

# Itinerary & Optionals

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## DAY 1 WELCOME TO KATHMANDU

Keep a keen eye out for the rainbow-coloured prayer flags flapping in the wind as your transfer from Kathmandu Airport takes you to your hotel. Spirituality is the cornerstone of Nepalese culture, and this is revealed in the many shrines and temples that dot its capital, which you'll get to explore in the coming days. This evening, enjoy dinner at your hotel.

| MEAL(S) | HOTEL                |
|---------|----------------------|
| Dinner  | Crowne Plaza Soaltee |

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## DAY 2 STUPAS AND TEMPLES OF KATHMANDU AND PATAN

Your first stop today is the UNESCO-listed shrine of Swayambhunath. Uncover its history spanning millennia. Admire the galleries of prayer mills and gleaming white stupa, whose gilded spire provides the colourful eyes of Buddha a lofty vantage point from which to survey the surrounding valley. Share the intricately carved stone façades with the resident monkeys and admire the artistry of Nepalese craftsmanship. You'll see all this as you walk through the remnants of Buddhist and Hindu iconography, said to be around 2000 years old. Proceed to the heart of the old town and Durbar Square, another UNESCO World Heritage site. Here you will gain a deeper understanding of its role in the centuries of rule over this mountain kingdom. See the traditional pagoda-style architecture reflected in the temples and palaces that surround the square – the Hanuman Dhoka palace complex, the Mahadev Temple, the House of the Goddess Kumari and Taleju Temple. After some free time for lunch, journey to nearby Patan, renowned for its collection of ancient temples, carvings and palaces, which you will see first-hand during a visit to Patan Durbar Square, a generic name given to plazas and areas located opposite Nepal's old royal palaces. Delve into the ancient Buddhist heritage of the City of Beauty and visit the Krishna Temple and Golden Temple. Later, MAKE TRAVEL MATTER® Experience during your visit to the Tibetan Refugee Camp, which features a handicraft centre and provides shelter to the families of Tibetan refugees who fled the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. Among these were gifted Tibetan carpet weavers whose talents remain on display today at the Jawalakhel Handicraft Centre. You could choose to buy some of the traditional Tibetan handicrafts as a memento of your trip. Then it's back to Kathmandu for a well-deserved evening at leisure.

| MEAL(S)   |
|-----------|
| Breakfast |

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## DAY 3 EXPLORE KATHMANDU

The UNESCO-listed city of Bhaktapur and its impressive Durbar Square are the main attractions today. While the city is rebuilding its fallen temples, it remains a cultural centre. Stroll along narrow alleys and admire artisans at work. Watch how they weave cloth, carve timber and make pottery, which dries in all its terracotta brilliance in open squares for all to admire. Dive Into Culture and join a local potter for a workshop to learn how Bhaktapur has been a pottery centre for centuries. You'll see first-hand how traditional techniques are still used. Large spinning wheels are coaxed into action with a long stick and the rapid stirring of the talented potters to shape all sorts of ceramics out of lumps of clay. Get your hands dirty and hone your own pottery talents as you make your own creation to take home as a memento of your visit. If you have time, stop in one of the squares and sample the famous Juju Dhau, Newari yoghurt treat, enjoyed in a 'takeaway' pottery bowl. Later, return to the hotel and enjoy some free time. You could consider joining an Optional Experience to witness a poignant Aarti ceremony at Pashupatinath Temple on the banks of the Bagmati River.

| MEAL(S)   |
|-----------|
| Breakfast |

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### OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

#### Market, Boudhanath Stupa and Sunset Aarti Ceremony 2021

Enjoy a walking tour through the bustling streets of Thamel – a shopper's paradise selling singing bowls, all types of jewellery, clothes, Pashmina shawls, rice paper items, trekking gear and handicrafts amongst a treasure trove of other items. Afterwards visit Boudhanath Stupa, one of the most important stupas outside Tibet and the largest in Nepal. According to legend the king constructed the stupa as an act of penance, but this was destroyed by Mughal invaders in the 14th century, so the current stupa is a more recent construction. The influx of a large number of refugees from Tibet to the area led to the construction of more than 50 gumbas (Tibetan Buddhist monasteries) around the stupa. Later witness a truly mesmerising ritual, an Aarti (prayer) ceremony at the Pashupatinath Temple on the banks of the River Bagmati, the holy river that runs through the temple. As the sunsets, the priests begin their melodious chants and prayers as they take oil lamps and move them around in a circular motion. Bhajan (songs with a religious theme) are sung by devotees during the ceremony creating

an enchanting atmosphere.

Adult Price: **USD50.0\***

\* The Optionals and pricing listed here are a guideline only and subject to change.

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## **DAY 4 FAREWELL NEPAL**

Your soulful encounter with Nepal at its end, transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

### **MEAL(S)**

Breakfast