

Nepal: Exploring the Himalayas

This classic Himalayan adventure allows you to experience the spectacular mountain country of Nepal. In your two-week adventure, you will view the daily lives of the Nepalese people by visiting ancient city-states, remote hilltop villages, Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries – all among the spectacular scenery of the world's highest mountains.

We'll start, though, in the jungle, where you will experience the grandeur of a safari while riding on the back of an elephant in search of the Royal Bengal Tiger and a host of other exotic wildlife. And a trip to Nepal cannot be complete without a trip to see Mt. Everest: you will pay homage to the highest mountain in the world by taking a private chartered flight around it.

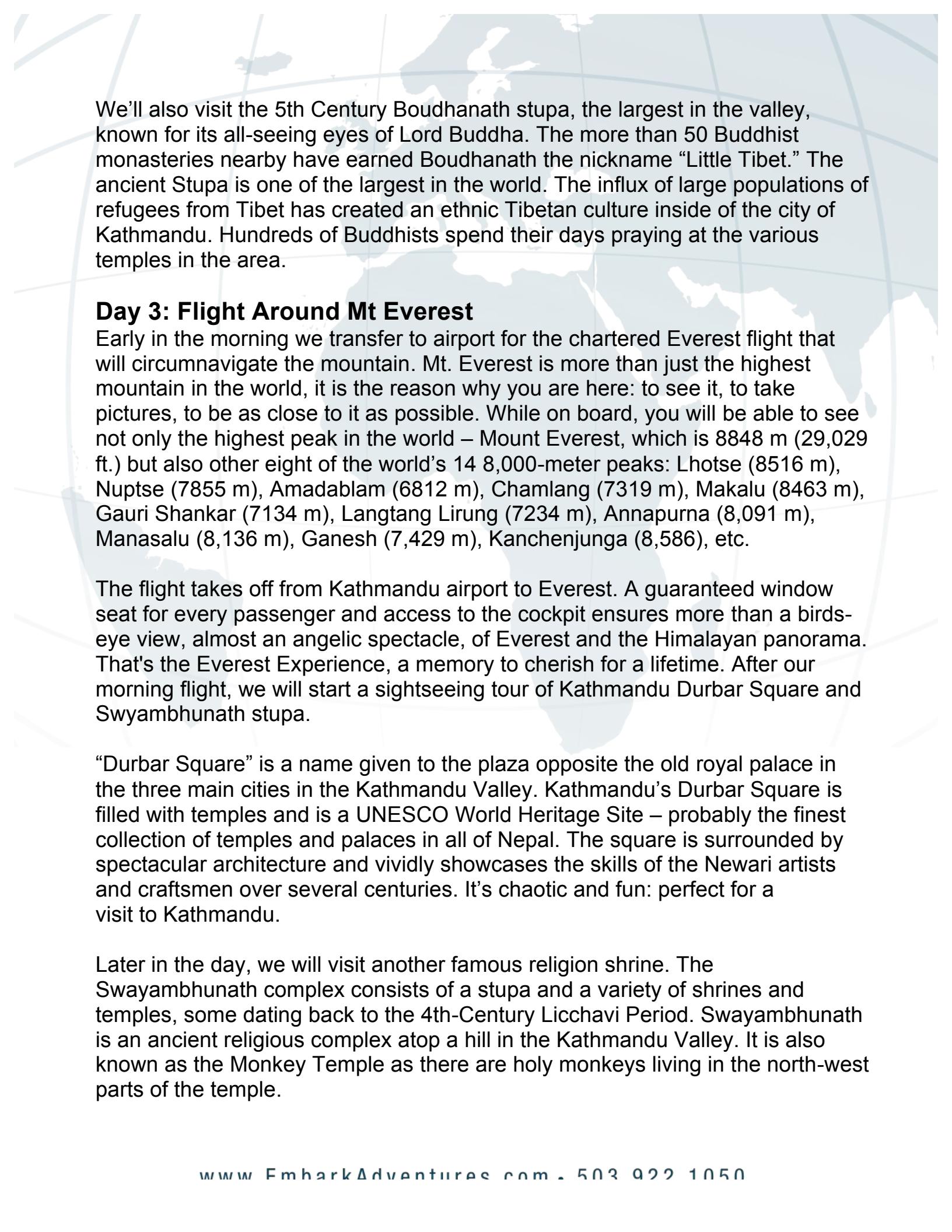
Finally, we will spend a few days walking among the quiet villages of the famous Annapurna region, staying in local tea-houses for in-depth interactions with various ethnic groups. The Himalayas are a place to let yourself go, where edges blur and the mountains and people alike welcome you with looming curiosity.

Day 1: Arrive in Kathmandu

Upon arrival, we will transport to the hotel and receive introductions to our various guides. No activities are planned for the day. We are free to explore the picturesque downtown Kathmandu.

Day 2: Full day sightseeing tour of Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath stupa

This will be a full day of sightseeing, with a tour of Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath Stupa. For 2,000 years, Kathmandu has been a center of trade, culture and religious life in Nepal. We will visit several of the city's best-known sites, starting with the Pashupatinath temple, a World Heritage Site which is the oldest Hindu temple in Kathmandu and one of the most sacred Hindu temples of Lord Shiva in the world. It's famous for its two-tiered golden roof and silver doors, as well as a richly ornamented pagoda which houses the sacred Linga of Lord Shiva. Chronicles indicate its existence prior to 400 AD. Devotees can be seen taking ritual dips in the holy Bagmati River flowing next to the temple.



We'll also visit the 5th Century Boudhanath stupa, the largest in the valley, known for its all-seeing eyes of Lord Buddha. The more than 50 Buddhist monasteries nearby have earned Boudhanath the nickname "Little Tibet." The ancient Stupa is one of the largest in the world. The influx of large populations of refugees from Tibet has created an ethnic Tibetan culture inside of the city of Kathmandu. Hundreds of Buddhists spend their days praying at the various temples in the area.

Day 3: Flight Around Mt Everest

Early in the morning we transfer to airport for the chartered Everest flight that will circumnavigate the mountain. Mt. Everest is more than just the highest mountain in the world, it is the reason why you are here: to see it, to take pictures, to be as close to it as possible. While on board, you will be able to see not only the highest peak in the world – Mount Everest, which is 8848 m (29,029 ft.) but also other eight of the world's 14 8,000-meter peaks: Lhotse (8516 m), Nuptse (7855 m), Amadablam (6812 m), Chamlang (7319 m), Makalu (8463 m), Gauri Shankar (7134 m), Langtang Lirung (7234 m), Annapurna (8,091 m), Manaslu (8,136 m), Ganesh (7,429 m), Kanchenjunga (8,586), etc.

The flight takes off from Kathmandu airport to Everest. A guaranteed window seat for every passenger and access to the cockpit ensures more than a birds-eye view, almost an angelic spectacle, of Everest and the Himalayan panorama. That's the Everest Experience, a memory to cherish for a lifetime. After our morning flight, we will start a sightseeing tour of Kathmandu Durbar Square and Swayambhunath stupa.

"Durbar Square" is a name given to the plaza opposite the old royal palace in the three main cities in the Kathmandu Valley. Kathmandu's Durbar Square is filled with temples and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site – probably the finest collection of temples and palaces in all of Nepal. The square is surrounded by spectacular architecture and vividly showcases the skills of the Newari artists and craftsmen over several centuries. It's chaotic and fun: perfect for a visit to Kathmandu.

Later in the day, we will visit another famous religion shrine. The Swayambhunath complex consists of a stupa and a variety of shrines and temples, some dating back to the 4th-Century Licchavi Period. Swayambhunath is an ancient religious complex atop a hill in the Kathmandu Valley. It is also known as the Monkey Temple as there are holy monkeys living in the north-west parts of the temple.

Day 4: Bhaktapur City

Today we will visit and spend the night in Bhaktapur city, one of three ancient cities of Nepal. Its four square miles are filled with medieval art and architecture plus thriving pottery and textile industries. Here we'll visit the central Durbar Square, where a palace was home to Nepalese royalty until the 18th Century and is now a national gallery. We will also visit the 15th Century Palace of 55 Windows, whose Golden Gate is a masterpiece of repoussé (hammered metal) art.

Day 5: Changu Narayana / Kathmandu

Today starts with an early morning wake-up to watch the sunrise over the Himalayan mountains. After breakfast, we will begin our drive back to Kathmandu, with a sightseeing stop in Changu Narayana. The ancient temple of Changu Narayana is located on a high hilltop that is also known as Changu or Dolagiri. The temple is surrounded by a forest of champak trees and a small village, known as Changu Village. The temple is full of magnificent art works in metal and wood. In fact, it is one of the finest examples of Nepalese architecture.

Day 6: Chitwan National Park / Elephant Safari

Chitwan National Park was the first national park in Nepal and is one of the most premier wildlife viewing national parks in all of Asia. Formerly called Royal Chitwan National Park, it was established in 1973 and granted the status of a World Heritage Site in 1984. It's home to rhinos, deer, monkey, 450 species of birds, leopards, elephants, tigers and sloth bears.

Upon arrival in Chitwan, we will prepare for our elephant safari. Riding on top of the elephants, we will journey around the dense jungle in search of rhinoceros, sloth bear, monkey leopards and the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Day 7: Chitwan National Park

A myriad of events are planned today, including a nature walk around Chitwan and a canoe ride along the Rapti River, an excellent place for birdwatching and crocodile viewing. After our morning adventures, we will visit the elephant breeding center. In the late afternoon, we will visit an ethnic Tharu village, where you will learn more about their culture and lifestyle. The Tharus make their living by subsistence agriculture, growing wheat, corn, rice, cabbage and other crops. All around Chitwan, you will see colorfully dressed women planting rice, men using water buffalo to plow the fields, and women carrying thatch from the forest in gigantic baskets on their backs.

Day 8: Drive to Nayapul/Start village walk/Ulleri

Today we start our village walk, a four-day adventure of visiting villages and getting to witness daily life in this ancient Himalayan culture. After a short 30-minute flight, we will begin our walk in the Annapurna region, an immensely popular walking destination in Nepal due to its altitude variations, ecological diversity, sacred valleys, and enormous peaks all around.

Central to the Annapurna experience is the Annapurna Sanctuary, a glacial hollow where for thousands of years people of diverse ethnic backgrounds have carved a lifestyle out of its steep terraces and barren plateaus. This is excellent habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, from sub-tropical lowland forests of oak, bamboo and rhododendron to high alpine meadows and windswept desert plateaus.

This village hike provides a good introduction to the area, as well as some wonderful close-up views of both two sacred mountains: Macchapuchre (22,943 feet) and Annapurna South (26,545 feet). Our destination is the beautiful and ornate village of Ghandruk, home to the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. The highest point of this trek – and for many the highlight – is an early morning pilgrimage to Poon Hill for a spectacular sunrise over the Himalayas.

After an early breakfast, we'll leave for Nayapul and drive to Birethanti. The journey will take about two hours over the hill to Chandrakot, where we alight to start walking. We cross the river at Birethanti and head left along the gentle slope to Tikhedhunga, where we cross the Bhurungdi Khola to start the walk to the village of Ulleri.

Day 9: Walk to Ghorepani

As we walk to the next village today, we get occasional views of the peaks that give way to a narrower valley; we pass through rhododendron forests and eventually reach Ghorepani, a beautiful village where we can enjoy views of Dhaulagiri (26,795 feet) and the Annapurna Range.

Day 10: Visit Poon Hill / Walk to Ghandruk

Early this morning, we will hike one hour to Poon hill, one of the most popular vantage points of this village tour. From this spot at sunrise, we can see tremendous views of giant Dhaulagiri and the Annapurna range. After we return and have breakfast, we will begin our walk to Ghandruk.

Day 11: Walk Ghandruk to Nayapul, drive to Pokhara

In the morning, we will begin with a walk to the village of Nayapul, where we will drive back to a small town for tonight, Pokhara.

Pokhara, the second largest city in Nepal is located at the base of the Annapurna Mountain Range and is the starting point for not only the Annapurna Circuit, but also many local hikes around the valley. This area is green, forested and much more relaxed than Kathmandu. Three out of the 10 highest mountains in the world (Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu) are situated within 30 miles of the city, so that the northern skyline of the city offers a very close view of the Himalayas.

Day 12: Pokhara

Today we will have a half-day of sightseeing and boating on Phewa Lake. The group will also visit some of the many medieval era temples and old Newari houses are still a part of the city today.

Day 13: Flight to Kathmandu / Patan City

In the morning, we will take a 30 minute to Kathmandu, where we transfer to our hotel and have the rest of the day free for personal activities, or to visit Patan City.

Patan City is best known for its rich heritage, particularly its tradition of arts and crafts. It is also called a city of festival and feast, fine ancient art, and making of metallic and stone statues.

We will end the trip in Kathmandu by having a private cultural dinner with local folklore, music and dancing in a local Nepali restaurant.

Day 14: Departure

Free till transfer to airport for final departure.

Costs:

The price for this adventure in Nepal is \$2495, excluding international airfare. This includes one domestic flight from Pokhara to Kathmandu, as well as the items listed below.

Nepal portion cost includes:

- * All international and domestic airport transfers as per the program by private vehicle
- * Private transportation for Kathmandu / Nagarkot / Kathmandu and Kathmandu / Chitwan / Pokhara drive
- * Sightseeing tours in Kathmandu and Pokhara as per the program by private vehicle
- * One hour boating at Phewa Lake in Pokhara
- * Service of local English speaking guide during sightseeing in Kathmandu and Pokhara
- * Entrance fee wherever applicable during sightseeing in Kathmandu and Pokhara
- * Accommodation for 4 nights in Kathmandu with breakfast
- * Accommodation for 1 night in Nagarkot with breakfast
- * Accommodation for 3 nights in Pokhara with breakfast.
- * Accommodation for 2 nights in Chitwan with all meals
- * Service of naturalist and nature guide in Chitwan
- * Chitwan National park fee
- * Jungle activities such as Elephant safari, nature walk, Tharu village visit etc. Transportation for Pokhara / Nayapul / Pokhara by private vehicle.
- * Lodge trek with all meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and accommodation in tea house lodges.
- * Services of English-speaking trekking guide and porters (We will provide one porter for 2 people and the maximum weight carried by one porter is total 50 pounds.)
- * Accommodation, meals, transportation, equipments, and allowances of guide and porter
- * Insurance for Guide and Porters.
- * Annapurna Conservation Fee (ACAP)
- * TIMS fee (Trekkers Information Management System fee)
- * Sleeping bag and down jacket if necessary.
- * All applicable government taxes and service charges.

Nepal portion cost does not include:

- * Lunch and dinner in Kathmandu, Nagarkot and Pokhara
- * Any international airfare
- * Domestic airport tax of USD 3 per person per flight
- * Bottled drinks (mineral water, any cold drinks, and alcoholic drinks).
- * Your travel insurance.
- * Expenses of personal nature such as tips for guide, porter and driver, laundry, bar bill, telephone calls etc.
- * Medical, travel, trip cancellation, surface or air evacuation or any other type of insurance
- * Liability for extra expenses caused by illness, accident, flight cancellation, roadblocks, and delays or other such occurrences, beyond control of, its agents and associates.
- * Any other cost not mentioned above as included