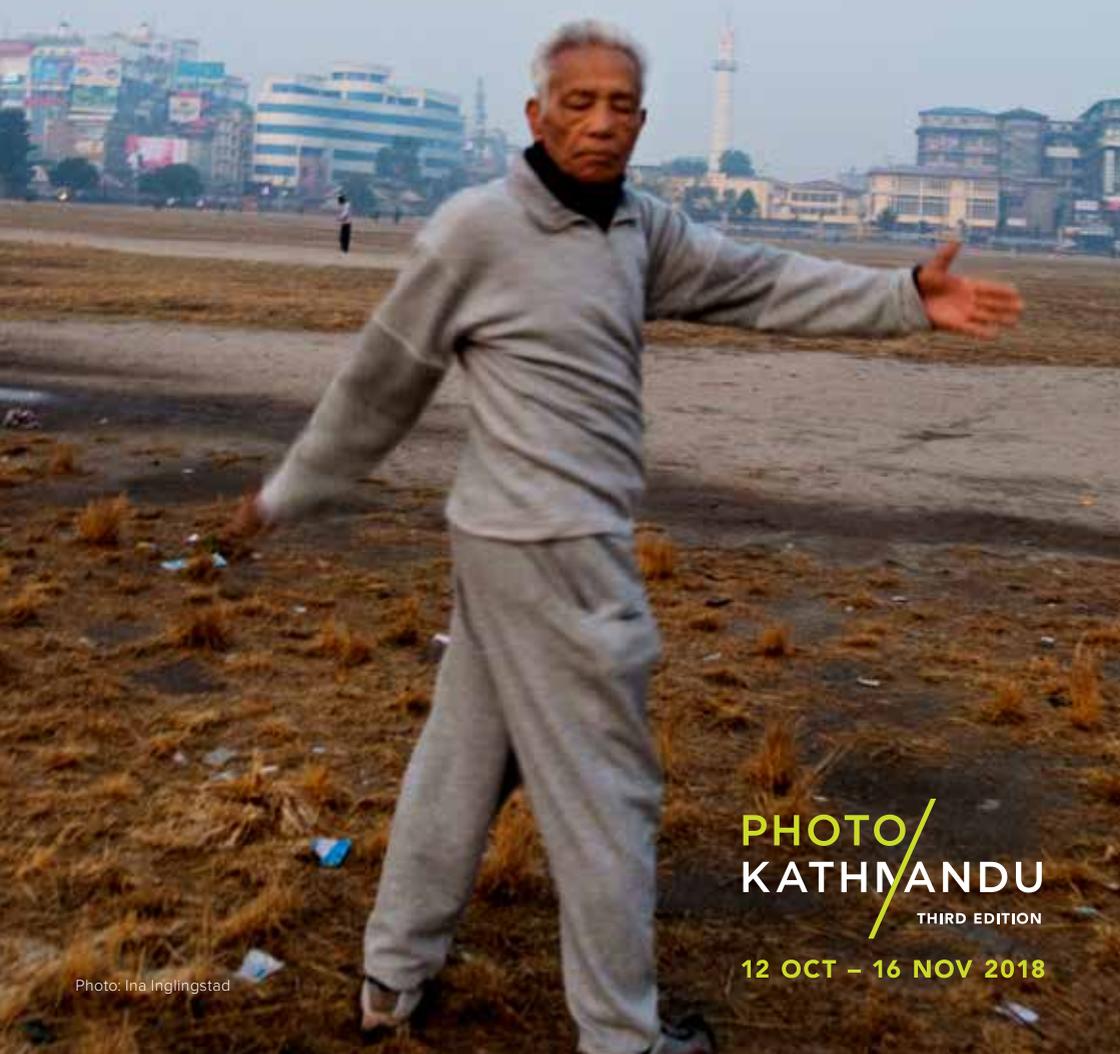


# PRACTICAL GUIDE TO NEPAL



PHOTO/  
KATHMANDU  
THIRD EDITION

12 OCT – 16 NOV 2018



Photo: Sita Mademba



Photo: Pawan Joshi

## ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

Photo Kathmandu is a laid-back festival. No dress-code parties, no red tape, just good company in a relaxed environment. We want to make your stay here in Nepal as comfortable as possible, so please, never hesitate to ask us for anything. If it's possible, we'll try our best to make it happen, with a smile. If something is just not doable, we'll be honest enough to let you know and try to figure out alternatives.

One of our main goals is to facilitate new connections and friendships, both Nepali and international. With this in mind, on most evenings at around 7pm, we organize informal gatherings in local bars around Patan Durbar Square.

The exhibitions, slideshow nights and talks are freely accessible to all and are set in public spaces, using the alleys, squares and

historic surroundings of Patan and Kathmandu as our venues. This leads to very interesting interactions! Neighborhood children swarm to see the slideshows, elderly passers-by passionately discuss photographs in the streets, schoolchildren drag their parents around after a guided tour they enjoyed, local touristic guides include the festival's public exhibitions in their tours.

If we handled your accommodation, you'll be staying in the beautiful old city center of Patan where all the Photo Kathmandu action happens. During the day it's a busy place, with small streets, where motorbikes and pedestrians contest for ways through, and where honking is common practice (and usually means nothing more than a friendly "hey look out, I'm here"). The smaller side-alleys are little havens of peace and quiet. After a couple of days, you'll get your bearings and love the Patan buzz!

# ARRIVAL IN NEPAL

## Visa:

The only one you need to look at is the regular **tourist visa**.

**Indian nationals** do not require a visa to enter Nepal. A passport or an Indian identity card is sufficient to enter the country.

Visitors from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (**SAARC**) countries, except Afghanistan, receive a once-a-year free 30-day visa upon arrival (Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

Nationals of Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Cameroon, Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Syria and Refugees with a travel document are required to obtain visas **before** arrival.

Tourist visas are available **on arrival** for citizens of all other countries at Kathmandu airport and currently cost US\$25 for 15 days, US\$40 for 30 days and US\$100 for 90 days. Tourist visas can be granted for a maximum of 150 days in a calendar year. You can also pay this in convertible currencies such as Euros, Pounds, RMBs and Australian dollars, although US dollars are always preferred. The visa fee payment desk has a credit card terminal, but it has been known to be faulty. All tourist visas are currently “multiple entry.”

## At the airport:

Step-by-step visa procedure for everybody except the nationals of above-mentioned countries:

1. Fill in the tourist visa form online ([www.online.nepalimmigration.gov.np/tourist-visa](http://www.online.nepalimmigration.gov.np/tourist-visa)), 15 days before your departure at the earliest
2. Bring a print out of that form with you.
3. On the plane, ask the cabin crew for an Arrival Card or get one in the arrival hall **(A)**.
4. Pay the visa fee at the booth on the far end of the hall **(B)**, and get your receipt.
5. Armed with receipt, visa form, Arrival Card

and your passport, find the appropriate immigration desk **(C)** to get your visa sticker and entry stamp. The desks are differentiated according to the amount of time you want to spend in Nepal: 15 days - 30 days - 90 days.

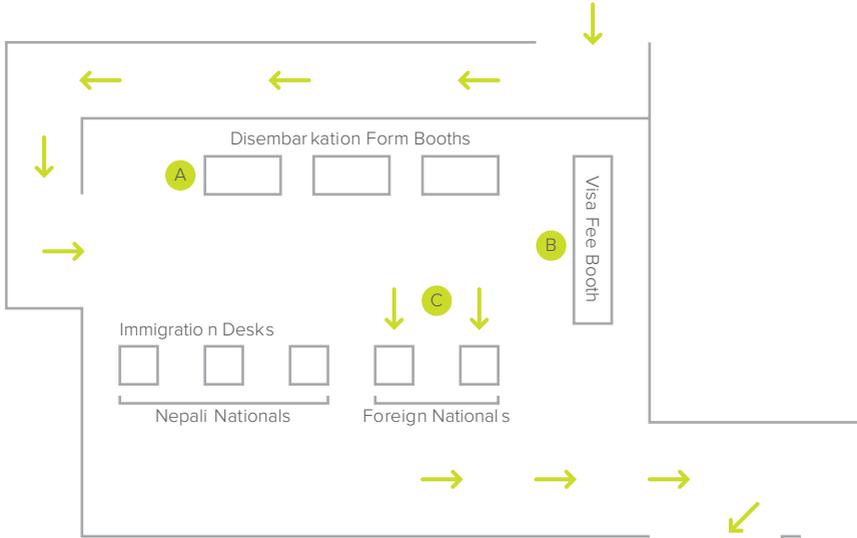
After your passport has been processed and stamped, exit the hall and go down to the luggage belts **(D)**. Expect to wait for some time until your luggage is delivered, especially if you arrive with an evening flight. Be sure to keep your **luggage tag** (the one that was pasted on your boarding pass at check-in) handy as security/customs officers will check if it matches the one on your bag **(E)**.

If Photo Kathmandu is arranging your hotel, look out for our placard outside the main arrival area. Our airport pick-up service by Four Season Travel & Tours will take you to your hotel.

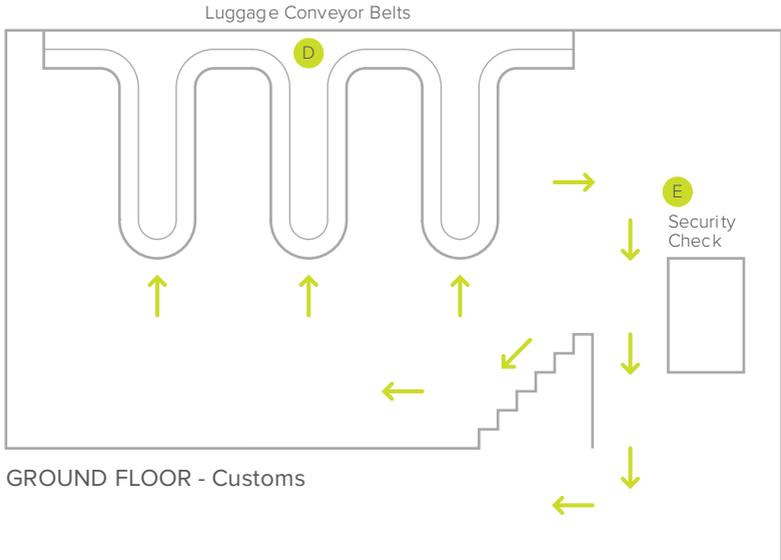
If you're making independent arrangements, try to book your first night's accommodation before you arrive and ask the hotel to send someone to meet you. Many hotels and guest houses offer complimentary airport pick-ups. If you have made such arrangements, someone from your hotel or trekking agency will be displaying a sign so they can be identified.

Otherwise, fixed price pre-paid taxis can be arranged before you exit the building. Be sure to know to which neighborhood you are heading.

# TARMAC



FIRST FLOOR - Immigration



GROUND FLOOR - Customs

EXIT

# BRING

In October and November, forget your rain gear and expect sunny skies with daytime temperatures around 20°C! After sunset, temperatures cool down to around 10°C on average.



Pack a bag with clothes and essentials for 2 days and bring this as hand luggage (carry-on) – in case you encounter delays with checked luggage



Comfortable walking shoes to walk around



A torch/flash light in case of power cuts, inside and outside



Passport sized photos (e.g. for sim card application form, permits, ...)



Prescription glasses and contact lens solution if required

Bring warm clothes to sleep in at night (no central heating)



A sweater/light jacket/scarf for the evenings (key to Kathmandu nights is definitely 'layering')



Toilet paper is not standard in every bathroom, so carry your own if you need it



Medication/prescriptions – ask your doctor about your specific needs



Camera, memory cards, extra batteries



## VISIT

The festival's travel partner **Four Season** (Phone: +977-1-5526894 / 5528842) offers a wide array of tours and trekking itineraries, both long and short. Take advantage of their knowledge and let them handle the logistics of your trip!  
[www.go-nepal.com/destination/nepal.html](http://www.go-nepal.com/destination/nepal.html)

**Palaces and Temples.** Besides the mountains, these are the other main reason people visit Nepal. Basantapur (Kathmandu), Patan and Bhaktapur boast the most famous **Durbar Squares** (*durbar* means palace) and are packed with temples, bells, statues, patis and hitis.

Luckily, many of these survived the disastrous earthquakes of 2015, and can still be explored today. The most interesting way to visit is with a guide, who can take you around the square and, most importantly, the surrounding neighborhoods, so as to get a glimpse of how traditional urban life is organized. **Important:** tourists need to pay a fee to access the Durbar

Squares. Bring your passport (visa) and ask for an **extended ticket** to avoid paying a daily entrance fee.

Equally beautiful, but lesser known, are the old centers of **Dhulikhel** and **Panauti**, a mere two to three hours drive from the capital, just outside of the valley.

Of course, don't miss the **Boudhanath** and **Swayambhunath Stupas**. Both are major pilgrimage sites for Buddhists and impressive architectural feats.

**Pashupathinath:** this extensive Hindu temple precinct is a sprawling collection of temples, ashrams, images and inscriptions raised over the centuries along the banks of the sacred Bagmati river. Simply gorgeous.

When the hustle of traffic, horns, and pollution gets too much, take a rest on the cushions in the **Garden of Dreams** (Thamel) amidst the exquisite sub-tropical flora. Or play with the squirrels.



Photo: Shikhar Bhattarai

## RESPECT

Greet people with a warm **namaste** (or a more formal *namaskar*) with palms together, fingers up. It is used in place of hello or goodbye. The least watered down definition of the word is 'the divine in me salutes the divine in you.'

Show respect to **elders**.



**Feet** are considered dirty. Don't point the bottoms of your feet at people or religious icons. Don't step over a person who is seated or lying on the ground. Be sensitive to when it's appropriate to remove your hat or shoes. It is proper to take off your shoes before entering a residential house.

The **left hand** is considered unclean as it is used to wash after defecating. Many Nepali Hotel & Guest House toilets have bidet attachments, like a kitchen sink sprayer, for this purpose in lieu of toilet paper. It is considered insulting to touch anyone with the left hand. It is proper to poke someone, or take and give something with the right hand.



Circumambulate Buddhist and Hindu shrines and temples, chortens, stupas, mani walls, monasteries etc in a **clockwise direction**.

When **haggling** over prices, smile, laugh and be friendly. Be prepared to allow a reasonable profit. Don't be a miser or insult fine craftsmanship, it's much better to lament that you are too poor to afford such princely quality.



Many **Hindu temples** do not allow non-Hindus inside certain parts of the temple complex. Be aware and respectful of this fact, as these are places of worship, not tourist attractions.

Being a non-Hindu makes you moderately impure to some strict Hindus. Avoid touching communal or shared containers of water: let someone pour it into your drinking container. Likewise avoid touching food that others will be eating. Make sure you are invited in before entering someone's house. You may only be welcome on the outer porch, or in the yard.

**Shoes** are routinely left on the front porch or in a specific area near the front door.



**Wash hands** before and after eating. Touch food only with the right hand if you're not left-handed.



Photo: Shikhar Bhattarai

## CONNECT

**WiFi** is widely available in the Kathmandu Valley. WiFi speed and reliability are not among the world's best, but they are certainly enough to check emails and browse social media.

Our internet partner offers free WiFi at the two festival hubs. The networks in both locations are called "Photo Kathmandu" and the password for all three is "ilovephotoktm".

There are two main **mobile operators** in Nepal: Government run NTC (Nepal Telecom Company) and the private provider Ncell. Both offer 4G data reception in populated areas.

Both operators allow tourists to buy SIM cards for about NPR 100 in Kathmandu and most major towns. You will need to bring a passport photo, fill

in a form and have your passport and visa page photocopied. Try to buy the SIM card at a shop owned by the phone company as if you buy it from a corner shop it can take some time for the card to be activated, despite promises that it will be done in "a couple of hours".

**Ncell** SIMs - can be bought from many stores (type Ncell in Google Maps), but are best bought from official outlets. Micro/nano SIMs can be cut for free if needed. Ncell offers both call/data and data only SIMs.

**NTC** SIMs - can usually only be bought from their official offices. Sometimes, the Nepal Tourism Board offers free NTC sims at their airport desk. Check them out, right before the exit!

**Recharge cards** of various values are readily available in most shops.



Photo: Benjamin A. Ward

## MONEY MATTERS

**Nepali Rupees** (NPR) is the local currency. Removing the last 2 digits of a price gives you a fair approximation of the USD equivalent (1 USD = +/- 110 NPR).

**Indian currency** is also accepted in Nepal (at an official and fixed exchange rate of 1.60 NPR to 1 INR), nevertheless, the INR 500 and INR 1,000 notes are not widely accepted.

There are quite a number of ATMs that are open around the clock. The maximum withdrawal amount is 35,000 Rupees (Nabil Bank) for a 500 Rupees processing fee. They can easily be found through Google Maps. Currency exchange offices are available throughout the main cities.

Be sure to keep all currency exchange and ATM receipts as you will need these at the airport bank to convert any cash back to your original currency. If you don't have them, they will refuse to convert your currency.

## STAY SAFE

Kathmandu is generally a safe city, and even pickpockets are rare. Nevertheless, take the usual precautions and don't flaunt your cash or make ostentatious displays of wealth.

Sometimes, there are strikes (*bandhas*) and demonstrations to contend with. Some businesses close, but many allowances are usually made for tourists, who are widely respected. If in doubt, ask about strikes at your hotel or read the English language Nepali newspapers.

## NEWSPAPERS

These are the main Nepali newspapers in English language:

- Nepali Times
- República
- The Himalayan Times
- The Kathmandu Post
- Himal Southasian

## STAY HEALTHY

**Water** - Always assume that tap water is unsafe. In restaurants and bars, when you ask for regular water, you'll get water from treated and purified 20L bottles. Otherwise stick to mineral water.

**Food** - Peel your fruit, and avoid street food unless you're positive about the vendor's hygiene (if it's fried, it's usually OK). Most restaurants wash the vegetables and salads with iodized water to kill germs, but don't hesitate to ask your waiter about it. In any case, traveler's diarrhea is a common thing and shouldn't leave you too worried. Stay hydrated, carry tissues and hand sanitizer around, take basic precautions and it should be over before you know it. If not, see the next section...

## EMERGENCIES

Police	100
Fire Brigade	101
Ambulance	102
Traffic Police	103

Patan Hospital	+977 1 552 2295 or 552 2566
CIWEC Clinic	+977 1 442 4111 or 443 5232
Grande Hospital	+977 1 515 9266 or 515 9267
Norvic Hospital	+977 1 425 2922 or 425 8554
Blue Cross Hospital	+977 1 426 2027
Blood Bank	+977 1 422 5344



Photo: Sagar Chhetri



Photo: Shikhar Bhattarai

## SHOP

For **books**, head to Pilgrims Book Store (Thamel) or the Patan Bookshop (Patan Dhoka). For **locally made and fair trade certified souvenirs and interior decoration items**, head to Pulchowk - the strip between Himalaya Hotel and Kan Devata Temple has a number of interesting places like Dhukuti, The Hemp Company and Mahaguthi. Roam the alleys of Patan to find **antiques** (or replicas, as exporting certain antiques is prohibited). If you fall in love with a wooden object, one way to know if it's the real thing is to check for patina.

Here for more than a week? Take a couple of hours to have a **suit and shirts tailored!** Head to the Bishal Bazaar mall on New Road and look for our favorite tailor Sirjana.

## RELAX

**Kundalini Sound and Herbal therapy** (Thamel) is the place to wind down and get yourself back together after exploring the nooks and crannies of Kathmandu. Just sit back, relax and let the singing bowls do all the work.

**Sotai & Kai Japanese Physiotherapy** (Jhamsikhel). The Japanese owner and his son have trained deaf/mute Nepalis as masseuses/masseurs, and they perform excellent massages that do wonders to ease aching muscles and joints.

**Seeing Hands** (Jhamsikhel & Thamel). The fantastic hands of the teams of blind masseurs will find every knot in your muscles and make sure you leave walking on clouds.

## GO OUT

Check your SMS and/or emails regularly for the day's designated **drinking hole**.

For more information on the following selection, check out their facebook pages.

In Thamel, **Sam's Bar** and **OR2K** are lively and fun. **Jazz Upstairs** on Lazimpat Road offers nice views in a pub kind of style (with a live band on Wednesdays and Saturdays). The **Reggae Bar and Cafe** in Thamel has live bands almost every night as does **Purple Haze Rock Bar** right around the corner. **The Irish Pub** shows major sports events on a big screen (Lazimpat). **Club 25 Hours** (Naxal) has a cozy restaurant, a garden bar and a club in it's basement. **The Victory Lounge** (Durbar Marg) is the new fancy place in town. Check their facebook page to get on the guest

list. Those in the know gather at **House of Music**, an old-school beer house and music venue on Friday and Wednesday evenings for decent rock, reggae and RnB (Amrit Marg). Unpretentious **Base Camp** attracts the artistic minded crowds on Arun Thapa Chowk (Jhamsikhel).

Don't miss out on the **Kathmandu International Jazz Festival** (aka Jazzmandu, in various locations, from 1 to 6 November 2018), a major highlight in the capital's cultural scene. A great selection of jazz performers comes up to the valley from around the world to perform and delight the Nepali crowds - jazzmandu.org



Photo: Samip Dhungel

## FOOD & DRINKS

All places listed here are easily found on Google Maps.

**Mo:mo:** These bite-sized dumplings packed full of flavor come in many shapes and tastes - they can be boiled or fried, veg or non-veg, usually savory, sometimes sweet (try a fried Snickers mo:mo: after a long day of hiking). Our picks: **Momo Magic** (Pulchowk), **Le Trio's** (Pulchowk) and **Michung Mo:mo:** (Tibetan style, Boudhanath).

### Breakfast/Brunch

A favourite of the expat/NGO crowd, **Café Soma** (Jhamsikhel) serves hearty breakfasts, burgers and salads, and displays a series of irresistible desserts on the counter. **Himalayan Java** (Mangal Bazaar), a specialty coffee shop and bakery, makes delicious breakfasts in this protected heritage building.

### Local cuisine

The Nepali national meal is *daal-bhaat-tarkaari*: spiced lentils poured over boiled rice, and served with vegetables cooked with spices. This is served in most Nepali homes and teahouses.



Photo: Shikhar Bhattarai

The meal may be accompanied by *dahi* (yogurt) and a small helping of fresh ultra-spicy *achaar* (pickle). Traditionally this meal is eaten with the right hand. Head to **Thakkhola** (Jhamsikhel) for a great experience.

One of Nepal's oldest eateries, **Honacha** (Patan Durbar Square), still stands strong and serves authentic Newari cuisine. Their *chhoyala* has been a local favorite for years.



Photo: Chemi Dorje

For a great Newari food and Raksi experience, head to lovely Kirtipur, just behind Tribhuvan University, right outside the ring road and find **Newa Lahana**. This restaurant up on the fourth floor offers amazing views of the surrounding hills, and serves 5 different types of *raksi* to go along with a variety of Newari snacks.

### International

The food scene in Kathmandu is fast-growing. And it's good! South of the Bagmati River, it's all happening in the Jhamsikhel area where new places pop up regularly. Check out **Roadhouse Café** (pizzas), **El Mediterraneo** (tapas), **Lhakpa's Chulo** (fusion), **The Lunch Box** (Chicago style burgers), **Piano B** (Italian) to name a few.

On the north side, find **Chez Caroline** (continental) in the beautiful Baber Mahal

Revisited complex in Thapathali, or **Vino Bistro** (cheese and wine) on Lazimpat Road and **Le Sherpa** (continental) in Panipokhari, amongst many others.

**Tea** - Although not as internationally famous as Indian brands, Nepal does in fact have a large organic tea industry. Sit down on a stool at any tea shop, ask for masala tea, milk tea or black tea. Remember to ask for little or no sugar, if that's your fancy.

**Coffee** - Nepal has emerged as a coffee producing country over the last two decades. For the most part, it is grown organically and provides extra income for smallholder farmers. Don't settle for dehydrated instant powders when you can enjoy a tasty local arabica! Head to **Coffee, Tea & Me** (Swotha) for a coffee and a snack!



Photo: Sagar Chhetri

**Alcohol** - *Raksi* is a clear drink, similar to tequila in its alcohol content. It is usually brewed "in house", resulting in variations in taste and strength. It is often served in small, baked, beveled clay cups that hold less than a shot. It works great as a mixer in juice or soda. **Chyaang**

is a cloudy, moderately alcoholic drink sometimes called "Nepali beer". It is mostly made from rice, especially in Newari culture. While weaker than *raksi*, it will still have quite an effect. **Tongba** is a Tibetan drink based on fermented millet grains mixed with hot water - very tasty, and potent!

## CONTACT

During the festival, you can always find a Photo Kathmandu team member at Kwalkhu Square (Yala Mandala) and/or Yala Maya Kendra, where most of the Talks and Workshops take place. Here are the contact details for the core Festival Team, in case you need to get in touch. Remember to sign your text messages, as we may not have your international numbers stored!

NayanTara  
+977 985 101 4930

Nishant (logistics)  
+977 984 175 0949

Thomas (hospitality)  
+977 980 383 3384

Raji (general)  
+977 984 382 3356

Sushrut (general)  
+977 981 848 8062

## RECOMMENDED READING

### AND LINKS

Among the many sources of information on Nepal, we find these particularly well written and insightful.

Books:

Thomas Bell - "**Kathmandu**" (non-fiction)  
Aditya Adhikari - "**Bullet and the Ballot Box: The Story of Nepal's Maoist Revolution**" (non-fiction)  
Prawin Adhikari - "**The Vanishing Act: Stories**" (fiction)  
Manjushree Thapa - "**Tutor of History**" (fiction)  
Pranaya Rana - "**City of Dreams**" (fiction)  
Rabi Thapa - "**Thamel**" (non-fiction)

Online news & culture magazines:

**La.Lit Magazine** (lalitmag.com)  
**The Record Nepal** (recordnepal.com)  
**Himal Southasian** (himalmag.com)

Links to general information on Nepal and Kathmandu:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal)  
[wikitravel.org/en/Nepal](https://wikitravel.org/en/Nepal)  
[wikitravel.org/en/Kathmandu](https://wikitravel.org/en/Kathmandu)





Photo: Samantha Reinders

## GETTING AROUND

Except for the main arteries, very few streets have names/signs in Kathmandu. To get to your destination, you need to know the closest landmark, or at least the name of the neighborhood.

**Taxis** are probably the most efficient means of getting around in Kathmandu. They're the small white Maruti Suzuki cars (with black number-plates), and usually with a luggage rack on the roof. Most taxi drivers know most hotels and landmarks around town, and if you tell them the neighborhood, they'll ask around themselves to get you safely to your destination. Before sitting down, make sure that they either **put on the meter** or **agree on a price**. Be prepared to negotiate (on average, settle on 30% less than the first offer). Best results are obtained when you smile and take the negotiation process lightly. There's no use in getting angry, and in any case there are usually other taxis around to choose from.

From Patan Durbar Square, expect to pay  
150 Rupees to Jhamsikhel  
400 Rupees to Thamel  
500 Rupees to Lazimpat  
600 Rupees to Bouddha  
Prices increase 50% after dark.

Other options include the (often crowded) "**tempo**" three-wheelers and "**micro**" buses. They run on fixed routes and cost between 15 and 20 Rupees. The routes they serve are written in Nepali, so ask around for help.

For longer distances, such as to Pokhara (6-7h) or Chitwan (7h), there are **tourist buses** that leave every day at 7am from Kantipath (just outside Thamel).

Alternatively, you can opt for a **domestic flight** with one of the numerous carriers (Bouddha Airlines, Yeti Airlines, Tara Airlines, Nepal Airlines).



Our travel partner **Four Season Travel & Tours** will be happy to help you organize your plans! Contact Mr. Pankaj Pradhananga (pankaj@nbe.com.np or +977-98010 33864, +977-1-5526894 / 5528842) for a personalized tour or check out the packages on their website ([www.go-nepal.com/destination/nepal.html](http://www.go-nepal.com/destination/nepal.html)).



Photo: Phillip Blenkinsop

## HELP US GET THE WORD OUT

As a recent initiative, we can use all the help we can get **to spread the word** about Photo Kathmandu. A couple of small clicks on your part would go a long way! Here's an overview of our social media handles.



[photoktm.com](http://photoktm.com)



[instagram.com/photoktm](https://www.instagram.com/photoktm)



[facebook.com/photoktm](https://www.facebook.com/photoktm)



[twitter.com/photoktm](https://twitter.com/photoktm)



[youtube.com/c/PhotoKathmanduNepal](https://www.youtube.com/c/PhotoKathmanduNepal)

**Tweet** about your exhibition/slideshow/talk/workshop/residency, share links, and post photos of your preparations!

**Disclaimer:** This information has been gathered based on personal experiences, as well as a number of web sources. August 2018.

Published by:

**photo.circle**