

Earthbound Expeditions

Spirit of Nepal

10 days, from US$1,187 per person

Duration
10 days

Grade
Easy

Max altitude
2,175 m

Start and end
Kathmandu

On foot
2 to 4 hours a day

Best season
Oct to Apr

Accommodation
Hotels and a jungle lodge

Meals
Breakfast daily

Group size
Private, from 1

Getting around
Vehicle and one flight

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Spirit of Nepal Overview

Nepal in ten days without a trek: the historic cities of the Kathmandu Valley, rhinos in the grassland of Chitwan, and the Annapurnas from a ridge above Pokhara.

Tour overview

Ten days that cross Nepal from the subtropical plains to the edge of the Himalaya, with every night in a hotel or lodge. You visit the valley cities, Chitwan National Park and the ridges above Pokhara, in the most practical order, with two mornings set aside for mountain views so that one cloudy sunrise does not mean you miss them.

Chitwan National Park

Many visitors expect Nepal to be only mountains, and are surprised to find that a fifth of the country is hot, flat grassland with rhinos. Chitwan covers four hundred square miles of sal forest and elephant grass on the Indian border, and two days there give you a fuller picture of the country.

The ridge walk

Sarangkot at sunrise is a viewpoint with a car park. From there you walk west along the ridge for three hours, through villages going about their morning, which gives you a closer experience of the Annapurnas than the viewpoint alone. It is one of the highlights of the trip and adds very little to the cost.

Who this trip is for

First-time visitors to Nepal, families, couples, and travellers with ten days who want to see the whole country rather than one region. It runs for one traveller or more, and it is the trip we recommend most often to people who are not yet sure what they want.

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Arrive Kathmandu	-	-	1,400 m
2	Swayambhunath, Durbar Square, Boudhanath	3 to 4	-	1,400 m
3	Patan and Pashupatinath	4	-	1,400 m
4	Kathmandu to Chitwan	5 to 6	165 km	150 m
5	Chitwan: canoe, walk and jeep	3 to 4	-	150 m
6	Chitwan to Pokhara	5	150 km	820 m
7	Sarangkot sunrise and the Naudanda ridge	3	9 km	1,600 m
8	Pokhara, the lake and the pagoda	2	-	820 m
9	Fly to Kathmandu, drive to Nagarkot	25 min	-	2,175 m
10	Nagarkot sunrise, Bhaktapur, and out	2	-	1,400 m

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

We meet you at the airport and take you to your hotel. There are no activities planned today. In the evening we go through the ten-day itinerary over dinner and answer common questions, such as how hot Chitwan will be, what you will see, and whether you need anything you have not brought.

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

Day 2

Swayambhunath, Kathmandu Durbar Square and Boudhanath

You climb the stairway to Swayambhunath early, while pilgrims are still walking around the stupa. You visit Kathmandu Durbar Square in the late morning, and Boudhanath at the end of the afternoon, when several thousand people walk the kora as the lamps are lit and the stupa turns golden in the evening light. Many visitors find this the most memorable moment in the valley.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: 3 to 4 hours on foot Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Patan, its workshops and Pashupatinath

You spend the morning in Patan Durbar Square, the finest and least crowded of the three royal squares, and then walk the back lanes where families still cast bronze using the lost-wax method in their own courtyards. In the afternoon you visit Pashupatinath, where cremations take place in the open on the ghats. Your guide will explain what to expect before you arrive.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: 4 hours on foot Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Drive to Chitwan

You drive south and west out of the valley along the Trishuli river, five to six hours by road, descending a thousand metres. The temperature is about fifteen degrees higher. Chitwan is flat, hot and green, and very different from Kathmandu. We arrive in time for a walk to a Tharu village and the sunset on the bank of the Rapti river.

Altitude: 150 m On foot: 1 hour Night: Jungle lodge, Sauraha Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 5

Full day in Chitwan National Park

At first light you travel down the Rapti river in a dugout canoe, with gharial crocodiles on the sandbanks and plenty of birdlife. This is followed by a guided walk in the park with two naturalists, one in front and one behind, which is the standard practice here. In the afternoon a jeep drive takes you into the grassland where the rhinos live, and in the evening there is a Tharu stick dance.

Altitude: 150 m On foot: 3 to 4 hours Night: Jungle lodge, Sauraha Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 6

Drive from Chitwan to Pokhara

There is an early walk or a second canoe trip if the group would like one, followed by a five-hour drive north-west to Pokhara along the Seti river. The road climbs steadily and the air becomes cooler. We reach the lake in the afternoon, and you can check whether the mountains are visible to the north.

Altitude: 820 m On foot: 1 hour Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast, lunch

Day 7

Sarangkot sunrise and ridge walk to Naudanda

You drive up to the Sarangkot ridge at 1,600 m before six. The early start is worthwhile, as the first light reaches Machhapuchhre and Annapurna South while the lake below is still under mist. After breakfast we walk west along the ridge to Naudanda, three hours on a village path with the mountains on your right the whole way, and then drive back down.

Altitude: 1,600 m On foot: 3 hours Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 8

Free day in Pokhara

You can take a boat across Phewa Tal to the Tal Barahi temple and climb the steps to the World Peace Pagoda, visit the Tibetan settlement at Tashiling, see Devi's Fall and the Gupteshwor cave, or rest on the hotel terrace. Paragliding from Sarangkot is a popular optional extra, and we can arrange it for the morning.

Altitude: 820 m On foot: 2 hours Night: Hotel by the lake, Pokhara Meals: Breakfast

Day 9

Fly to Kathmandu and drive to Nagarkot

The flight takes twenty-five minutes, with the mountains visible from the left-hand windows. If the weather prevents flying, the drive takes six hours. Instead of returning to the city, we drive directly to the Nagarkot ridge at 2,175 m, an hour beyond Bhaktapur, where you can watch the evening light fade over the Himalaya.

Altitude: 2,175 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 10

Nagarkot sunrise, Bhaktapur and departure

You get up before six for a final mountain view, which on a clear winter morning extends from Ganesh Himal to Everest. You spend the morning in Bhaktapur, the best preserved of the three cities. In the afternoon we take you to the airport, or back to Kathmandu if you are extending your stay.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: 2 hours on foot Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

Spirit of Nepal Cost and What's Included

- Airport transfers and all land transport in a private vehicle with a driver
- The Pokhara to Kathmandu flight on day 9, with road transport as the alternative
- Nine nights: three in Kathmandu, two at a Chitwan jungle lodge, three in Pokhara and one at Nagarkot
- A licensed cultural guide for the valley days, and a naturalist throughout your time in Chitwan
- Full board in Chitwan, breakfast everywhere else, and dinner on the first and ninth nights
- All monument entry fees in the valley, and the Chitwan National Park permit
- Canoe trip, guided jungle walk, jeep drive and the Tharu cultural evening in Chitwan
- The Sarangkot sunrise trip and the guided ridge walk to Naudanda
- The boat on Phewa Tal on day 8

Not included

- International flights and the Nepal visa
- Lunch and dinner outside Chitwan, which applies on most days and is inexpensive
- Drinks, tips and personal expenses

- Travel insurance
- Optional extras: paragliding, the Everest scenic flight, a visit to the elephant breeding centre, a second jeep drive

Spirit of Nepal Packing List

Packing for three climates

A January morning in Kathmandu is two degrees. A Chitwan afternoon in the same week is twenty-six degrees. Sarangkot before sunrise is colder than either, and you will be standing still. Bring layers rather than one warm coat, and bring insect repellent for the lowlands. It is the item most often forgotten, and the products available in Sauraha are of poor quality.

Headwear

- A sun hat with a brim, which is more important in Chitwan than in the hills
- Sunglasses
- A warm hat for the two sunrise mornings, which are cold from November to February

Clothing

- Light long-sleeved tops and long trousers in neutral colours for the jungle walk, to protect against insects
- Clothes that cover shoulders and knees for the temples
- One good warm layer for Sarangkot and Nagarkot at dawn
- A light waterproof jacket, in any month
- Swimwear for the pool in Chitwan

Footwear

- Shoes with a good grip that are easy to take off, for the temples and the cobbled streets
- Trainers or light boots for the Naudanda ridge walk and the jungle walk
- Sandals for Chitwan, where it is hot

Health

- Insect repellent with DEET for Chitwan, which is often forgotten
- Sun cream, factor 30 or above
- A dust mask or buff for the Kathmandu traffic
- Rehydration salts and your usual remedy for an upset stomach
- Your own prescription medicines in their original packaging

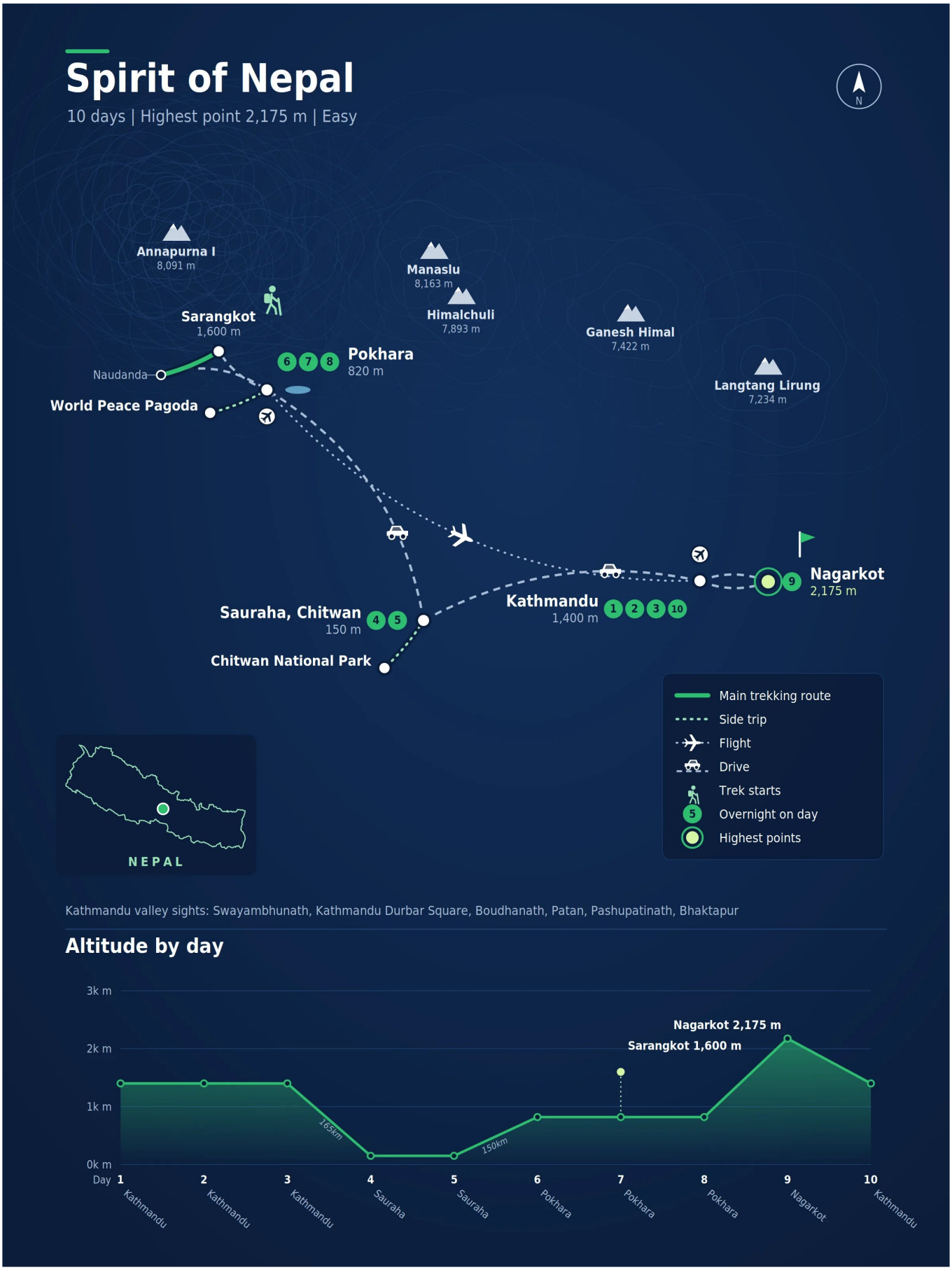
Bags

- One suitcase or duffel bag, carried in the vehicle, and a daypack that you carry
- A refillable water bottle
- Binoculars, which make a great difference in Chitwan and are easy to pack
- Spare camera batteries for the two sunrise mornings

Documents

- Passport valid for at least six months, and two passport photographs
- US dollars in clean notes for the visa counter
- Travel insurance details, on paper as well as on your phone

Route map


Spirit of Nepal
10 days | Highest point 2,175 m | Easy
N
Annapurna I
8,091 m
Manaslu
8,163 m
Himalchuli
7,893 m
Ganesh Himal
7,422 m
Langtang Lirung
7,234 m
Sarangkot
1,600 m
Naudanda
Pokhara
820 m
6 7 8
World Peace Pagoda
Nagarkot
2,175 m
9
Kathmandu
1,400 m
1 2 3 10
Sauraha, Chitwan
150 m
4 5
Chitwan National Park
Main trekking route
Side trip
Flight
Drive
Trek starts
Overnight on day
Highest points
NEPAL
Kathmandu valley sights: Swayambhunath, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Boudhanath, Patan, Pashupatinath, Bhaktapur
Altitude by day
3k m
2k m
1k m
0k m
Day
Nagarkot 2,175 m
Sarangkot 1,600 m
165km
150km
1 Kathmandu
2 Kathmandu
3 Kathmandu
4 Sauraha
5 Sauraha
6 Pokhara
7 Pokhara
8 Pokhara
9 Nagarkot
10 Kathmandu

Optional extras

Paragliding from Sarangkot

$90, 1 morning

A tandem flight of twenty to thirty minutes, launching from the ridge where you watched the sunrise and landing by the lake. It takes place on the morning of day 8. Flights need stable air, so autumn and winter are best, and the cost is refunded if the flight does not go ahead.

Everest scenic flight

$220, 1 morning

A one-hour flight along the range from Kathmandu with a guaranteed window seat, returning before eight. It can be added on day 2 or day 10. It depends on the weather and is refunded in full if cancelled.

A third night in Chitwan

$170, 1 extra day

This is the addition we recommend most. Two days in Chitwan is enough to see a rhino; three days allow a more relaxed pace, and the second jeep drive at dawn usually offers the best wildlife viewing of the trip.

Ghorepani and Poon Hill trek

$897, adds 5 days

Added to the end of the Pokhara stay rather than sold separately. Five days on a teahouse trail, with sunrise at 3,210 m over ten peaks, returning to the lake. One itinerary and one price, with the permits arranged together.

Newari cooking class in Patan

$45, half a day

Held in a family kitchen rather than a hotel demonstration room. You shop at the market first, then cook and eat with the family. Added to day 3.

Upgrade to four-star and five-star hotels throughout

from $640, same length

Dwarika's or the Hyatt in Kathmandu, a five-star lodge in Chitwan, a lakeside resort in Pokhara and the best hotel on the Nagarkot ridge. The itinerary stays the same.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: enepaltrekking.com/nepal-tour-spirit-of-nepal