



Nepal

Eight of the world's ten highest mountains, the birthplace of the Buddha and valleys full of carved wooden temples.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Kathmandu

POPULATION

About 29 million (2021 census)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Nepali, written in Devanagari script. The constitution also names every mother tongue spoken in Nepal a language of the nation

CURRENCY

Nepalese rupee

AREA

About 147,000 km²

GOVERNMENT

Federal parliamentary republic of seven provinces, with a president as head of state and a prime minister leading the government

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Mount Everest (Sagarmatha), 8,848.86 m by the joint Nepal and China survey of 2020, on the border with China

LONGEST RIVER

The Karnali, about 507 km, the longest river in Nepal

NEIGHBOURS

China (Tibet) to the north and India to the south, east and west. Bangladesh and Bhutan are close, but do not touch Nepal

DRIVES ON THE

Left

CALLING CODE

+977

A 45-minute trip to Nepal

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Nepal together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 563 BC: The Buddha is born at Lumbini; 1953: Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary climb Everest; 2015: A new constitution creates seven provinces. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Dal bhat and Dhindo. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Namaste" (Hello, and also goodbye), "Namaskar" (Hello (more formal)), "Tapai lai kasto chha?" (How are you?). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/nepal/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Nepal and its cities



- Kathmandu (Bagmati Province): Kathmandu Durbar Square and the Kumari's house, Swayambhunath, the Monkey Temple, The great stupa of Boudhanath, Pashupatinath on the Bagmati River, The traveller district of Thamel
- Pokhara (Gandaki Province): Phewa Lake and the Lakeside district, Views of Machhapuchhre and the Annapurnas, The start of Annapurna treks, The Tal Barahi temple on an island in the lake
- Lalitpur (Bagmati Province): Patan Durbar Square, The stone Krishna Mandir of 1637, The Golden Temple (Hiranya Varna Mahavihar), Bronze and metal crafts
- Bhaktapur (Bagmati Province): Bhaktapur Durbar Square, The five-roofed Nyatapola temple, Juju dhau, the king of yoghurt, Pottery and handicrafts
- Bharatpur (Bagmati Province): The gateway to Chitwan National Park, The Narayani River, Narayangadh market
- Biratnagar (Koshi Province): The Biratnagar Jute Mills, Industry and trade, The border crossing to India at Jogbani
- Birgunj (Madhesh Province): The main trade crossing to India, The Gahawa Mai temple, The Tribhuvan Highway to Kathmandu
- Janakpur (Madhesh Province): The white marble Janaki Mandir, Colourful Mithila wall paintings, The Vivaha Panchami wedding festival of Rama and Sita

- Nepalgunj (Lumbini Province): The Bageshwari temple, The Jamunaha border crossing to India, Awadhi and Urdu speakers
- Dharan (Koshi Province): Grilled sekuwa meat, The Gurkha tradition, The road into the eastern hills
- Siddharthanagar (Lumbini Province): The gateway to Lumbini, The border crossing at Sonauli, Its old name, Bhairahawa
- Namche Bazaar (Koshi Province): Sherpa culture, Acclimatisation stops on the Everest trek, Views of Thamserku and Everest

A short history of Nepal

Nepal's written history begins with a stone pillar set up by an Indian emperor at the Buddha's birthplace. For centuries the Kathmandu Valley was a rich land of Newar kings and craftsmen, until the king of Gorkha united the hills into one kingdom in the 1760s. Nepal kept its independence through the British era, then went through a century of Rana prime ministers, royal rule, a ten-year civil war and, in 2008, the end of the monarchy.

563 BC **The Buddha is born at Lumbini**

According to Buddhist tradition, Queen Maya gave birth to Prince Siddhartha Gautama in the garden of Lumbini. The date is uncertain: it is often given as around 563 BC, and Nepal uses the traditional date of 623 BC. He left his royal life, became the Buddha and founded one of the world's great religions.

249 BC **Emperor Ashoka visits Lumbini**

Around 249 BC the Mauryan emperor Ashoka made a pilgrimage to Lumbini and set up a stone pillar saying that the Buddha was born there. Its inscription is counted as the start of Nepal's recorded history.

AD 400 **The Licchavi kings rule the valley**

From around AD 400 the Licchavi dynasty ruled the Kathmandu Valley. They left temples and many stone inscriptions, and most of what is known about this period comes from them. The temple of Changu Narayan dates back to their time.

1482 **The Malla kingdom splits into rival kingdoms**

After the death of King Yaksha Malla in the early 1480s, his sons divided the kingdom, and by 1482 it had split apart. Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur became rival kingdoms, and their competition filled the three Durbar Squares with palaces and temples.

1768 **Prithvi Narayan Shah takes Kathmandu**

The king of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah, entered Kathmandu on 25 September 1768 during the Indra Jatra festival, and Patan and Bhaktapur fell soon after. He is honoured as the founder of modern Nepal.

1814

The Anglo-Nepalese War begins

Nepal's expansion brought it into conflict with the British East India Company. The war of 1814 to 1816 ended with the Treaty of Sugauli, under which Nepal gave up recently conquered lands. The fighting also began the British army's long tradition of recruiting Gurkha soldiers.

1846

The Kot massacre brings the Ranas to power

On 14 September 1846 Jung Bahadur Kunwar and his brothers killed dozens of officials at the palace armoury in Kathmandu. He became Jung Bahadur Rana, and his family ruled as hereditary prime ministers for more than a century, while the kings had little power.

1951

Rana rule ends

A revolution supported by King Tribhuvan ended the Rana regime in 1951 and brought in parliamentary democracy. Nepal also began to open to foreign visitors.

1953

Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary climb Everest

On 29 May 1953 the Sherpa climber Tenzing Norgay and the New Zealander Edmund Hillary became the first people confirmed to reach the summit of Mount Everest, as part of a British expedition.

1960

King Mahendra bans political parties

In 1960 King Mahendra dismissed the elected government and banned political parties. A partyless panchayat system governed Nepal for the next thirty years.

1990

The People's Movement restores democracy

In 1990 mass protests, the Jana Andolan, forced King Birendra to accept a new constitution with multiparty democracy and a king with limited powers.

1996

The civil war begins

On 13 February 1996 the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) began an armed insurgency against the monarchy. The war lasted ten years and cost about 17,000 lives.

2006

A peace accord ends the civil war

After mass protests in April 2006 restored parliament, the government and the Maoists signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord on 21 November 2006, and the Maoists joined peaceful politics.

2008

Nepal becomes a republic

On 28 May 2008 an elected Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy, about 240 years after Prithvi Narayan Shah founded the kingdom. Nepal had been the world's last Hindu kingdom.

2015

A great earthquake strikes

On 25 April 2015 an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 killed nearly 9,000 people. Many old temples in the Kathmandu Valley were damaged or destroyed, and an avalanche killed climbers at Everest Base Camp.

2015

A new constitution creates seven provinces

On 20 September 2015 Nepal adopted its present constitution, which made the country a federal democratic republic divided into seven provinces.

What people eat in Nepal

The everyday meal of Nepal is dal bhat: a plate of plain rice with lentil soup, a vegetable curry called tarkari and a spoon of sharp pickle (achar), often served on a metal tray with small bowls, and eaten twice a day, late in the morning and in the evening. In the hills and mountains, where rice grows poorly, a thick porridge of millet, maize or buckwheat called dhindo takes its place. Nepali curries are usually lighter than Indian ones, and are flavoured with ginger, garlic, cumin, turmeric and a Himalayan herb called jimbu. The Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley have the richest feast cooking, with dozens of small dishes, while the Tibetan-influenced north gave the whole country its favourite snack, momo dumplings. Most Hindus do not eat beef, and buffalo meat, called buff, is common instead.

Dal bhat

All of Nepal

The national meal: steamed rice (bhat) with a thin lentil soup (dal), served with vegetable curry, pickle and sometimes meat.

Dhindo

Hills and mountains

A very thick porridge made by stirring buckwheat, millet or maize flour into boiling water until it is stiff. A small ball is shaped with the fingers, dipped in soup or gundruk and swallowed.

Gundruk

All of Nepal

Leaves of mustard, radish and cauliflower that are fermented in a pot for about a week and then dried in the sun. It is cooked into a sour soup or a spicy pickle and keeps all winter.

Momo

Kathmandu Valley and the Himalayas

Small dumplings of thin wheat dough filled with spiced minced buffalo, chicken, pork or vegetables, steamed and served with a spicy tomato-based dipping sauce (achar). They are the most popular snack in the country.

Sel roti

All of Nepal

A sweet, ring-shaped bread made from a batter of rice flour, sugar and ghee, poured by hand into hot oil. Crisp outside and soft inside, it is made in large batches for the Dashain and Tihar festivals.

Yomari

Newar, Kathmandu Valley

A steamed dumpling of glutinous rice flour with a pointed tip, filled with chaku (a dark molasses) and sesame, or with sweet milk solids called khuwa. It is the star of the Yomari Punhi festival at the end of the rice harvest.

Juju dhau

Bhaktapur

A thick, creamy, slightly sweet yoghurt from Bhaktapur, made from buffalo milk and set in clay pots. It is served at the end of Newar feasts and sold in pots all over the Kathmandu Valley.

Chatamari

Newar, Kathmandu Valley

A thin rice-flour crepe cooked on a griddle and often topped with minced meat, egg or vegetables. It is made for festivals and special days.

Bara

Newar, Kathmandu Valley

A savoury pancake of ground black lentils, fried until golden, eaten plain or topped with egg or minced meat. In the Newar language it is called wo.

Kwati

Newar, Kathmandu Valley

A thick soup of nine kinds of sprouted beans, such as chickpeas, soybeans, mung beans and peas, soaked for three or four days until they sprout and then cooked with spices and ajwain seeds.

Choila

Newar, Kathmandu Valley

Spicy grilled buffalo meat, cut small and mixed with chilli, garlic, ginger and mustard oil. Traditionally the meat is charred over a straw fire; today chicken, duck or mushrooms are also used.

Samay baji

Newar, Kathmandu Valley

A Newar festival platter built around beaten rice (chiura), with roasted soybeans, choila, a lentil bara, a boiled and fried egg, fresh ginger, greens and pickle. It is served at festivals, family gatherings and religious ceremonies.

Aloo tama

Hills of Nepal

A sour, tangy curry of potatoes, black-eyed peas and tama, fermented bamboo shoots. With the peas it is called aloo tama bodi, and it is a favourite partner for rice.

Sekuwa

Eastern Nepal, especially Dharan

Pieces of goat, chicken, buffalo or pork marinated in spices, ginger, garlic and mustard oil, then grilled on skewers over charcoal. It is eaten with beaten rice, pickle and sliced onions.

Tongba

Eastern hills, Limbu people

Fermented finger millet in a wooden or bamboo vessel, topped up with hot water and sipped through a bamboo straw. It is mildly alcoholic and is refilled several times.

Chiya

All of Nepal

Sweet milk tea, boiled together with black tea and often spiced with ginger or cardamom. It is served at every roadside stall and trekking lodge, in small glasses.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Many Nepalis eat with their right hand. The left hand is not used for eating or for passing food.
- Wash your hands before and after the meal. Mix rice and dal with your fingertips and push the food into your mouth with your thumb.
- Do not touch food that other people will eat, and do not put anything that has touched your mouth back into a shared dish. Some strict Hindus consider such food impure.
- Dal bhat is often refilled until you say you have had enough. The Nepali word for that is 'pugyo'.

- Because Hindus hold cattle sacred, beef is not part of traditional Nepali cooking. Goat and chicken are the usual meats; buffalo is eaten by some communities but avoided by others, and some families are vegetarian.
- Avoid touching shared water jugs and containers. Let your host pour water into your own glass or bottle.

Dal bhat

The national meal: steamed rice (bhat) with a thin lentil soup (dal), served with vegetable curry, pickle and sometimes meat.

Ingredients

- 300 g long-grain rice
- 200 g red or yellow lentils, rinsed
- 1 litre water for the lentils
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 2 tablespoons ghee or oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 small piece ginger, grated
- 1 tomato, chopped
- Salt and a handful of fresh coriander

Method

1. Rinse the rice and cook it in about 600 ml of water with a lid on, on low heat, for 15 to 20 minutes, until the water is absorbed.
2. Put the lentils in a pot with 1 litre of water, the turmeric and a pinch of salt. Simmer for 20 to 25 minutes until soft, stirring now and then, and add water if it gets too thick.
3. In a small pan heat the ghee, add the cumin seeds and, when they sizzle, the garlic and ginger. Fry for a minute, then add the tomato and cook until soft.
4. Pour the hot ghee mixture into the lentils, stir, season with salt and scatter over the coriander.
5. Serve the rice in the middle of the plate with the dal in a bowl beside it, and add a vegetable curry and a spoon of pickle if you have them.

Momo

Small dumplings of thin wheat dough filled with spiced minced buffalo, chicken, pork or vegetables, steamed and served with a spicy tomato-based dipping sauce (achar). They are the most popular snack in the country.

Ingredients

- 300 g plain flour and about 150 ml water
- 400 g minced chicken or pork
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 spring onions, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic and 1 piece ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon cumin, half a teaspoon turmeric, salt
- A handful of chopped coriander and 2 tablespoons oil
- For the sauce: 3 tomatoes, 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds, 1 green chilli, salt and lemon juice

Method

1. Mix the flour with the water into a firm, smooth dough. Cover it and let it rest for 30 minutes.
2. Mix the meat, onion, spring onions, garlic, ginger, spices, coriander, oil and salt with your hand until sticky.
3. Roll small balls of dough into thin rounds about 8 cm across. Put a spoon of filling in the middle, pleat the edges together and pinch them closed at the top.
4. Steam the momos on an oiled steamer rack for 12 to 15 minutes, until the dough is shiny and the filling is cooked through.
5. For the sauce, char the tomatoes in a dry pan, then blend them with the sesame, chilli, salt and lemon juice. Serve the momos hot with the sauce.

Sel roti

A sweet, ring-shaped bread made from a batter of rice flour, sugar and ghee, poured by hand into hot oil. Crisp outside and soft inside, it is made in large batches for the Dashain and Tihar festivals.

Ingredients

- 300 g rice flour (or rice soaked overnight and ground to a paste)
- 100 g sugar
- 2 tablespoons ghee or butter, melted
- 1 ripe banana, mashed (optional)
- Half a teaspoon ground cardamom
- About 250 ml milk or water
- Oil for deep frying

Method

1. Mix the rice flour, sugar, ghee, banana and cardamom. Add the milk little by little to make a thick batter that pours slowly, like thick pancake batter.
2. Cover and let the batter rest for at least 2 hours, or up to 6 hours in a warm kitchen.
3. Heat the oil in a deep pan to about 175 °C. Test with a drop of batter: it should rise at once and sizzle gently.
4. Pour the batter in a thin ring into the oil, from your hand, a squeeze bottle or a small jug. Fry until light brown, turn it with a skewer, and fry the other side.
5. Lift out and drain on paper. Take care with hot oil, and keep children away from the pan.

Chiya

Sweet milk tea, boiled together with black tea and often spiced with ginger or cardamom. It is served at every roadside stall and trekking lodge, in small glasses.

Ingredients

- 250 ml water
- 250 ml milk
- 2 teaspoons black tea leaves
- 2 to 3 teaspoons sugar
- 2 cardamom pods, crushed, and a thin slice of ginger

Method

1. Bring the water to the boil with the cardamom and ginger and let it bubble for a minute.
2. Add the tea leaves and simmer for one minute.
3. Pour in the milk and sugar and bring it back to the boil, watching that it does not boil over.
4. Strain into small glasses or cups and serve hot.

Useful phrases

Namaste

nuh-muh-STAY · Hello, and also goodbye

Namaskar

nuh-muh-SKAR · Hello (more formal)

Tapai lai kasto chha?

tuh-PIE lie KUS-toh chuh · How are you?

Sanchai chhu

SUN-chai choo · I am fine

Dhanyabad

DHUN-yuh-baad · Thank you

Dherai dherai dhanyabad

DHAY-rai DHAY-rai DHUN-yuh-baad · Thank you very much

Mero naam ... ho

MAY-roh NAAM ... HOH · My name is ...

Maaf garnus

MAAF gur-NOOS · Excuse me, or I am sorry

Pheri bhetaula

PHAY-ree bhay-TAU-lah · See you again

Yesko kati parchha?

YES-koh KUH-tee PAR-chuh · How much is this?

Ekdam mahango bhayo

EK-dum muh-HUN-go BHUH-yoh · That is too expensive

Ma masu khandina

muh MAH-soo KHAN-dee-nuh · I don't eat meat

Malai pani dinus

muh-LIE PAH-nee DEE-noos · Please give me some water

Mitho chha

MEE-thoh chuh · It is delicious

Pugyo

POOG-yoh · Enough, I am full

... kasari jaane?

KUH-suh-ree JAH-nay · How do I get to ...?

Malai sanchho chhaina

muh-LIE SUN-choh CHAI-nuh · I am not well

Malai sahayog garnus

muh-LIE suh-huh-YOG gur-NOOS · Please help me

Things you might not know

1. As of 2026, Nepal's flag is the only national flag in the world that is not rectangular. It is made of two stacked pennants, crimson with a blue border, with a white moon and sun.
2. Eight of the world's ten highest mountains, the eight-thousanders Everest, Kangchenjunga, Lhotse, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and Annapurna, stand in Nepal or on its borders with China and India.
3. In 2020 Nepal and China announced a joint new height for Mount Everest: 8,848.86 m. The old official figure, used for decades, was 8,848 m.
4. Nepal's clocks run 5 hours and 45 minutes ahead of UTC. As of 2026 it is one of only three time zones with a 45-minute offset.
5. Nepal's official calendar, Bikram Sambat, runs about 57 years ahead of the Western calendar. Its new year falls in mid-April, and the year 2083 began in April 2026.
6. In the Kathmandu Valley a young girl is chosen and worshipped as the Kumari, a living goddess. The Royal Kumari of Kathmandu lives in the Kumari Ghar on Durbar Square.
7. Nepal was never colonised by a European power. Under the Rana prime ministers it stayed independent between British India and Qing China.
8. Nepal's land rises from about 60 m above sea level in the Terai to 8,848.86 m at the top of Everest, one of the greatest height ranges of any country.
9. Gurkha soldiers from the hills of Nepal have served in the British and Indian armies for more than 200 years, since the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814 to 1816.
10. A Newar artist from the Kathmandu Valley, Araniko (1245 to 1306), designed the White Stupa of the Miaoying Temple in Beijing for the court of Kublai Khan.
11. The Kali Gandaki river runs between Dhaulagiri and Annapurna, two peaks above 8,000 m, and its valley is sometimes called one of the deepest gorges in the world.
12. Since 2007, Nepal's banknotes have shown Mount Everest where the king's portrait used to be. The change came just before the country

became a republic in 2008.

- 13.** Chitwan National Park had only about 95 rhinos left at the end of the 1960s. Protection brought the number back to about 605 by 2015.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Nepal, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Dal bhat or Dhindo? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The People's Movement restores democracy (1990). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The civil war begins (1996). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Mount Everest and Sagarmatha National Park, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Nepal, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Nepal?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. In which year did Nepal abolish its monarchy and become a republic?

- A) 2008
- B) 2001
- C) 2015
- D) 1990

2. When does Nepal usually have the clearest air for mountain views?

- A) The monsoon, June to September
- B) Midsummer, July and August
- C) Autumn, October to December

3. Which hilltop stupa in Kathmandu is nicknamed the Monkey Temple?

- A) Pashupatinath
- B) Janaki Mandir
- C) Boudhanath
- D) Swayambhunath

4. What is the currency of Nepal?

- A) Nepalese kyat
- B) Nepalese rupee
- C) Nepalese taka
- D) Nepalese ngultrum

5. Nepal has a short coastline on the Bay of Bengal.

- A) True
- B) False

6. According to Buddhist tradition, who was born at Lumbini?

- A) Araniko
- B) The Buddha
- C) Prithvi Narayan Shah
- D) Sita

7. Pashupatinath Temple, on the Bagmati River, is dedicated to which Hindu god?

- A) Vishnu
- B) Ganesha
- C) Shiva
- D) Brahma

8. In the Kathmandu Valley a young girl is chosen and worshipped as the Kumari, a living goddess.

- A) True
- B) False

9. What is dhindo, a staple of the hills and mountains?

- A) A steamed dumpling with a meat filling
- B) A sweet ring of fried rice-flour batter
- C) A pickle of fermented leafy greens
- D) A stiff porridge of buckwheat, millet or maize flour

10. Birgunj is called the Gateway of Nepal because most of the country's trade with India passes through it.

- A) True
- B) False

11. Which greeting is the more formal one, used for an older or high-status person?

- A) Dhanyabad
- B) Pugyo
- C) Namaskar
- D) Mitho chha

12. The Nepali phrase 'pheri bhetaula' means 'see you again'.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. A) 2008

On 28 May 2008 the elected Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy, about 240 years after the kingdom was founded.

2. C) Autumn, October to December

Autumn, October to December, has little dust in the air and is the best season for mountain views. The monsoon brings rain and clouds from June to September.

3. D) Swayambhunath

Swayambhunath, on a hill west of Kathmandu, is home to troops of monkeys. The Buddha's eyes are painted on all four sides of its tower.

4. B) Nepalese rupee

The currency is the Nepalese rupee (NPR), introduced in 1932. The taka, ngultrum and kyat are the currencies of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar.

5. False

False. Nepal is landlocked. The nearest sea, the Bay of Bengal, is several hundred kilometres away across India or Bangladesh.

6. B) The Buddha

The Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, was born at Lumbini according to tradition, often dated around 563 BC. Hindus honour Janakpur as the birthplace of Sita.

7. C) Shiva

Pashupatinath is dedicated to Shiva as Pashupati, lord of the animals. It is the holiest Hindu temple in Nepal.

8. True

True. The Royal Kumari of Kathmandu lives in the Kumari Ghar on Durbar Square, and there are other Kumaris in Patan and Bhaktapur.

9. D) A stiff porridge of buckwheat, millet or maize flour

Dhindo is a stiff porridge of buckwheat, millet or maize flour, stirred into boiling water and eaten in small balls dipped in soup.

10. True

True. Birgunj is joined to the Indian town of Raxaul, and most of Nepal's trade with India crosses the border there.

11. C) Namaskar

Namaskar is the formal form of namaste, said with palms pressed together.

12. True

True. Pheri bhetaula means see you again, and Nepalis use it when saying goodbye.

Nepal visa page

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Next stops

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