



Earthbound Expeditions

Holi & Festival Cultural Tour

6 days, from US\$497 per person

Duration

6 days

Grade

Easy

Max altitude

2,175 m

Start and end

Kathmandu

On foot

Sightseeing

Best season

March

Accommodation

Hotel and yoga retreat

Meals

Breakfast daily

Group size

No maximum

Getting there

Private vehicle

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Holi & Festival Cultural Tour Overview

Celebrate the festival of colours in the historic cities of the Kathmandu Valley, with visits to temples and palaces and traditional local food.

Tour overview

This six-day trip is planned around the Holi festival. Holi is the Hindu festival of colours. It marks the end of winter and the victory of good over evil. In Kathmandu, the whole city comes out into the streets and throws coloured powder and water at everyone, including strangers, for about six hours. The rest of the itinerary is arranged around the festival: two days visiting the temples of the valley beforehand, and two days of fresh air in the hills at a yoga retreat afterwards, which is a welcome rest after Holi.

The festival day

Holi is loud, wet and chaotic, and one of the most joyful public celebrations in the world. It starts in mid-morning and builds through the day. Water balloons are thrown from rooftops, colour comes from every direction, and local people who would normally be reserved with foreigners approach you freely. The largest crowds and most of the music are in Basantapur, the old Durbar Square. By 2 pm you will be covered in colour, and many people will have hugged you.

Who this trip is for

This trip suits travellers who want to experience one remarkable day rather than two weeks of scenery, and who are comfortable in a large, boisterous crowd. It is a short, inexpensive trip that works as a week on its own or before a trek. It does not suit anyone who wants personal space on day 3, and we will tell you so before you book.

Festival dates

Holi falls on Falgun Purnima, the full moon of the Nepali month of Falgun, so its date in the Western calendar changes each year. It also falls on different days in different parts of Nepal: Kathmandu and the hills celebrate on the day of the full moon, and the Terai, the southern plains, one day later. This itinerary is planned around the Kathmandu date, which is the one fixed point of the trip.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	–	–	1,400 m
2	Swayambhunath, Pashupatinath, Boudhanath and Patan	–	–	1,400 m
3	Holi, in the streets	–	–	1,400 m
4	Nagarkot sunrise, then downhill to the retreat	3 hrs	–	2,175 m
5	Yoga, meditation and the organic farms	–	–	1,500 m
6	Back to Kathmandu, and home	–	–	1,400 m

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at Tribhuvan International Airport and take you to your hotel. A trip briefing is held on the day you arrive or the following day, depending on your arrival time.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: None

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing

After breakfast, visit the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Swayambhunath (the Monkey Temple) and Pashupatinath, an important Hindu pilgrimage site where cremations take place. Continue to Boudhanath, the largest Buddhist stupa in the world, and Patan Durbar Square, known for its medieval architecture and stonework.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 3–4 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Holi festival

Celebrate Holi by playing with colours in the local streets and greeting local people with "Happy Holi". Watch the celebrations in the city's main square and take part in the festival.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Nagarkot sunrise and walk to the yoga retreat

Leave early for Nagarkot to see the sunrise over the Himalaya. After breakfast, walk downhill for three hours to a quiet yoga retreat in the foothills.

Altitude: 1,500 m On foot: 3 hrs Night: Yoga retreat, below Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Day at the yoga retreat

Spend the day practising yoga and meditation at the retreat centre. You can also walk in the surrounding countryside and visit nearby organic farms.

Altitude: 1,500 m On foot: Optional 2–3 hrs Night: Yoga retreat, below Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Departure

Return to Kathmandu for your onward departure.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Airport transfers & ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits & national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary

Not included

- International flights
- Travel & rescue insurance
- Personal trekking gear
- Tips & personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Packing list

Clothing for Holi

- Clothes you are willing to throw away. A white T-shirt is traditional and shows the colours best
- An old pair of trainers. Do not wear sandals, as the crowd is dense and your feet may be trodden on
- Sunglasses, which are the best way to keep powder out of your eyes
- Most travellers buy an inexpensive set of clothes in Thamel on day 2 for a few dollars

Protection from the colour

- Coconut oil or any other oil, rubbed into your hair and skin before you go out. Local people do this, and it makes the colour much easier to remove
- A waterproof phone pouch on a lanyard, bought before you travel. This is the most useful item on this list
- An old cap or bandana, as otherwise your hair may stay coloured for a week
- Micellar water or baby oil for afterwards, which removes colour that soap does not

Cameras

- Bring only an action camera or a phone in a waterproof pouch. Powder and water will damage a normal camera, and you will be soaked within ten minutes
- If you bring a larger camera, bring a rain cover and put the camera away by 11 am
- Ask before photographing people. On Holi, almost everyone will agree

The rest of the trip

- Long trousers and tops with sleeves for the temples on day 2, and slip-on shoes, as you will take them off often
- Comfortable shoes for the day 4 walk, which is three hours downhill on farm paths
- A light layer for the sunrise at Nagarkot, which is at 2,175 m and cold before dawn
- A passport valid for six months, US dollars in clean notes for the visa, and two passport photographs

Route map



Optional extras

Everest scenic flight

\$220, 1 morning

A one-hour flight along the Himalaya with a guaranteed window seat. It can be added on day 2 or day 6, and it is the closest this trip comes to the mountains.

Chitwan and Holi in the Terai

from \$390, +3 days

The southern plains celebrate Holi one day after Kathmandu, so with three extra days you can attend both. You see rhinos and Tharu villages, and spend a second festival day in a very different setting.

Short Annapurna trek from Pokhara

from \$387, +3 days

A trek to Ghandruk and back, with views of the Annapurna range. A good way to extend a festival week into a longer trip in Nepal.

Extra nights at the retreat

\$70 a night, +1 or 2 days

Two days of yoga after Holi is the shortest worthwhile stay, and three days is better. This is the least expensive option on this list.

Bhaktapur and Changu Narayan

\$95, 1 day

Bhaktapur is the best preserved of the valley's medieval cities, and Changu Narayan is the oldest temple in Nepal. Both are near Nagarkot and can easily be added to day 4.

Single room

\$110

A room to yourself for all five nights, at the hotel and at the retreat.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/holi-festival-tour