



*Magnificent Nepal
With
Fascinating Bhutan*



Nepal

“Once is not enough”



Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is a landlocked central Himalayan country in South Asia. Nepal is divided into 7 provinces and 75 districts and 744 local units including 4 metropolises, 13 sub-metropolises, 246 municipal councils and 481 villages. It has a population of 26.4 million and is the 93rd largest country by area. Bordering China in the north and India in the south, east, and west, it is the largest sovereign Himalayan state. Nepal does not border Bangladesh, which is located within only 27 km (17 mi) of its southeastern tip. Neither does it border Bhutan due to the Indian state of Sikkim being located in between. Nepal has a diverse geography, including fertile plains, subalpine forested hills, and eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, including Mount Everest, the highest point on Earth. Kathmandu is the nation's capital and largest city. It is a multiethnic nation with Nepali as the official language.



The territory of Nepal has a recorded history since the Neolithic age. The name "Nepal" is first recorded in texts from the Vedic Age, the era which founded Hinduism, the predominant religion of the country. In the middle of the first millennium BCE, Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born in southern Nepal. Parts of northern Nepal were intertwined with the culture of Tibet. The Kathmandu Valley in central Nepal became known as Nepal proper because of its complex urban civilisation. It was the seat of the prosperous Newar confederacy known as Nepal Mandala. The Himalayan branch of the ancient Silk Road was dominated by the valley's traders. The cosmopolitan region developed distinct traditional art and architecture. By the 18th century, the Gorkha Kingdom achieved the unification of Nepal. The Shah dynasty established the Kingdom of Nepal and later formed an alliance with the British Empire, under its Rana dynasty of premiers. The country was never colonised but served as a buffer state between Imperial China and Colonial India. In the 20th century, Nepal ended its isolation and forged strong ties with regional powers. Parliamentary democracy was introduced in 1951, but was twice suspended by Nepalese monarchs in 1960 and 2005. The Nepalese Civil War resulted in the proclamation of a republic in 2008, ending the reign of the world's last Hindu monarchy. Modern Nepal is a federal secular parliamentary republic. It has seven states. Nepal is a developing nation, ranking 144th on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2016. The country struggles with the transition from a monarchy to a republic. It also suffers from high levels

of hunger and poverty. Despite these challenges, Nepal is making steady progress, with the government declaring its commitment to elevate the nation from least developed country status by 2022. Nepal also has a vast potential to generate hydropower for export.

Bhutan

“The Dragon Kingdom”



The Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan lies along the lofty ridges of the eastern Himalayas, bordered by China (Tibet) to the north and northwest, and by the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal and Sikkim on the east, south and west respectively.

With an area of 46,500 square km., Bhutan is comparable to Switzerland both in its size and topography. The mighty Himalayas protected Bhutan from the rest of the world and left it blissfully untouched through the centuries. The Drukpa Kagyupa school of Mahayana Buddhism provided the essence of a rich culture and a fascinating history. The Bhutanese people protected this sacred heritage and unique identity for centuries by choosing to remain shrouded in a jealously guarded isolation.

The kingdom is peopled sparsely, with a population approaching 700,000. The written history of the kingdom dates back to the 8th century, with Guru Padmasambhavas legendary flight from Tibet to Bhutan in 747 AD on the back of a tigress. The Guru, also considered as the second Buddha, arrived in Taktsang (Tigers Nest), on the cliffs above the valley of Paro, and from there began propagation of the Tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism. In the ensuing centuries many great masters preached the faith, resulting in the full bloom of Buddhism in the country by the middle ages. Although sectarian at first, the country was eventually unified under the Drukpa Kagyupa sect of Mahayana Buddhism in the early 17th century, by the religious figure, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Shabdrung codified a comprehensive system of laws and built dzongs which guarded each valley during unsettled times, and nowadays serves as the religious and administrative centres of their respective regions. In the next two centuries, the nation was once again fragmented into regional fiefdoms with intermittent civil wars.

At the end of the 19th century, the Tongsa Penlop, Ugyen Wangchuck, who then controlled the central and eastern regions, overcame all his rivals and united the nation once again. He was unanimously accepted as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan in 1907.



Bhutan is the only extant Mahayana Buddhist kingdom in the world of today and the teachings of this school of Buddhism are a living faith among its people. The air of spirituality is pervasive even in urban centers where the spinning of prayer wheels, the murmur of mantras and the glow of butter lamps are still commonplace features of everyday life. Bhutan's religious sites and institutions are not museums, but the daily refuge of the people.

One of the most striking physical features of Bhutan is its architecture. The characteristic style and colour of every building and house in the kingdom is a distinct source of aesthetic pleasure. The dzongs - themselves imposing 17th century structures built on a grand scale without the help of any drawings and constructed entirely without nails - are outstanding examples of the best in Bhutanese architecture. Patterns of rich colours adorn walls, beams, pillars and doors in traditional splendour.



As with its architecture, art and painting are important aspects of Bhutanese culture and they bear testimony to the spiritual depth of Bhutanese life. Whether it is on a wall, or one of the renowned thangkhas, painters use vegetable dyes to give their work an unparalleled subtle beauty and warmth. Bhutan also boasts a wealth of cottage industries, and the skills of its wood carvers, gold and silversmiths, and weavers (to name only a few) are all representative of highly developed art forms.

One of the main attractions of the kingdom is its annual religious festivals, the tsechus celebrated to honor Guru Padmasambhava (more commonly referred to as Guru Rinpoche). For local people, tsechus are an occasion for reverence and blessing, feasting and socializing. Two of the most popular tsechus are held at Paro and Thimphu, in spring and autumn respectively, but others are held all the year round at temples, dzongs and monasteries throughout Bhutan. Attendance at one of these religious events provides an opportunity for the outsider to experience the extraordinary.

Nowhere in the Himalayas is the natural heritage more rich and varied than in Bhutan. In historical records, the kingdom is referred to as the Valley of Medicinal Herbs, a name that still applies to this day. The countries richly diverse flora and fauna result from its unique geographic location in the eastern Himalayas where the Tibetan plateau meets South Asia, its annual rainfall which is significantly higher than in the central and western Himalayas, and its considerable altitudinal variation, from 200m above sea level in the south to over 7,000m above sea level in the north, and consequent dramatic climatic variations. Because of the deep traditional reverence, which the Bhutanese have for nature, the kingdom is one of the leading countries in environmental conservation. Over 70% of Bhutans land area is still under forest cover. Many parts of the country have been declared wildlife reserves, and are the natural habitats of rare species of both flora and fauna.

Opened for tourism in 1974, after the coronation of the present King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan is perhaps the world's most exclusive tourist destination. The country still retains all the charm of the old world, and travelers experience the full glory of this ancient land as embodied in the monastic fortresses, ancient temples, monasteries and stupas which dot the countryside, prayer flags fluttering above farmhouses and on the hillsides, lush forests, rushing glacial rivers, and perhaps most important of all the warm smiles and genuine friendliness of the people. Each moment is special as one discovers a country, which its people have chosen to preserve in all its magical purity.

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05th December: Arrive Kathmandu

Arrive at Kathmandu's International Airport. Welcome to Nepal! You are met by Creative Travel guest ambassador in the arrival area of the airport after you clear all immigration and customs formalities.

NEPAL – officially the **Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal** is a mystical country nestled in the folds of the magnificent Himalaya mountain ranges. The people of Nepal can always be seen to be smiling. Nepal is a deeply religious country, as you will see in their temples, Monasteries and buildings. The fertile, mountain-sheltered Kathmandu Valley is the historic heart of Nepal, where the Himalaya's most sophisticated kingdoms rose and fell and where Nepali art and culture were developed and refined. In many ways the Kathmandu Valley is Nepal

Check in to the hotel. In the afternoon proceed for the city tour.



Kathmandu City:

Known as Kantipur, the capital of the Kingdom of Nepal. Here you will visit the temple of the Living Goddess who acknowledges the greetings of the devotees from the balcony of her temple residence. Kashtamandap - the source of the name Kathmandu and supposed to be made from the timber of a single tree and the Durbar Square are with its array of temples overlooked by the Hanuman Dhoka Palace,

the ancient place of the Nepalese Royalty.

Swayambhunath:

Located approximately 4 kms. /2.5 miles, this Buddhist Stupa is said to be 2000 years old. The Stupa which forms the main structure is composed of a solid hemisphere of brick and earth supporting a lofty conical spire capped by a pinnacle of copper gilt. Painted on the four sided base of the spire are the all seeing eyes of Lord Buddha. This hill is a mosaic of small Chaityas and Pagoda temples.

Overnight at the hotel.

After breakfast at the hotel fly to Kathmandu. Upon arrival check in at the hotel.

Proceed for the full day sightseeing tours of Bhaktapur, Pashupatinath and Boudhanath.

Bhaktapur:



Also known as Bhaktapur meaning city of devotees, this place is the home of medieval art and architecture. Lying 14 kms. /9 miles east of Kathmandu City, this place was founded in the 9th Century and is shaped like a conch shell. The city is at the height of 4600 ft. above sea level. In Bhadgaon, you will visit the Durbar Square with its array of temples overlooked by the Palace of 55 windows built by King Bupatindra Malla. The Nyatapola Temple, also built by King Bhupatindra Malla, is the best example of Pagoda style

and stands on five terraces on each of which stands a pair of figures - two famous strong men, two elephants, two lions, two griffins and two goddesses. Time permitting, a visit to the museum of Thangka painting can also be considered.

Pashupatinath:

Situated 5 kms. East of Kathmandu City, Pashupatinath temple is one of the holiest temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. Situated amidst a lush green natural setting on the bank of the sacred Bagmati River, the temple built in pagoda style has gilded roof and richly carved silver doors. Visitors will be permitted to view the temple from the east bank of Bagmati River, entrance in the temple being strictly forbidden to all non Hindus. Pashupatinath is the centre of annual pilgrimage on the day of shivaratri which falls in the month of February/March. Behind the temple are the cremation grounds.



Boudhanath:



This Stupa, 8 kms. East of Kathmandu City, is one of the biggest in the world of its kind. It stands with four pairs of eyes in the four cardinal direction keeping watch for righteous behaviour and human prosperity. This Buddhist Stupa was built by King Man Deva at the advice of the Goddess Mani Jogini. It is built on an octagonal base inset with prayer wheels. The shrine is ringed by houses of Lamas or Buddhist priest.

Overnight at the hotel.

07th December: Kathmandu – Paro by flight KB 400 0730-0830 hrs
Paro – Thimpu drive approx. 1 ½ hr

Early morning transfer to the airport to board the flight to Paro. Upon arrival drive to Thimpu.

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular in entire Himalayas. Flying along the Himalayan range from Kathmandu, the journey offers fascinating views and an exciting descent into the Kingdom. Bhutan's first gift to you as you disembark from the aircraft will be cool, clean fresh mountain air. After immigration formalities and baggage collection, you will be met by our representative, and afterwards drive to Thimphu, the capital town of Bhutan with en-route stop at Chuzom, the confluence of Thimphu and Paro rivers. Three different style of stupas ; Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese adorn this confluence.



The capital town of Bhutan and the centre of government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a unique city with unusual mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditions. Home to civil servants, expatriates and monk body, Thimphu maintains a strong national character in its architectural style. On arrival in Thimphu, check into the hotel.

Later visit to **Trashichhoedzong**, 'fortress of the glorious religion'. This is the center of government and religion, site of monarch's throne room and seat of Je Khenpo or Chief Abbot. Built in 1641 by the political and religious unifier of Bhutan, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was reconstructed in 1960s in traditional Bhutanese manner, without nails or architectural plans.

National Library: The history of Bhutan lies imprinted in archaic texts, which are preserved at the National Library. Besides thousands of manuscripts and ancient texts, the library also has modern academic books and printing blocks for prayer flags.



Institute for Zorig Chusum: Commonly known as Arts & Crafts School or Painting School, the Institute offers a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. On a visit, one can see students learning the various skills taught at the school.

Also **if time permits** visit Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang). Located at a short drive from Thimphu city centre, visitors can get a good overview of the Thimphu valley from the Buddha point (Kuensel Phodrang). You can pay your obeisance and offer prayers to the Buddha, the largest statue in the country and then walk around and take a glimpse of the valley.

Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu. (Altitude 2320m)

08th December: Thimphu – Punakha drive approx. 2 ½ hrs

After breakfast drive up to **Dochu-la pass** (3,088m/ 10,130 ft) stopping briefly here to take in the view and admire the chorten, mani wall, and prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the road. If skies are clear, the following peaks can be seen from this pass (left to right): Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158 m), Kangphugang (7,170 m), Zongphugang (7, 060 m), a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana - finally Gangkar puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m.

At **Dochula Pass**, 108 chortens or stupas known as Druk Wangyal Chortens have been built by Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk, the eldest Queen Mother. These chortens are built in three layers, the first lowest level layer has forty five chortens, the second has thirty six and the top layer has twenty seven, built around the main chorten.



Later drive onward to Punakha.

Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan and seat of government until 1955 and still it is the winter seat of Je Khenpo (the chief abbot). Blessed with temperate climate and owing to its natural drainage from Pho Chhu (male) and Mo Chhu (female) rivers, the fertile Punakha valley produces abundant crops and fruits. Located at an elevation of 1300m above sea level, Punakha enjoys mild winters and is popular year round destination.

After lunch, visit **Punakha Dzong** or (Palace of Great Happiness), built at the junction of the Phochu and Mochu rivers in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. This majestic dzong served as both the religious and the administrative centre of Bhutan in the past. It measures some 600 by 240 feet and has a six-story, gold-domed tower. Inside are courtyards and religious statuary that hint at the depth of history and spiritual tradition embodied here. Your guide will illuminate your understanding of this intricate culture that is exotic to us, though long established here.

Then a short excursion to **Chimi Lhakhang**.

The Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children and wanting one, if they pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child very soon. The trail leads across rice fields to the tiny settlement of Pana, meaning 'field'. A walk through the village near the temple will give you rare glimpses into the daily life and lifestyle of the villagers.

Overnight at the hotel in Punakha. (Altitude 1,300m)

After breakfast, drive to Paro along scenic highway. En route visit **Simtokha Dzong**, the oldest fortress of the country built in 1627 which now houses the School for Buddhist studies.

On arrival in Paro, check into the hotel.

The beautiful valley of Paro encapsulates within itself a rich culture, scenic beauty and hundreds of myths and legends. It is home to many of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries, National Museum and country's only international airport. Mount. Chomolhari (7,314m) reigns in white glory at the northern end of the valley and its glacial water plunge through deep gorges to form Pa Chhu (Paro river). Paro is also one of the most fertile valley in the Kingdom producing a bulk of the locally famous red rice from its terraced fields.

Post lunch, proceed to visit **Ta Dzong**, originally built as Watchtower, which now houses National Museum. The extensive collection includes antique thangka paintings, textiles, weapons & armour, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts.

Ta Dzong visit immediately followed by a short walk down the trail to visit **Rinpung Dzong (Paro Dzong)**, meaning ("fortress of the heap of jewels"), which has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount. Sumeru and other cosmic Mandala.

Evening explore Paro city centre and market area.

Overnight at the hotel in Paro. (Altitude 2,280m)

After breakfast, embark on a fascinating excursion to **Taktshang Monastery or Tiger's Nest (approx. 5 hours round trip walk)**: It is one of the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is called 'Tiger's Nest'. This site has been recognised as a most sacred place and visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. On 19 April, 1998, a fire severely damaged the main structure of building but now this Bhutanese jewel has been restored to its original splendour.



Late afternoon, drive end of the Valley to the base of **Drukgyel Dzong**, a 17th century fortress burned down in the early 50s. Here we will also see the beautiful **typical farm house**. Bhutanese farmhouses are very colorful, decorative and traditionally built without the use of single nail. The majority of the population of Bhutan continues to live as it has for centuries – in small isolated farms and hamlets, surrounded by terraced fields of rice, maize and buckwheat.

While driving to Paro town, stop en route at the 7th century **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

Overnight at the hotel in Paro. (Altitude 2,280m)

11th December: Paro – Kathmandu by flight by flight KB
401 0930-1050 hrs

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to the airport for the flight to your onward destination. Our guest ambassador will help you with exit formalities and then bid you farewell.

Upon arrival in Kathmandu, transfer to the hotel.

In the afternoon proceed for the sightseeing tours of Patan Durbar Square and Thamel.



Patan Durbar Square: Located about 5 km south of Kathmandu in the Kathmandu Valley, on the southern side of the Bagmati River, Patan is one of 3 royal cities in the valley. A destination for connoisseurs of fine arts, Patan is filled with wood and stone carvings, metal statues, ornate architecture, including dozens of Buddhist and Hindu temples, and over 1200 monuments. The city of Patan is believed to have been built in the third century B.C. by the Kirat dynasty. It was expanded by Lichhavis in the 6th century A.D. and again by the Mallas in medieval period. Durbar Square, like its counterpart in Kathmandu, is an enchanting

mélange of palace buildings, artistic courtyards and graceful pagoda temples. Listed as a World Heritage Site, the former royal palace complex is the center of Patan's religious and social life, and houses a museum containing an array of bronze statues and religious objects.

Thamel Tour:

Thamel is a popular tourist destination in Kathmandu, Nepal. Thamel has been the centre of the tourist industry in Kathmandu for over four decades starting from the hippie movement when many artists came to Nepal and spent weeks in Thamel. Its concentration of narrow streets are lined with small shops selling everything from food and provisions to clothes, walking gear, cakes, pastries, music, DVDs, handicrafts, travel agents and budget hotels. It boasts a wide range of mountaineering gear shops, foreign money exchange booths, pubs, clubs and nightlife along with the numerous travel agents, and guest houses.



The area has some very good restaurants. Although prices tend to be significantly higher than non-tourist areas, food hygiene is generally a lot better too. All in all, Thamel is home to a wide range of audience of the Nepalese population for entertainment and employment purposes.

Overnight at the hotel.

12th December: Depart Kathmandu

We ensure that that you will leave Kathmandu with cherishing memory and an experience of a lifetime. Our representative will drive you to the airport in time for your flight back home. Journey well!

Tour ends....!
Time to recollect the memories of Nepal & Bhutan...!