

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

### 8-Day Cultural, Educational & Spiritual Adventure

#### Kathmandu, Nepal

#### THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING DRALA ADVENTURES!

We are happy to provide some important travel information to ensure that you are well prepared for your upcoming trip. Please take a few minutes to read through this information. We wish you a wonderful and enriching journey!



#### HISTORY

Only slightly larger than Arkansas, Nepal is geographically stretched along the Great Himalaya Range and nestled between two giant neighbors—India and China (formerly known as Tibet). The Himalayan's most sophisticated urban cultures took shape there centuries ago in the three famous kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur—home to world-class spiritual, artistic and architectural heritage. Nepal contains 8 of the world's 10 highest peaks including Mount Everest, Kanchenjunga and Anapurna. During trekking season beginning in late March, the streets of Kathmandu are filled with the excitement of international mountaineers preparing for their ascents. Nepal has a population of about 29.5 million with a life expectancy of 60 years. It is a spiritually tolerant country comprised of about 80% Hindus and 10% Buddhists. Even though Nepal is one of the poorest countries on Earth with a literacy rate under 50%, visitors are enchanted by the diversity, friendliness and good humor of its people.

#### POLITICS

In 1951 the Nepalese monarch ended the century-old system of rule by hereditary premiers and instituted a cabinet system of government. Reforms in 1990 established a multiparty democracy within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. An insurgency led by Maoists broke out in 1996 and a 10-year civil war ensued between the insurgents and government

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forces. Nepal ended the Maoist insurgency in November 2006 and established an interim government in January 2007. National elections in April 2008 formed a Constituent Assembly to serve as a parliamentary body and draft a new constitution by May 2010. The Constituent Assembly declared Nepal a federal democratic republic and abolished the monarchy in May 2008. The Maoists, who received a plurality of votes in the Constituent Assembly election formed a coalition government in August 2008.

Political demonstrations and unrest have occurred sporadically throughout Nepal in the past and may escalate due to recent political tensions. The Department of State warns US citizens of the potential risks of traveling to Nepal and urges caution when traveling in that country. The Department of State remains concerned about the security situation in Nepal. US citizens are advised to obtain updated security information before traveling and they should be prepared to change their plans on short notice.

Travelers are advised to read the most recent travel warning for Nepal issued by the Department of State at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_927.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_927.html). Additionally, we encourage travelers to register with the US Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

#### **PREFERRED PROVIDER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Due to personal preferences for particular airlines, fare classes and travel routes, international airfares and travel insurance are not included in the price of your trip. However, we recommend Santa Barbara Travel (SB Travel) to work directly with you to handle all your travel arrangements. SB Travel will determine your best route and coordinate your international flights to allow arrival in Kathmandu at the time specified to begin your Drala Adventures trip. They also provide travel insurance.

**Santa Barbara Travel:** Established in 1947, SB Travel is a full service company that specializes in international travel. Its travel professionals take care of all the travel arrangement details so that you can relax and enjoy the moment.

#### Contact Information:

Email: Andrew Seligman at [aseligman@sbtravel.com](mailto:aseligman@sbtravel.com)

Telephone: 800-266-5452 or 805-969-7746

Website: [www.sbtravel.com](http://www.sbtravel.com)

#### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance for unforeseen changes, problems or emergencies. Santa Barbara Travel (above) offers this service. Your insurance agent or credit card company may also provide travel insurance.

#### **RECOMMENDED READING**

Lonely Planet Nepal GuideBook

Myth of Freedom, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Start Where You Are, by Pema Chodron

Fun Reading: Bring absorbing books to read when you wake-up in the middle of the night!

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## PRACTICAL INFORMATION & PACKING LISTS

### TRAVEL DOCUMENTS – Pack copies in a place separate from originals

passport identification page (must be valid 6 months after trip date)  
airline tickets  
driver's license  
credit cards

### TOURIST VISAS & FEES

**Visas:** Tourist visas can be obtained upon arrival at the immigration counter at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport. Two (2) passport photos are required for the visa application. Major foreign currencies are accepted to pay visa fees as quoted in USD: a) \$25 for 15 days multiple-entries; b) \$40 for 30 days multiple-entries; or c) \$100 for 90 days multiple-entries. Visas may also be obtained in advance through the Nepal Embassy in your resident country [Washington, DC for US citizens] and must be used within 6 months from date of issue.

**Cash Declaration:** Tourists carrying more than USD 2,000 or equivalent foreign currency are requested to declare in the Custom Declaration Form at the time of arrival in Nepal. For more information visit 'Tourist Visa Requirements' at [www.nepalembassy.org](http://www.nepalembassy.org).

**Airport Exit Tax:** Before departure from the Tribhuvan International Airport, all foreigners, regardless of their length of stay, must pay an airport exit tax (approximately USD 21).

### CURRENCY & CREDIT CARDS

1 USD ≈ 73.5 Nepalese Rupees (NPR)  
1 EUR ≈ 94.2 Nepalese Rupees (NPR)

Major foreign currencies and credit cards are generally accepted at the larger hotels, restaurants and shops. We suggest travel notification be provided to your credit card company to ensure international charges are accepted. Ask if foreign transaction fees will be applied as some credit cards charge high fees while others charge none. ATM machines are available at certain locations in Kathmandu. Traveler's checks are easily cashed at hotels, banks & shops.

### COMMUNICATION SERVICES

**Computers, Telephone & Fax:** The Kathmandu Hyatt Regency Hotel provides international phone service and high-speed wireless (wireless is free for Drala guests) in each room, and a full-service business center on the main floor. Skype calls can be made at no charge via your computer.

**Cell Phones:** You may want to add an international call and/or text package to your plan for the days you will be abroad as international calls are expensive, ie., AT&T charges \$3.49/minute to make/receive calls in Nepal. AT&T offers an international text package of 100 texts for \$10 (remember to cancel the plan upon your return).

### TIME DIFFERENCE

Nepal is 5 hours + 45 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. [10 hours + 45 minutes ahead of EST and 13 hours + 45 minutes ahead of PST].

**ELECTRICAL CURRENT**

Nepal's electrical current is 220V/50 cycles. Bring transformer/converter plugs for 120V appliances (laptops, curling irons, etc.)

**ALTITUDE & CLIMATE**

The Kathmandu Valley is situated at 4446 ft above sea level. The country has a typical monsoonal, two-season year. The dry season runs from October to May and the hot, wet season runs from June to September. Fall (mid-September to November) and Spring (March to May) bring almost perfect weather and are the best times to visit. Following the monsoon, Fall months enjoy a green and lush countryside, the air is fresh and clear and the Himalayan views are near perfect. Spring months, the tail-end of the dry season, get a bit warmer during the day with occasional afternoon thunder showers. Temperatures during the Fall range from 65-75°F [18-24° C] in the day and 45-55°F [7-13° C] at night.

**WHAT TO PACK**

International travel requires some common sense practices and safety begins when you pack. To avoid becoming a target, it is advised not to dress so as to mark yourself as an affluent tourist. Expensive-looking jewelry and watches can draw the wrong attention and are best left at home. You may want to carry a shoulder-strap travel bag or fanny pack and leave expensive handbags at home.

Laundry service is available on a daily basis at the Kathmandu Hyatt Regency Hotel, thereby allowing you to pack light. The Nepalese are a traditional and reserved people – it is greatly appreciated to respect their custom of modest dress. Shorts and revealing clothes are unsuitable for women; however, shorts are acceptable for men. Your wardrobe should be sturdy, casual and comfortable; however, it's fine to dress up a bit for evening gatherings and dinners at the hotel. Temperatures vary during the day and evening, therefore clothing that can be layered is the most suitable. Sturdy, comfortable shoes are a must for Kathmandu's rugged streets as we will be walking a lot. Slip-on shoes are advisable when visiting monasteries as they are removed before entering.

**Recommended Packing List:**

- Comfortable walking shoes – running shoes and sandals with rubber soles & good support
- T-shirts, polo shirts and/or other comfortable shirts
- Jeans, kakis and other durable pants
- Capris, dresses & skirts
- Sweatshirts, sweaters & jacket
- Rain jacket & compact umbrella
- Swimming suit & flip-flops for the spa & pool
- Work-out clothing for the Fitness Center
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen & lip balm
- Camera, lenses and plenty of film
- Flashlight & extra batteries
- Transformer, converter plug and adaptors for electrical appliances/equipment
- Day-pack, shoulder-strap travel bag or fanny pack
- Extra suitcase for shopping treasures
- Journal or notebook
- Travel alarm clock

## HEALTH CARE

**Immunizations & Travel Medicine:** Please consult your personal physician or local travel clinic to determine which precautions, immunizations, prescriptions and OTC medicines are advised for your safe travel. Common discomforts associated with long-distance travel and visiting third-world countries are sleep difficulties, sore throats, upper respiratory ailments and diarrhea. CDC Travelers' Health also offers information to assist travelers and their health-care providers in deciding the vaccines, medications and other measures necessary to prevent illness and injury during international travel. Visit <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>.

**Suggested Travel Medical Kit:** Make certain to bring an adequate supply of prescription, OTC and/or alternative medicines that are part of your daily health regimen. It is advised to bring a medical kit with basic items to treat headaches, fever, flu, cough, cold, allergies, sore throat, cold sores, upset stomach and diarrhea; sinus & nasal decongestants; antacids & laxatives; lip balm & eye care drops; motion sickness & sleeping aides (jet lag tablets, melatonin for time change); antiseptic ointment & band-aids; and a prescription antibiotic such as Cipro, should it be required. Some travelers report the dietary supplement grapefruit seed extract (tablet or liquid) wards off stomach ailments when used as a prophylactic.

**Medical Care in Kathmandu:** The CIWEC Clinic Travel Medicine Center located across from the British Embassy in Kathmandu is one of the most famous destination travel clinics in the world. CIWEC was established in 1982 to meet the need for a Western standard clinic to treat foreign tourists, diplomats and aid workers in Nepal. The clinic is known internationally both for the high level of care afforded to patients, and for its reliable research and information about health risks in Nepal. Visit CIWEC Clinic at [www.ciwec-clinic.com](http://www.ciwec-clinic.com).

## TRAVEL RELATED LINKS

A Safe Trip Abroad: [www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_1747.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html)

CIWEC Clinic Travel Medicine Center: [www.ciwec-clinic.com/](http://www.ciwec-clinic.com/)

Currency Exchange: [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic)

Kathmandu Hyatt Regency Hotel: [www.kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp](http://www.kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp)

Passport Information: [www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)

Santa Barbara Travel: [www.sbtravel.com](http://www.sbtravel.com)

Time Zone Converter: [www.timezoneconverter.com/cgi-bin/tzc.tzc](http://www.timezoneconverter.com/cgi-bin/tzc.tzc)

Traveler's Health at the Centers for Disease Control: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel)

US Dept of State Travel Warnings: [www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html)

US Embassy in Kathmandu: [www.nepal.usembassy.gov](http://www.nepal.usembassy.gov)

Visa Information at the Nepal Embassy: [www.nepalembassyusa.org](http://www.nepalembassyusa.org)

World Weather: [www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com)