

Guide to Global Health Program Elective in Nepal

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Description of the Area

Location

- **Capital:** Kathmandu (2.5 million people)
- **Other major cities:**
 - Pokhara
 - Patan
 - Biratnagar
 - Birgunj
 - Dharan
 - Nepalgunj
- **Climate:** Varies with elevation
 - North: Cool summers and severe winters
 - South: Subtropical summers and mild winters
- **Terrain:**
 - North: Rugged Himalayas
 - Central: Hill region
 - South: Tarai or flat river plain of the Ganges
- **Area:** 56,826 sq. mi.
 - Nepal is slightly larger than Arkansas



Country Facts

- **977 is the country code**
- **Nationality:** Nepali
- **Population (2017): 29.3 million**
- **Ethnic groups** (cast system): Chhettri (16%), Brahman-Hill (13%), Mager (7%), Tharu (7%), Tamang (6%), Newar (5%), Muslim (4%), Kami (4%), Yadav (4%), other (33%)
- **Religions:** Hindu (81%), Buddhist (11%), Muslim (4%), Kirant (4%)
- **Languages:** Nepali (official), Maithali, Bhojpuri, Tharu (Dagaura/Rana), Tamang, Newar, Magar, Awadi, and English is spoken by medical providers.
- **Education:** Adult literacy is 57.4%



- **Independence:** 1768
- **GDP (2017):** \$25 billion
- **Agriculture:**
 - Rice, corn, wheat, sugarcane, jute, root crops, milk, water buffalo meat
- **Industry and construction:**
 - Tourism, carpets, textiles, small rice, jute, sugar, oilseed mills, cigarettes, cement, brick production
- **Trade:**
 - Exports--clothing, pulses, carpets, textiles, juice, pashima, jute goods
 - Export partners--India, USA, Germany
 - Imports--billion, petroleum products, machinery and equipment, gold, electrical goods, medicine
 - Import partners--India, China

Health Statistics	Nepal	USA
Life Expectancy (years)	68	79
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	21.6	13.3
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	6.7	8.4
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	40	7
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	190	28
Prevalence of TB (per 100,000 population)	211	4.1
Deaths due to TB (per 100,000 population)	17	0.15



Top 10 Causes of Death

	Nepal	United States
1	<i>COPD (9.2%)</i>	Ischemic heart disease (14.8%)
2	<i>Ischemic heart disease (9.2%)</i>	Dementia (9.5%)
3	<i>Stroke (8.2%)</i>	Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers (6.5%)
4	<i>Lower respiratory tract infections (7.0%)</i>	COPD (5.8%)
5	<i>Diarrheal diseases (3.3%)</i>	Stroke (5%)
6	<i>Self harm (3.0%)</i>	Diabetes mellitus (2.7%)
7	<i>Tuberculosis (3.0%)</i>	Hypertensive heart disease (2.7%)
8	<i>Diabetes mellitus (2.8%)</i>	Colon/rectum cancers (2.3%)
9	<i>Road injury (2.7%)</i>	Kidney disease (2.2%)
10	<i>Preterm birth complications (2.5%)</i>	Lower respiratory infections (2.0%)

Weather

Nepal is a country of extreme temperature variations -- ranging from tropical to arctic.

November through March is generally cold. April is usually warm during the day 70-80° and cooler at night. Monsoon season for Nepal is between June and August. Rain typically occurs during the night time, leaving the skies clear before morning, which is not the typical monsoon of Asia.



Language

Nepali is widely spoken; medical providers will be bi-lingual. However, the English spoken in Nepal is quite different than US English and difficult to understand at times.

Translation is generally required to speak to patients.

Before You Travel

Average Costs

- Airfare: \$1,400
- Two meals a day: \$5-10/day in typical Nepali restaurants
- Taxi ride within city limits: \$3-5 per trip
- 5-6 hour trip on tourist bus: \$10-15
- Visa: \$40 (<30 days)

Airline Tickets

Travel will need to be booked through the Concur travel system. You must generate a travel request and then once approved you can book a flight through Christopherson Business Travel.

Common flights:

- ☐ **Qatar Airlines**: Layover in Doha (if you have a layover of more than 8 hours, contact Qatar about complimentary lodging/meals.)
- ☐ **Turkish Airlines**: Layover in Istanbul, Turkey

Passport & Visa

In order to enter Nepal, you will need a valid passport with at least six months validity and Nepalese visa. You can acquire a tourist visa at the Tribhuvan International Airport when you arrive.

It is recommended that you make a few photocopies (2-3) of your passport and Visa to keep in your luggage or a secure area in case it is misplaced, as well as a copy with someone at home.

Passport photos are also commonly required in Nepal for various transactions (SIM card, trekking permit, etc). Bring at least 4-5 photos with you. These can be around \$10 a piece at a US pharmacy, but using an app (there are a variety available), you can print up to 6 on a regular-sized photo and cut them yourself for as little as \$1.00.

Medical Clearance

Please review the CDC website for travelers to Nepal to assess your need for vaccinations. Your PCP or a dedicated travel clinic should be able to assist with immunizations and other travel advice. Which vaccines are needed will depend on where within the country you travel and how you travel (adventurous eating, contact with animals, etc.) Some commonly recommended vaccines include typhoid fever, hepatitis A, tetanus, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, and rabies. Medications may be prescribed for the prevention of malaria, motion sickness, altitude sickness, and for the treatment of travel-associated diarrhea. Malaria prophylaxis is generally only recommended for people travelling in the Terai region.



Registering Your Travel

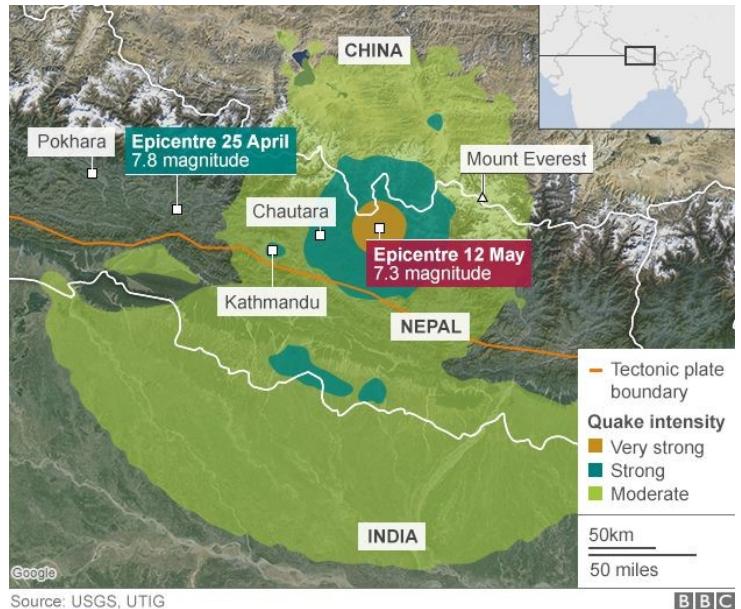
One week before you go, register with The SmartTravelerEnrollmentProgram (STEP). It is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling. It allows you to register your travel so the U.S. State Department can better assist you in an emergency.

Register your travel:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

U.S. Embassy (less than 10 min walk from apartment)
 Maharajgunj Rd, Kathmandu 44600, Nepal
 +977 1-4007200

<http://nepal.usembassy.gov/>



Things to Know

Arrival

In order to obtain your tourist visa, you will need to:

- Visit the automated machines upon arrival (this document can be completed and printed in advance but does not save much time).
- The machines will print a form, which you should take to the payment counters situated a bit past the automated machines. They are cashier counters and will not have a line as long as the visa lines.
- Get in the appropriate visa line with all your paperwork. This line could take an hour or more depending on the crowds when you arrive.

Use the address of the teaching hospital for the address on your visa. Because there are few true addresses in Nepali, this is adequate.

Visas have different costs, and there is a small fee for each day of overstay on your visa. Be sure to calculate what that fee may be in your case to see if increasing your visa time is worth the cost. Standard time periods are 30 and 90 days.

You will be greeted by Dr. Narayan Mahotra (or his representative) at the airport and taken to the apartment. Dr. Mahotra will be your primary contact while in Nepal. You should save his number/whatsapp in your phone prior to departure.

There is wifi in the visa area with varying degrees of functionality. You should download WhatsApp or Viber prior to your trip. Let Dr. Narayan know you have arrived and your status ASAP.

Currency and Financial Matters

Nepalese Rupees are the currency used in Nepal. 1 US dollar is roughly 100 Nepalese Rupees.

ATM

Different ATMs have different fees and withdrawal limits. Nabil Bank (across from US embassy) is generally good/safe and has a higher withdrawal limit. In general, plan on using cash for most expenses during your stay.

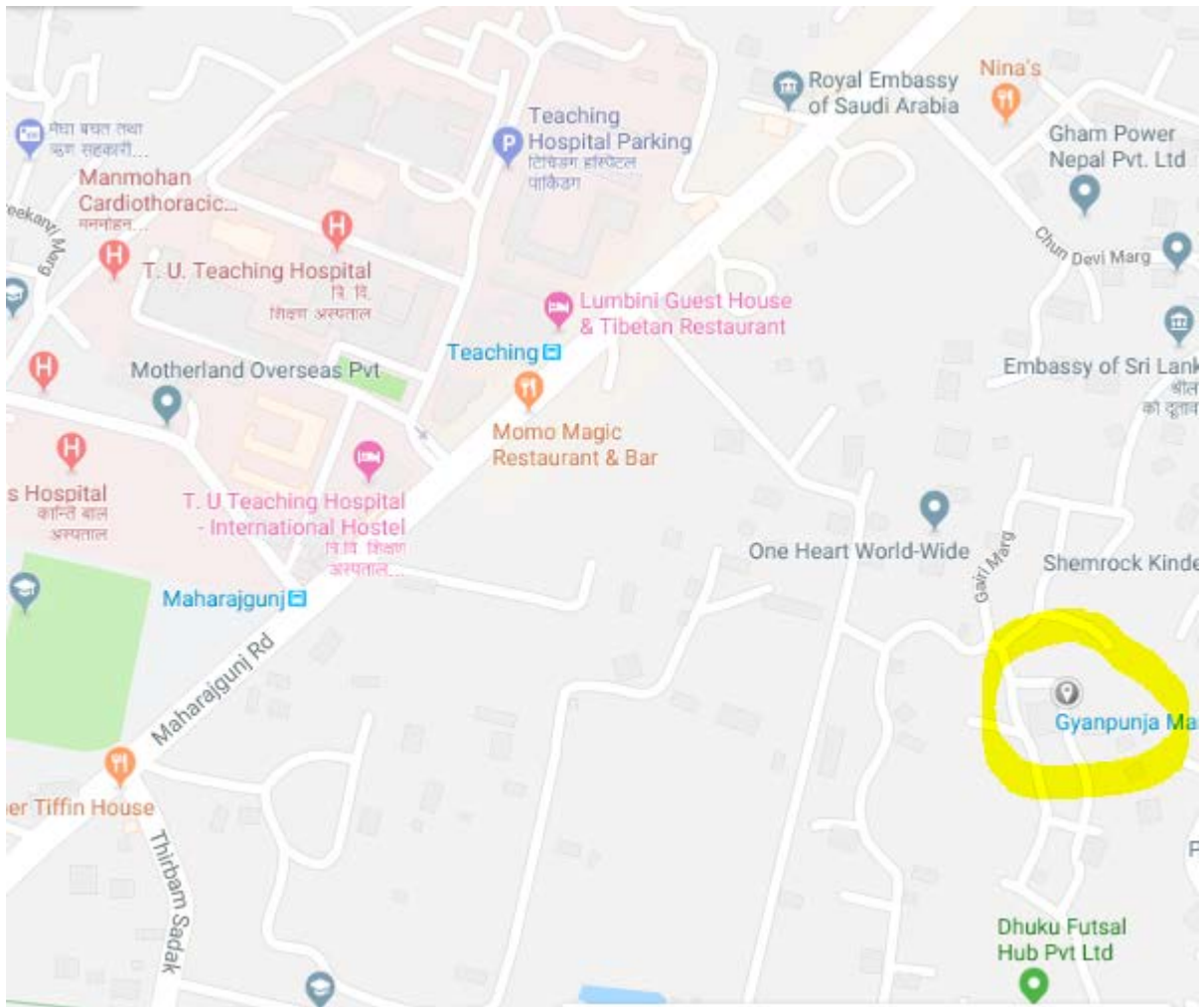
US bills

US dollars are NOT widely accepted, and places that do take dollars are very particular about U.S. bills. U.S. bills should be crisp and new, with no slight tears. It will always be easier to pay in Nepalese Rupees.

Housing

There is a 2-bedroom apartment available to rotating learners that is in the Chandol neighborhood about a 10-minute walk from the hospital. The neighborhood is generally quiet and mostly inhabited by Nepalis. The landlord, Mr. G.C., his son Bibek and wife all live upstairs. Krishna and his wife Goma live near the apartment, and you will likely have some interaction with them as well. Be respectful of the neighbors; they will be some of your best insight into Nepali culture.

This is the approximate location of the apartment (there are not many true addresses in Nepal):



- **Safety:** The neighborhood generally feels very safe; however prevention of opportunistic crime is always the best approach. There is street gate, a channel gate on the back stairs, and a lock on your personal apartment door. The owner of the building generally locks the external gates around 8-9pm but can leave them open longer if you will be out later. You will just have to communicate with them.
- **Electricity:** Power can brown/black out at random times, but particularly during rainstorms. It's a good idea to keep some battery powered lights around. Some plugs will fit US cords while other require converters.
 - **Wi-Fi:** The apartment has a dedicated wifi router with decent connection speed sufficient for video calls,

streaming, etc.

- **Shower:** Uses an electric-powered heating system. The tank is mounted on the wall in the bathroom. You must turn on the heating element to heat your water, and it generally heats to max temp in about an hour. If you will be away for a weekend or other long period of time, please turn off the heater to conserve energy. Water is a precious commodity, please use it judiciously!
- **Toilet paper:** put it in the trash can everywhere in Nepal. There is usually a hose or bucket near the toilet as Nepalis use this method for cleaning.
- **Kitchen:** A simple two burner, gas system is the primary cooking apparatus in the apartment. You will light the gas with either a match/lighter or a sparking mechanism. Mind the gas at all times and turn off the valve when not in use.
 - **Water:** Generally recommended to drink and cook with filtered water that is delivered in 5-gallon containers. If you are running low, inform the building owner and he can have another delivered. (The neighbor Krishna can also help you with this.) Water from the tap is assumed to be contaminated and is **not** safe for consumption.
- **Clothing:** There is no heat or air conditioning in the apartment. Bring warm clothes to wear inside during winter months.
 - There is laundry service available in Lazimpat, the neighborhood between the apartment and Thamel. However, there are a lot more options for laundry in Thamel. You may also try: <http://washmandu.com/#orders>

The clinical rotation

Dress: Nepali residents and students will at time wear jeans and/or open toed shoes in the hospital.

Recommendations for our rotating learners:

Men: khakis with a collared shirt, no tie, closed toe dress shoes

Women: Nepali women generally dress very conservatively. Minimal skin exposure and no tight-fitting clothing. Lightweight scarves are a very popular, versatile choice for women.

Wear your whitecoat—bring your own

Bring your own stethoscope

Overall healthcare structure and culture is very different than in the US. Residents should plan to apply through the NCHPE- <https://www.nchped.org.np/>. NCHPE is a well-established program that receives residents and student from all over the world who wish to study/rotate at TU Teaching hospital. There is no need to apply for a Nepal Medical license if you go through this program, and residents should obtain a tourist visa on arrival to Nepal. In this program, the learner selects which department they would like to visit and stays in that department for 2 weeks. He/she can then move to another department after 2 weeks. The day is generally a combination of conferences, inpatient rounds, and OPD (outpatient clinic).

Learners should understand in advance that rounds are very different in Nepal. The residents manage most everything, and attending rounds are only to quickly update the attending and let them add something to the plan.

Tuberculosis is very common and true isolation is uncommon. It is socially acceptable to wear a mask at all times in the hospital; however, use by both hospital staff and patients is widely variable. Learners should bring their own masks and gloves as they are sometimes difficult to locate in the hospital.

Social norms around patient privacy are very different in Nepal. Clinic rooms are sometimes large rooms with multiple patients seeing multiple physicians all at the same time. Patients waiting to see the doctor will often be sitting in the room as well.

Everyone must remove their shoes prior to entering the ICUs. There are usually some communal rubber sandals available to wear while in the ICU.

TU Teaching Hospital

Established in 1983. T. U. Teaching Hospital is an integral part of the Institute of Medicine of Tribhuvan University. It performs two distinct functions. As a teaching hospital, it provides practical field for the academic training programs (basic, graduate and postgraduate) of the Institute and, as a national hospital, renders medical care and services to those who need them. Besides, it conducts medical research projects and provides a major impetus to Biomedical and Health Sciences Research in Nepal. The establishment of the Teaching Hospital was a landmark in the evolution of medical education in Nepal.

It has the largest number of medical specialties in any hospital in Nepal with 22 departments. The services provided are from basic medical and surgical problems to open heart surgery and kidney transplant.

General Clinical Schedule(will vary depending on department)

8am Pre rounding with resident teams

9am: morning conference (with entire hospital team)

10am: Rounds with attending

12 or 1 pm- afternoon lecture

1-5Pm: seeing patients with residents and/or independently with a translator.

Certain days of the week there is afternoon OPD (outpatient clinic)

Saturday is the only day off in Nepal.

How to get Around

Brace yourself for walking and driving in Nepal. There are no road rules in Nepal, few stoplights, crosswalks, etc. “If you abide by traditional rules, you will never be able to cross the road. Pro tip: follow Nepali people.”

Taxis and minibuses are readily available. It is sometimes challenging to determine the route of the buses, however. Most taxi drivers speak English.

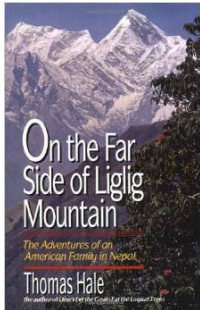
For safety, please do not walk around alone at night, especially women.



In Addition – Special Packing Items

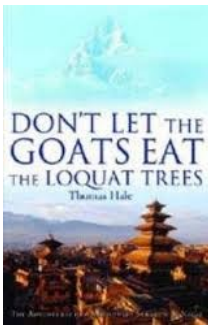
- Make sure to bring: clothing for layering and shoes you don't mind getting dusty, flashlight, handsanitizer, N95 mask, comfortable backpack.
- Consider Dramamine with you for car rides
- Very easy to obtain a SIM card if your phone is unlocked or buy a cheap phone while in Nepal.
- Be aware that Nepal is a mostly Hindu country, and leather clothing/footwear isn't always appreciated. Some temples will not allow you to enter if you are wearing leather.
- Things to have on you at all times: TOILET PAPER, HAND SANITIZER
- Health: “Air quality in Kathmandu is absolutely terrible, d/t smoke, smog, fires, etc. You will have respiratory symptoms for the duration of your stay.” **BRING A MASK** or you can purchase one off the street. Also bring N95 Respirator Masks for use in the hospital.
- Nepalis always take off their shoes before going in a house or other sacred space. Indoor flip flops or slip-on sandals are important to bring.
- The Monsoon season starts in June. Bring an umbrella or rain jacket. Sometimes people carry umbrellas to protect from intense sun. Sunscreen is also important.
- A white coat is needed whenever in the hospital.
- Converters: get a step down voltage converter (240 to 120). DO NOT connect a US power strip to a converter or it will explode the outlet. A normal European/Asian 2 prong adapter piece is sufficient.

Books to Read in Preparation



On the Far Side of Liglig Mountain

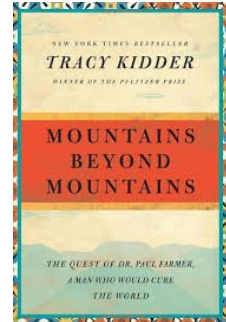
A book that will take you lands away to the mysterious 'closed' kingdom of Nepal, where its author, Thomas Hale, and his wife, Cynthia, have struggled to serve God as medical doctors. With beguiling humor and humility, Dr. Hale recounts his often amazing (and sometimes almost unbelievable) experiences in bringing western medicine to people who distrust -- even fear -- the introduction of ideas different from their own. He and his family work as a team to dispel that distrust and fear, and in the process have experienced incredible adventures.



Don't Let the Goats Eat the Loquat Trees [Thomas Hale] Thomas Hale writes about being a missionary surgeon in the same delightful way James Herriot writes about being a country veterinarian. Dr. Hale's incredible experience in tiny, mountainous Nepal are surpassed only by his talent for telling about them. Imagine, for example, the culture shock of moving to a Hindu country under such rigid religious control that it is not only illegal to proselytize, but illegal to change religions as well.

Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World

Tracy Kidder is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the author of the bestsellers *The Soul of a New Machine*, *House*, *Among Schoolchildren*, and *Home Town*. He has been described by the *Baltimore Sun* as the "master of the non-fiction narrative." This powerful and inspiring new book shows how one person can make a difference, as Kidder tells the true story of a gifted man who is in love with the world and has set out to do all he can to cure it.



Experiencing the Culture

Food

Many Nepali people eat with their hands and do not use utensils.

Nepali food is similar to Indian food, but with a little less variety.



☐ **Grocery Stores:**

☐ **Salesberry:** Midsize grocery/household store a few 100 meters north of the hospital on Mahajgunj

- **Bhat Bhateni**- Massive 4 story department store with groceries in the bottom floor.

☐ **Rotis:** flatbread

☐ **Puri:** fried bread

☐ **Takari:** means vegetable in Nepali; usually beans, potatoes

☐ **Daal Bhaat:** a Nepali staple: rice, with a cup of daal (lentils) that you pour into the rice. This will usually come with one or two sides of vegetables

- **Momos:** steamed (or fried) dumplings filled with either vegetables or meat, originally Tibetan. “The single most delicious thing you will eat.”

- Lunar shape - Tibetan

- Circular - Nepali

☐ **Achar:** word for sauce, usually spicy

☐ **Meat:** available, afforded primarily by the wealthy

- Water buffalo: Buff

- Mutton, chicken, fish

- No beef, as it once was a Hindu population

☐ **Newari dishes:** subset of the Nepali people, with their own cuisine utilizing a lot of dry rubs on their meat



Market vegetables should be cleaned thoroughly with iodine, chlorine, or a commercially available veg cleaner to avoid foodborne illness. Remember that raw fruits and vegetables are one of the most common sources of foodborne illness.

Restaurants

Food is pretty cheap in Nepal. You can get an outstanding meal for less than \$5. Touristy restaurants can be much more expensive, however. Street foods include momo's (steamy dumplings filled with veg or meat, either steamed or fried and sitting in rich broth or not), chow mein and a variety of fried doughs are available for \$1-3.

Some nicer places around town are:

Nina's- Excellent American-style restaurant that specializes in meat. About a 10 minute walk from the apartment. Great garden atmosphere. A specialty foods and meat store is in the parking area.

Le Sherpa- Fancier place about 15 minute walk from apartment. Also has a coffee shop and some boutiques in the same complex. Can get pricey.

Momo Magic- Cheap place to get momo's on Maharajgunj.

Kotetsu- Pricey but excellent Japanese food.

There are lots of typical Nepali restaurants on Maharajgunj. Be cautious about food hygiene to avoid getting sick.

Shopping

Here are some things you can get in Nepal/gift ideas. Remember to bargain when you are out shopping. Bargaining is part of the culture in Nepal, a 10% discount is common. More discounts available on tourist type items like t-shirts. "If not happy, smile and say no thanks, but always leave smiling."

- **Tibetan carpets:** These are very impressive, but kind of expensive. Do not expect to pay less than \$50.
- **Pashmina scarves:** They are everywhere, and super soft. To be able to tell if they are real or not, it is said that you should be able to pass the scarf through a ring without it getting stuck. These make very nice gifts.
- **Paintings:** Tons of unique Buddhist inspired stuff. Thangka is a very popular style of painting. Beware of fakes however.
- **Handmade paper goods:** frames, wrapping paper, stationary, etc.
- **Metal items:** bronze lamps, statues, etc., typically above \$20.



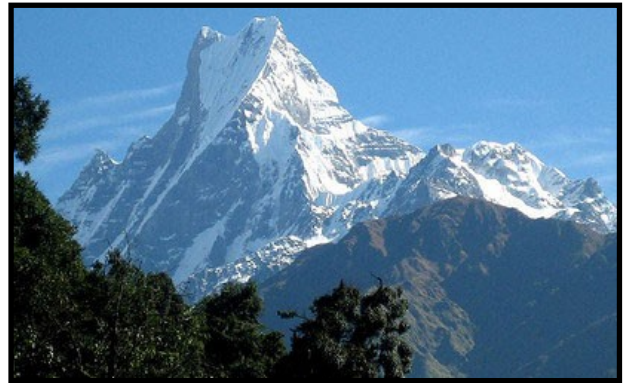
- **Tea:** Very cheap and good quality.
- **Fabrics**
- **Delicious Himalayan coffee (\$4/lb)**

- **Gurkha knives (Khukuri):** The British trained Nepali soldiers are known for their knives. Can buy knock offs or the real thing.

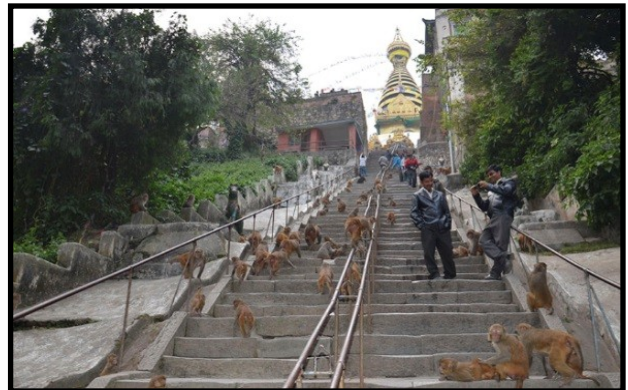
Learning about the Culture, Region

- **Pokhara:** 2nd largest city in Nepal at the base of the Annapurna Range, whose famous peak is Maachapuchre (fishtail); takes about 6 hours to drive there. Tourist buses are inexpensive, about \$15 one way. You can also fly there. It is quite touristy, so there are plenty of hostels around the area.
 - See sunrise at Sarangkot (mountain). You can either hike it the day before and stay overnight, or take a taxi really early in the morning and then do a 40 min hike to the top to see the sunrise.
 - There are a ton of other activities like paragliding and rafting. Be careful and make sure you do your research ahead of time.

- **Bhaktapur:** Durbar Square known for wood working. There is a small entrance fee.



- **Chitwan National Forest:** 6 hours away from Kathmandu on the southwest side. Jeep safari rides into the jungle. Good chance of seeing rhinos. Buses are available to take to Pokhara. There are some ethical concerns regarding elephant rides so do your research beforehand.
- **Kathmandu Durbar Square/Thamel:**
Most touristy part of Kathmandu
- **Patan Durbar Square:** Known for metal works
- **Buddha Stupa:** 2nd largest in the world containing Buddhist relics used by Buddhists as a place of meditation
- **Pashupathinath:** Hindu Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva
- **Swayambhunath:** Buddhist temple also known as the monkey temple (but please don't call it that.). The monkeys are everywhere and not afraid of humans.
- **Nagarkot:** Beautiful hilltop resort area where on a clear day you have a view of the Himalayan Range just an hour outside of Kathmandu. You can go to Bhaktapur on the way down.



For safety, no bus travel at night or motorcycle riding.

Resources

Bureau of Consular Affairs - U.S. Department of State. U.S.
Passports & International Travel.
<http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/english.html>

Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook:
Nepal. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>

Embassy of Nepal. Visa. <http://www.nepalembassyusa.org/visa.php>

Embassy of the United States – Kathmandu, Nepal.
<http://nepal.usembassy.gov/>

Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin. Travel Medicine.
<http://www.froedtert.com/travel-medicine>

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>
