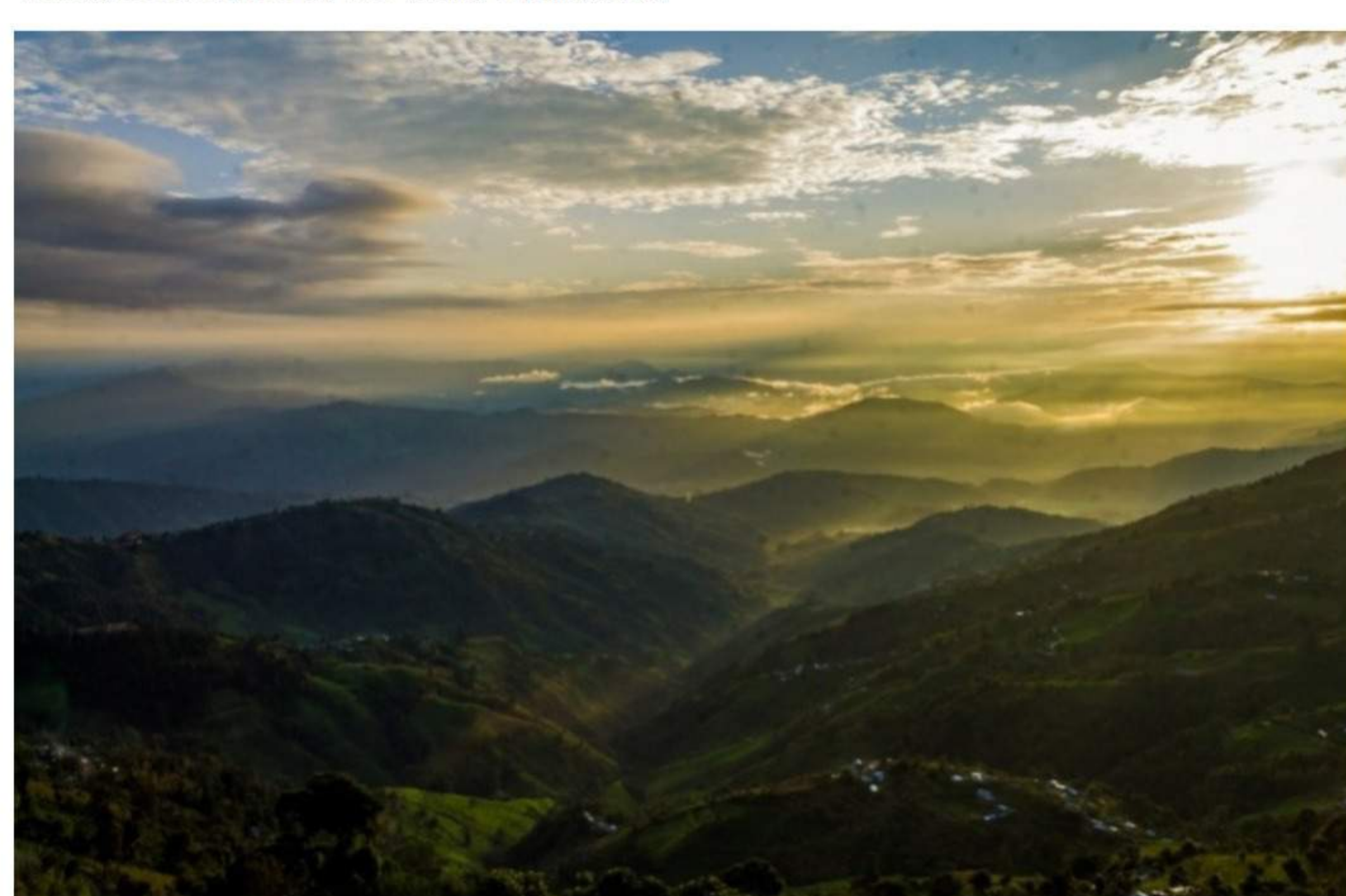
Pashupatinath Temple, Kathmandu
Image courtesy: ©Ami Bhat

Go temple hopping in Kathmandu

A temple trail through Kathmandu will let you experience two kinds of temples – the Hindu temples and the Buddhist ones. The uniqueness of each of these temples is what makes this trail interesting, even if you are not so much of a religious person. Explore the revered Pashupatinath temple for the Nepali customs that are practiced around it. Even if you are not allowed within its premises, you should explore the ghats behind it for its royal cenotaphs and a glimpse at the actual Pashupatinath temple from there. The floating Budhnilkantha statue is breathtaking, while the calming vibes of the Boudhanatha stupa and the Swayambhunath temple are bound to soothe your soul.

Pick your adrenaline fix

For an adrenaline junkie, Nepal literally offers you a menu for the kind of fix you may need. Take your pick from trekking on the Sarangkot hiking trail or head straight to one of the mountain base camps like Everest base camp or the Annapurna base camp. Try mountain biking or take a dare to bungee jump at Bhote Koshi river. You might even want to try river rafting or paragliding.



Sunrise in Nagarkot
Image courtesy: ©Ami Bhat

Experience sunrise over the Himalayas at Nagarkot

There is nothing like experiencing the first rays of sun cast a pink glow over the snow-capped Himalayas. Nagarkot, located at 32 kms from Kathmandu, is the perfect place to experience this sight from your hotel room balcony. Surrounded by the mighty peaks like Everest, Annapurna range, Langtang range and more, this quaint little town is perfect for those stunning green valley views.



A street in Bandipur
Image courtesy: ©Ami Bhat

Stay over at Bandipur

Go a little offbeat to discover a Newari town styled in a European fashion. With its no cars policy, cobblestone pathways, wooden doors and Juliet balconies, Bandipur, en route to Pokhara, will definitely fascinate you with its unique blend. Visit the Tindhara taps that connect a natural source of water to the town. A nature trail takes you to gorgeous views of the valley that you can even experience with paragliding offered here. Don't forget to visit the old monastery.

Experience the pristine lakes of Pokhara

Time spent by the lakeside is always so soothing, especially when the water is as clear and beautiful as the lakes of Pokhara. The Begnas and Phewa Lake offer you a chance to glide along the lake, while taking in the colourful bird life there. Surrounded by the Annapurna mountains, Pokhara is a natural stop for mountaineers and trekkers heading towards these camps. Don't miss the mysterious Bat cave & Mahendra Cave located in Pokhara.

Spot rhinos at Chitwan National Park

The wildlife enthusiasts would love Chitwan for its frequent sightings of the one-horned wonder. The National park is also popular for its Bengal tigers, gaurs, sambar deer and sloth bears. Equally fascinating is its birdlife, you can spot various species of kingfisher, hornbills, eagles and flycatchers. Stay clear of the gharials who inhabit the very river that you may take on for a boat safari.



Kumari – the Living Goddess of Nepal during Indra Jatra
Image courtesy: ©Ami Bhat

Witness the cultural festivals of Nepal

The Nepalese culture is a very vibrant one and the best time to experience it is during its festivals. Plan a visit to catch one of its many festivals – particularly Indra Jatra, where the elusive living Goddess of Nepal – Kumari, takes an annual tour of her city – Kathmandu. Experience the various rituals that are practiced at Kathmandu Durbar Square with offerings to the Kal Bhairava, while you enjoy the fun dances like Lakhey dance. The air is filled with so much energy that you are bound to join in for some fun.

Go on a food trail

Nepalese food is an amazing combination of Indian and Tibetan flavours. Starting with the chaats like pani puri, you can taste your way right up to its lip-smacking meal consisting of rice, vegetables, dal and salad. The piping hot thukpa and the momos are perfect for those who wish to avoid spice. However, note that your meal will not be complete without that small peg of Raksi – their rice-based liquor. Even if you are a teetotaler, you should definitely check out the manner in which Raksi is served.

Shop till you drop

It doesn't matter if or not you are a shopaholic, Nepalese markets will tempt you to buy something from brass singing bowls, stunning Thangka art pieces, simple pottery articles to colourful woollen clothes, funky caps and shoes. If you are running short of baggage space, buying a new one won't hurt.

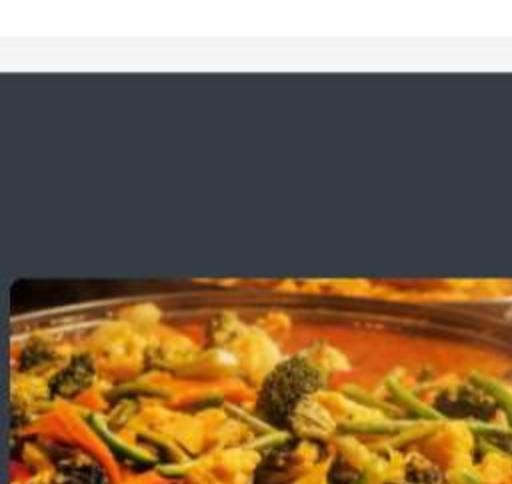
AUTHOR'S BIO: Ami Bhat is senior marketing professional, currently on a break to pursue full-time travel blogging. A travel enthusiast, who loves sports, photography and dancing with equal passion. More on: www.thrillingtravel.in



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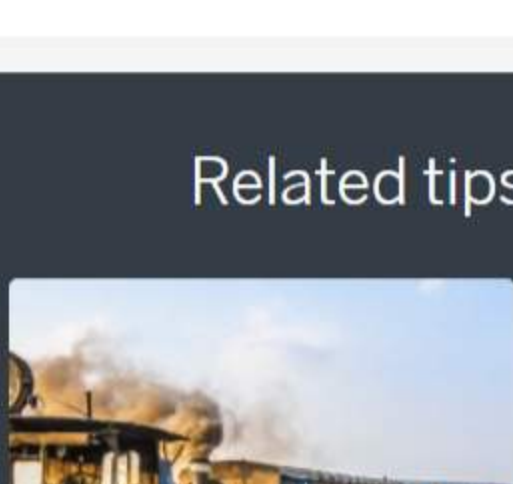
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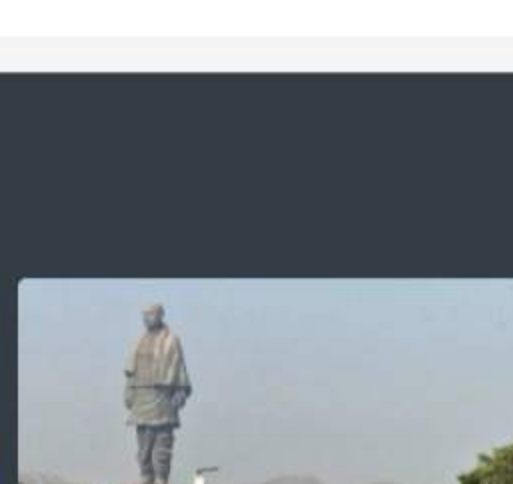
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