

Sightseeing Outside Kathmandu

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Pokhara

Pokhara is in an ideal position situated around the beautiful Lake Phewa. The Pokhara valley occupies the central location in Nepal; it is dominated by the peaks of Annapurna range that tower above the town. Pokhara has arguably the finest mountain backdrop in the world, the land sweeps from an altitude of 600 meters to over 8000 meters within a distance of 50 kms with many famous mountains in view from the town. The prominent peaks from east to west are Annapurna South (7,219 metres), Fang (7,647 metres), Annapurna 1st (8,091 metres), Rock Noir (7,454 metres), Glacier Dome (7,193 metres), Gangapurna (7,455 metres), Annapurna 3rd (7,755 metres), Machhapuchhre (6,993 metres), Annapurna IV (7,525 metres), Annapurna 2nd (7,937 metres) and Lamjung Himal (6,983 metres). In addition to these, Dhaulagiri to the north-west and Manaslu-Himalchuli peaks to the north-east are also visible. The town serves as a gateway for many treks in the Annapurna region.

Sightseeing around Pokhara.

Devi's fall: Locally known as Patale Chhango, Devi's Fall is the most famous waterfall in Pokhara and lies 2 km southwest of Pokhara. During the summer rainy season the water travels swiftly through the underlying rocks to enter the fall. The name devis comes from a situation on the 31st July 1961 a Swiss couple were having a bath in the stream just above the waterfall in the afternoon, a sudden flood from the Fewa

Dam swept one of the couple Mrs Devi to her death, since that time this fall has been known as Devi's Fall. The source of the fall originates from Fewa lake. Mahendra Cave where there are many stalactite and stalagmite formations forms part of the Devis fall complex.

Chhorepatan (near Devi's Fall) is one of two Tibetan settlements near Pokhara where it is possible to see traditional Tibetan hand knotted carpets being weaved with typical designs and methods handed down to them for generations. Syangja is another settlement situated on the Baglung road eight kms from Pokhara. Both these settlements are famous for traditional Tibetan handicrafts and souvenirs.

The Peace Pagoda:

The World Peace Pagoda is situated on the top of a hill on the southern shore of Phewa Lake reached by a half hour boat ride.

The journey up to the pagoda makes for a pleasant morning hike, it is not a difficult climb as it winds its way up through wooded forest and there are one or two stops for refreshments along the way. Situated in a perfect hill location the Pagoda clearly shows the four images of Buddha from each of its aspects.

The pagoda occupies an impressive hill top position providing a panoramic view of lake Phewa along with extremely clear views of both the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges.

Lakes:– The valley contains many lakes. Phewa, Rupa and Begnas are the most famous ones while Khaste, Dipang and Mardi are smaller lakes situated further away from the city, sporting activities include boating, canoeing and swimming.

It is also possible to fish, carp in particular. On a small island is a temple dedicated to Varahi where devotees travel by boat for worship. The underlying geological structure of the valley is made up of a huge layer of gravel which over the years has eroded in places by the Seti River to form intricate deep gorges that run north to south throughout the town.

Mini Treks:-

Pokhara is the main base for many treks in the Annapurna region; several short treks are available from Pokhara ranging from a day trek to Sarangkot to Treks of two weeks and beyond. If you are not planning to go trekking, an early morning twenty minute drive to the top of Sarangkot for sunrise over the mountains is well worth the wake up call. Sunrise offers fabulous views along the entire Annapurna range. Trekking back from Sarangkot to Pokhara provides a fantastic bird's eye view of Phewa lake and the town below.

A one night easy trek to Naudanda and Ghachowk is popular for those with less time, providing some splendid views of the Annapurna Himal including the holy mountain of Machhapuchhre, (Fish Tail

Mountain). Treks further afield entail a one hour drive to Nayapul followed by a 30 minute trek to the beautiful village of Birethanti which is situated at the confluence of the two rivers of two valleys. There are a number of treks available travelling up either valley..the most popular of these is a six night seven day trek to Poon hill for sunrise over both the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Himal this trek in effect is a mini circuit that takes in some very interesting Gurung villages. 3

Connections

Pokhara is connected by many daily flights to Kathmandu; it can also be reached by an extremely scenic drive (six hours) by highway from Kathmandu. There are also highways to both Chitwan and Lumbini, four hours and seven hours respectively.

Lumbini (Birth Place of Lord Buddha): -Lumbini

On the plains south of the first foothills of the Churia range, lies Lumbini, birthplace of Gautam, (Lord Buddha.) Lumbini is a sacred place for Buddhists from all over the world, on an equal footing with holy places sacred to other world religions. As millions of Christians look to Jerusalem for inspiration, and millions of Muslims turn to Mecca, so do three hundred million Buddhists in the sacred Kingdom of Nepal look to Lumbini". A huge pillar left by the great Emperor Ashoka marks Buddha's birth site.

Ashokan Pillar:-

In 1895 a German archaeologist whilst wandering the foothills of the Churia range, discovered a huge stone pillar erected by Emperor Ashoka in 250 B.C. to pay homage to the birth place of Buddha. It is said that the Indian Emperor visited Lumbini Garden in the twentieth year of his coronation.

The stone pillar bears the following inscription:-

King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, having been anointed twenty years, came himself and worshipped saying: "Here Buddha Sakyamuni was born and the stone pillar erected at the same time. The village of Lumbini has been made one free of taxes and a recipient of wealth." (Translated from Brahmi).

The Temple of Maya Devi:-

The temple of Maya Devi contains a stone relief depicting the birth scene of Lord Buddha. The base of the relief shows Maya Devi (the mother of Lord Buddha) supporting herself by holding on to a branch of a Sal tree with the newborn infant Buddha standing upright on a lotus pedestal. Two celestial figures are engaged in the act of pouring water and lotuses from heaven. The Maya Devi shrine has been worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists since the beginning of the Christian era and is believed to have been built over the foundation of at least one earlier temple or stupa.

To the south of the Maya Devi Temple is the famous sacred pool of 'Pusharani', believed to be the same sacred pool in which Queen Maya Devi bathed just before giving birth to Buddha, it is also believed to be the pool where the infant Buddha was given his first purification bath. The structure consists of three projecting terraces in descending order and is fastened with fine brick masonry.

Muktinath:

The famous temple of Lord Muktinath lies at an altitude of 3,749m in the district of Mustang, it is situated about 18km northeast of Jomsom (20 minutes trans himalayan flight north of Pokhara). The temple is situated on a high plateau, it is a very holy pilgrimage site for both Hindus and Buddhists. Muktinath is reached the easy way by a flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara followed by a flight to Jomsom and a few hours trek to the temple. The more scenic way is to trek in from Pokhara for eight days, a trek that takes you through some fascinating old villages. You can either trek out or fly back to Pokhara from Kathmandu ..

Gorkha:

Gorkha is the birthplace of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the great founder of modern Nepal who unified the country in 1768. Situated on a hill overlooking the Nepal Himalaya lies the Kings Palace known as Gorkha Durbar, there are two attractive temples of Gorakhnath and Kali inside the palace precinct. Gorkha is reached in five hours by road from Kathmandu or four hours from Pokhara. A side trip to Manakamana Temple is a well worthwhile temple which celebrates the mind and soul, it is a famous pilgrimage site. Best reached by cable car from Kurintar 80 kms on the main highway towards Pokhara from Kathmandu.

Helambu:

Helambu lies immediately northwest of Kathmandu, the area provides some fine scenery and village trekking. There are many Buddhist monasteries amidst a rich cultural heritage and attractive landscape. Sundarjal, the starting point to trek to Helambu is 11km from Kathmandu.

Daman:

For those seeking the ultimate pan-Himalayan view, Daman provides a fine example. Located 80km southwest of the Kathmandu valley, Daman (2,400m) offers the only clear view of the entire Himalayan range. It is located on the Tribhuvan Highway between Kathmandu and a town called Birgunj, reached in four hours from Kathmandu.

Janakpur:

Janakpur is steeped in religion, the famous birthplace of Sita, the wife of Lord Ram. There is an extremely intricate and artistic marble temple dedicated to Sita (Janaki), popularly known as Naulakha Mandir. Religious festivals, trade fairs and other festivals are held here on Bivaha Panchami (the marriage day of Ram and Sita) and Ram Navami (the birthday of Ram). Janakpur is linked with Kathmandu by air (35 mins) and road (9 hours 375km).

Biratnagar:

The town (the second largest in Nepal) acts as a tourist transit point for visits to Ilam (a district famous for its tea gardens,) along with the Indian destinations of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Kalimpong in Northern India, these regions are very popular study venues with many private and missionary schools situated in there. 117 kms from Biratnagar lies Karkabitta the small border town between Nepal and India after clearing immigration, Darjeeling can be reached in five hours by jeep from here.

Bandipur:

Located on a 1000m ridge in Tanahun district, Bandipur lies 140km west from Kathmandu towards Pokhara, Bandipur is a charming hill town surrounded by some splendid scenery.

At the eastern edge of the town is the pagoda-roof Bindabasini temple which houses Goddess Durga (goddess of destruction,) Bandipur's guardian deity. The rich wooden carvings and detailed brass work that decorate the temple are replicas of those found in the many old pagoda structures of the Kathmandu valley. The other important temples and shrines in the surrounding area include the Mahalaxmi temple with its beautiful woodwork and the Khadga Devi temple which comes alive once a year during the Dashain festival. There are also some pleasant day hikes from the town.

Manakamana: View from Manakama

The temple of Manakamana lies at the top of 1,302m hill. The deity is one of the manifestations of the Hindu Goddess Bhagwati who is believed to have the power to fulfil all wishes, it is one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Nepal, situated 135 kms to the west of Kathmandu..

It is a steep three-hour hike to the hilltop from Abu Khairani on the Kathmandu-Pokhara highway, the easiest way is to take the cable car at Kurintar on the main road. Day package tours are available that allow you to be back in Kathmandu the same day, alternatively there are a range of hotels if you want to extend your stay.

Tansen

Tansen is a small hill town of approximately twenty thousand people on the way from Pokhara to Lumbini and Chitwan National Park. The town is located 1659 metres above sea level on the south flank of Srinagar hill, Tansen has a very tranquil atmosphere with a moderate temperature throughout the year. The town is steeped in ancient culture and inhabited with very friendly people, there are also some excellent mountain views.

Inhabitants are mostly Newar and Magar, they have long been known as staunch warriors. The Kings of Tansen exercised great power over western Nepal in the fifteenth century with Palpa, their Kingdom the last to be defeated by the conquering Gurkhas who unified today's Nepal.

The inhabitants of the region became even more famous in the Anglo Nepal war of the early 1800's Col.Ujir Singh Thapa who commanded the army in the region was in an extremely weak situation at the time. His men were outnumbered four to one by the British forces, he desperately asked for divine help before going into battle, promising a temple in the name of Goddess Bhagwati (who is ferocious and loves blood sacrifices) if she would help him. He repelled the British In 1815, he kept his word and built a temple to the Goddess.

Amar Singh Thapa, another great champion of the Anglo-Nepal war had a special feeling for Tansen, he brought highly skilled artisans from the Kathmandu valley to build the Amar Narayan temple (under reconstruction) when he was the governor of the town. The temple's woodcarvings were remarkable and puja was offered here everyday to Lord Vishnu.

Tansen is unspoiled by tourism and is far away from any urban activity . On clear days mountain views from Srinagar (1659mtrs) hill 20 mins trek up from the town reveal Dhaulagiri, Annapurna, Manaslu, Gauri Shankar and other peaks. The hill also provides some good walks with dense pine and rhododendron forest.

Ilam

Ilam is a hill station situated in far eastern Nepal. The region is famous for its tea gardens, Ilam tea and the lesser known Kanyam teas are said to rival the best teas of Darjeeling nowadays. Ilam can be reached from Kathmandu by bus (16 hours.). The best alternative is to fly to Biratnagar or to Bhadrapur then drive to Ilam. Simple accommodation, tele-communication, e-mail, internet, restaurants and local transportation are available in the town. Antu Danda (1677mtrs) is an ideal location for views of Mt Everest and Kanchenjunga particularly at sunrise and sunset. Mai Pokhari lies approximately 13 kms north of Ilam Bazaar situated at an altitude of 2438 metres it is a famous place for pilgrimage.

Itinerary