



## **7 Days in Greater Kathmandu**

As the capital and largest city in the country, Kathmandu is the cultural center of Nepal. Despite this, many travelers treat Kathmandu as simply a launching point for trekking elsewhere in the country. Embrace the opportunities for cultural exploration and immersion and settle in for a long stay. Kathmandu Valley comprises the three ancient cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, which were once independent states ruled by the Malla kings from the 12th to the 18th centuries. Together, these cities are home to seven UNESCO World Heritage shrines, hundreds of monuments, and magnificent art and architecture, not to mention beautiful scenery in the valley just outside the city.

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## Day 1

**Transportation:** Just before you leave the airport, look for a pre-paid taxi counter on the right. Although more expensive, this is the least hassle option for heading to the city center: prices to numerous destinations are displayed on a board behind the counter. To save more, head outside and negotiate as low as 250 rupees.

Prepaid taxi to Thamel (Center) - NPR700 and 20 minutes, depending on traffic

**Lunch:** Within Thamel, you'll find dozens of tourist restaurants serving all types of international cuisine. However, Nepali dishes will consistently be the best priced and best tasting. If you're looking for something different, try Cozy Restaurant for their buffalo steaks. From Thamel Chowk, walk down Tridevi Marg and it's on the right, second story, by an internet cafe.

Cozy Restaurant | Thamel, Kathmandu  
Most entrees NPR200-300.

**Afternoon Walk Through the City:** Touring Thamel and Durbar Square, the Welcome To My Yard Tour looks at Kathmandu's history, culture, and community from a local perspective rather than simply showing off the sites. This three hour walk will provide a great introduction to navigating the city, understanding local culture, and providing background on how Kathmandu has changed over the years.

Welcome to My Yard | 3-Hour Daily Walking Tours | NPR 2200  
Tours Departing from Kathmandu Guesthouse in the Afternoon  
More Information at <http://www.welcometomyard.com/>

**Dinner and a Show:** After walking through the city, you've likely worked up an appetite. Sample Nepali specialties in a traditional multi-course meal served while you enjoy local music and dancing. Several restaurants offer these types of performances, but Bhojan Griha delivers quality most consistently. Beware of the Raksi, a locally brewed spirit.

Bhojan Griha | Dilli Bazaar, Kathmandu  
Open 8am-10pm; Shows Typically 6:30-8:30pm | Set Menu US\$20  
More Information at <http://www.bhojagriha.com/>

**Accommodations:** Hotel options in Kathmandu run from basic guesthouses to luxury hotels, but **Micasa Hotel** blends comfort with affordability. Rooms have cable TV, heating and air conditioning, free wi-fi, and private bathrooms with hot water.

Micasa Hotel | Thamel, Kathmandu | 0977-14-415149  
Rooms starting at \$50 including breakfast  
More information at <http://www.micasanepal.com/>

## Day 2

**Introduction to Nepali Cooking:** Now that you've sampled some of the region's traditional foods, learn how to prepare them. You'll start by going to the local markets to buy fresh ingredients and return to the kitchen to prepare typical Himalayan dishes like momos, lentil soup, vegetable curry, and celebration bread. Throughout your course, you'll learn how to speak basic Nepali and get an inside look at family life in Nepal before sampling your dishes for lunch.

Nepali Cooking Course | 1-Day Classes 7am-12pm | NPR 2000  
More Information at <http://nepalicookingcourse.com/>

**Side Trip to Patan:** Just across the Bagmati River is Patan, or the "City of Beauty" as it's called in Sanskrit. The architecture surrounding Patan's Durbar Square (NPR 500) is more impressive than Kathmandu's, plus you'll find hundreds of smaller stupas in the backstreets. The city is compact and easily explored in an afternoon, leaving time for shopping for woodcarvings, metal work, jewelry, pashminas, and rugs. Plan on spending about 2-3 hours.

**Transportation:** Easiest transport is via private taxi (NPR 250-300 one-way), but minibuses depart from Ratnapark (NPR 12), and blue or green buses depart from Kathmandu's Ring Road (NPR 20).

**Dinner:** For a relaxing, upscale place, enjoy dinner at Roadhouse Cafe. They specialize in wood-fired pizza, but offer plenty of Nepali dishes as well, all of which can be washed down with a local beer.

Roadhouse Cafe | Located on JP School Road in Thamel  
Pizzas (sized to share) NPR 600

**Accommodations:** Spend another night at Micasa Hotel.

Day 3

**Mountain Biking Fun:** It would be a shame to visit Kathmandu and not spend anytime enjoying the Valley's splendid nature. Hop on a mountain bike and spend the day riding a mix of off-road trails and single tracks. You can zig-zag your way through rice paddies and rural villages while you enjoy steep climbs, sweet downhills, a picnic lunch, and great adventure.

Himalayan Single Track | 1-Day Rides for all skill levels | US \$65  
More Information at <http://www.himalayansingletrack.com/>

**Progressive Dinner:** Start your dinner early by joining a guided "secret food tour". With a guide, you'll hit the most famous food stalls in Kathmandu, ones often frequented only by locals. Sample samosas, momos, pain purri, and lassi. If you're still hungry by the end of the tour, you'll leave with insider knowledge on which other stalls to fill up at.

Secret Food Tour | 3 Hour Tours Departing at 4pm | NPR 1000  
More Information at <http://www.backstreetacademy.com/>

**Accommodations:** Spend another night at Micasa Hotel.

#### Day 4

**Make Your Own Pottery:** An integral part of Nepalese culture, the art of pottery goes back millenia. Learn about how to get the clay to the optimal moisture level for molding and try your hand on the pottery wheel! Once you have your basic shape hammered out, take your time to adorn it with beautiful Nepalese patterns and inscriptions.

Pottery Class | 4 hour courses at 9am, 12:30pm, or 4pm | NPR 1800  
More information at <http://www.backstreetacademy.com/>

**Lunch:** Add some variety to your diet by dining on Middle Eastern cuisine at OR2K. This place has great atmosphere, free wi-fi, and healthy meals, many of which are vegetarian.

OR2K | Located down a side street just of Tridevi Marg, west of the main Thamel Cowk  
Large portions NPR 300-600

**Pashupatinath:** On the eastern side of Kathmandu is the Pashupatinath Temple (NPR 1000), one of the most significant Hindu temples of Shiva in the world. The temple is closed to non-Hindus, but visitors can witness the ritual of washing dead bodies in the adjacent Bagmati River. The bodies are wrapped in shrouds, draped with marigold garlands, and carried to nearby ghats where they are cremated in public.

**Transportation:** Easiest transport is via private taxi (NPR 100 one-way from Thamel).

**Boudhanath/Bodhnath:** Boudhanath (NPR 150) is home to one of the world's largest Buddhist stupas. According to legend, the stupa was built during the 5th century AD by an old woman who asked the king for land to construct a shrine to Buddha. The king agreed and offered her as much land as she could cover with the skin of a water buffalo. The woman cut a buffalo hide into thin strips, placing them end to end to form a huge circumference and tricking the king. Visit late afternoon, when pilgrims are circumnavigating the structure clockwise chanting mantras, spinning prayer wheels, and lighting lamps.

**Transportation:** It's a pleasant 20-minute walk from Pashupatinath to Boudhanath. Take the footbridge across the river right in front of the Guhyeshwari Temple and head north for five minutes. At a signposted junction by a tree temple, turn right and continue until you hit the next junction. There, take the middle (straight) path, and you'll eventually come out on the main road.

**Dinner:** Near Boudhanath, the Stupa View Restaurant lives up to its name, offering good views over the stupa. You're paying for the view, but the quality of food and service is also good.

Stupa View Restaurant | Near Boudhanath  
Most entrees NPR 200

**Accommodations:** Spend another night at Micasa Hotel.

**Day 5**

**Shivapuri National Park:** North of the city, just an hour and a half away, is a whole different world. At Shivapuri National Park, you'll find a great retreat from the city hustle and great hiking. With lush, green flora and potentially the opportunity to view some wildlife, a day trip here is a great change of pace. Spend about five hours hiking the trails, have lunch with the Holy Baba, and then return to Kathmandu, reenergized and refreshed.

Tours Offered by Traveltimes Treks | US \$25

More information at <http://www.traveltimes.com.np/>

**Dinner:** After a physically intense day, you've earned a feast! Everest Steakhouse is popular with trekkers, so there's no reason you can't visit after a day hike.

Everest Steakhouse | Just off Chhetrapati, near the pagoda roundabout.

Most entrees approximately NPR 300.

**Accommodations:** Spend another night at Micasa Hotel.

## Day 6

**Dakshinkali Temple:** South of Kathmandu, passing through Pharping village, is the temple of Dakshinkali. The temple was originally built in the 17th century and is the site of a famous Hindu pilgrimage dedicated to the goddess Kali. Every Tuesday and especially Saturday, devotees arrive to sacrifice animals and give offering to Kali. In fact, each year, over half a million pilgrims visit this site. It's not for the faint of heart, but it is an eye-opener to local culture.

**Transportation:** A 45-minute taxi (NPR 1500 round-trip, including 1 hour waiting time) will bring you here most conveniently, or buses run from the Old City Bus Park and Ratnapark. Minibuses may be available near Martyr's Gate.

**Lunch:** You'll have more restaurant options once you return to Kathmandu, and frankly, you may have lost your appetite watching the sacrificial offerings anyway. Located almost directly opposite of Kathmandu Guest House, New Orleans has a wide variety of food, ice cold beer, and great desserts like apple pie and other baked goods.

**Swayambhunath:** End your day at Swayambhunath Temple, also known as Monkey Temple. Although it has both Buddhist and Hindu significance, the most iconic part is the central white stupa with its painted Buddha eyes. An hour is sufficient to visit the stupa and photograph the monkeys before either returning to Thamel via taxi or walking (30 minutes).

**Dinner:** Enjoy great views from the tallest rooftop restaurant in Kathmandu. Sure, it's a climb to Helena's Rooftop Restaurant, but it's worth it, especially after dark when you can see the city lit up.

Helena's Rooftop Restaurant | On JP School Road, Thamel, Kathmandu  
Most entrees approximately NPR 350

**Accommodations:** Spend another night at Micasa Hotel.

## Day 7

**Changu Narayan:** In a scenic setting, Changu Narayan is a complex of beautiful temples, intricately carved statues and a museum of various artifacts - all expertly displayed with helpful cards in English. Considering you can see here the oldest stone inscription in the country (dating back to the 5th century), it's amazing how few tourists visit. Don't miss the temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu (NPR 100), the oldest in Nepal.

**Transportation:** A taxi (NPR 600) is easiest.

**Design a Thangka:** A Thangka painting is not only a decoration or a creation of beauty, but is the means to convey the iconography and lineage essential for a Vajrayana Buddhist practitioner. Sunapati Thangka School offers short workshops for anyone interested in learning and understanding the iconography, methods, materials and techniques involved in the process of creation of Thangka paintings.

Sunapati Thangka School | Located on the steps directly across the Changu Museum  
Introductory class at 11am & 2pm daily | NPR 300 | No reservations necessary  
More information at <http://traditionalartofnepal.com/>

**Lunch:** On the main road of town, you'll find small local restaurants featuring regional food like lentils, rice, vegetable curry, and momos.

**Short Hike:** From Changu Narayan, it's a downhill walk to Bhaktapur, lasting about ninety minutes. A network of trails will lead you via the village of Jhaukhel, and locals are happy to point out the way. Alternatively, a taxi costs about NPR 250 and public buses cost RPS 8.

**Bhaktapur City Tour:** The city of medieval art is located 14 km east of Kathmandu and even closer to Changu Narayan and is a great place to spend the afternoon. Highlights of the city include Durbar Square, the best preserved in the area; Nyatapola, the highest temple in the valley; Til Mahadev Narayan, an important place of pilgrimage; Pottery Square, where thousands of clay pots are made and sold; and Tachupal Tole, another square containing temples and monasteries. While you're there, allow time to explore the many woodworking and craft shops, get lost down narrow cobbled streets, and try some of their famous yogurt with honey: Juju-dhau, or "king of all yogurt".

**Dinner:** Just outside of Bhaktapur's Durbar Square, walk three minutes out the front gate and look on the right hand side for the unusual Cafe Beyond, a Korean restaurant that donates a portion of its profits to a local non-profit organization.

Cafe Beyond | Itachhen 15, Bhaktapur | Entrees NPR 250

**Accommodations:** Spend another night at Micasa Hotel before heading onward tomorrow.