

TRAVEL INFORMATION

8-Day Spiritual, Cultural & Educational 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 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.

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

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

Website: www.sbtravel.com

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

We suggest you make copies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license, and credit cards, and pack the copies in a place separate from where you carry the originals.

Passports: US citizens need a passport that is valid for six months from the date of completion of your trip.

Visas: Tourist visas can be obtained at the immigration counter upon arrival at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. Presently, visas cost US \$25 for a 15 day multiple-entry visit or US \$40 for a 30 day multiple-entry visit. Tourists may stay in Nepal no longer than 150 days in any given calendar year. You must bring 2 passport photos and pay in USD cash or travelers checks. Tourist visas can also be obtained before the trip through the Nepal Embassy in Washington, DC. For more information visit www.nepalembassyusa.org/index.php.

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 \$21).

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly 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.

HEALTH CARE

Immunizations & Travel Medicine: We strongly recommend that you 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. Traveler's Health at the Centers for Disease Control offers helpful information. Visit www.cdc.gov/travel.

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.

RECOMMENDED READING

Guide Book: Lonely Planet Nepal

Buddhist Philosophy: Myth of Freedom by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche; Start Where You Are by Pema Chodron; and Old Path White Clouds by Thich Nhat Hanh

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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].

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 dry season range from 70-85°F in the day and 45-59°F at night.

Currency: The currency of Nepal is the Nepali Rupee (NPR). The exchange rate as of July 2009 is 1USD ≈ 79 NPR. Major credit cards are generally accepted at the larger hotels, restaurants and shops. ATM machines are available at certain locations in Kathmandu. US dollars are accepted, so we suggest you carry US currency in small denominations for smaller purchases. Traveler's checks are easily cashed at hotels, banks & shops and are safer than cash. It's a good idea to keep your traveler's checks receipts in a separate location.

Communication Services: The Kathmandu Hyatt Regency Hotel offers wireless internet, international phone & fax services. Many internet cafes in Kathmandu also offer these services.

Electrical Current: Nepal's electrical current is 220V/50 cycles; therefore our 120V appliances (laptops, curling irons, etc.) require a transformer / converter plug.

What to Pack: International travel requires some common sense practices and safety begins when you pack. To help 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. Your wardrobe should be sturdy, casual and comfortable. Temperatures vary during the day and evening, so clothing that can be layered is the most suitable. Sturdy, comfortable shoes & sandals 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.

Nepalis are a very traditional and reserved people; therefore it is greatly appreciated to respect their custom of modest dress. Shorts and revealing clothes are unsuitable for women, below-the-knee capris, dresses & skirts are fine. Shorts are acceptable for men. Jeans, pants, shirts, t-shirts, sweaters and sweatshirts are suitable for both men & women. You may want to bring a swimsuit for the pool & spa and work-out clothes for the fitness center.



TRAVEL RELATED LINKS

A Safe Trip Abroad: www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

CIWEC Clinic Travel Medicine Center: www.ciwec-clinic.com/

Currency Exchange: www.oanda.com/convert/classic

Kathmandu Hyatt Regency Hotel: www.kathmandu.regency.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp

Passport Information: www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

Santa Barbara Travel: www.sbtravel.com

Time Zone Converter: www.timezoneconverter.com/cgi-bin/tzc.tzc

Traveler's Health at the Centers for Disease Control: wwwn.cdc.gov/travel

US Dept of State Travel Warnings: www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

US Embassy in Kathmandu: www.nepal.usembassy.gov

Visa Information at the Nepal Embassy: www.nepalembassyusa.org

World Weather: www.accuweather.com