

# TRAVEL FOCUS TOURS

## HOLI FESTIVAL OF COLOUR 2020



14 DAY JOURNEY | 26<sup>th</sup> Feb – 10<sup>th</sup> Mar | Land PRICE \$3,350\* pp



A journey begins with a ton of spirit, a touch of mystery and a sense of adventure...

### INCLUSIONS

- Hotel (11 nts) and Jungle Resort (2 nts)
- Transport via rickshaw, cable car, jeep safari, 2 x domestic flights and private vehicles
- 13 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 3 dinners
- Entrance fees for all attractions included in itinerary
- Chitwan National Park jeep safari, dugout canoe and village tour
- Overnight stay in the medieval city of Bhaktapur
- Traditional cooking class
- Tibetan settlement tour
- Tipping for both local guide and driver  
Walking tour of Kathmandu
- Australian Tour Manager
- 5% of journey cost goes directly to our sponsor school in Kathmandu

### TOUR INTRODUCTION

On this 14 day journey, you will get to experience all the excitement and celebration of the annual Holi festival as Nepalese and tourists alike take to the streets to shower one another in water and colour. Holi marks the triumph of good over evil and the arrival of spring, and is one of the most vibrant times to visit Nepal.

Get lost in the evocative lane ways of Kathmandu and travel to some of the Kathmandu Valley's most sacred religious landmarks. Then head off on safari to spot one-horned rhino and the elusive Bengal tiger in UNESCO-listed Chitwan National Park. Soak up the breathtaking Himalayan views from the lakeside town of Pokhara and stay overnight in the medieval city of Bhaktapur.

You will get a behind-the-scenes look at the "real" Nepal as we immerse you into the local community. You'll discover the secrets of Nepali cuisine during a family-run cooking class, spend time in a Tibetan refugee settlement and connect with young students whilst volunteering at Namaste Journeys sponsor school.

This unique adventure will see you explore the enchanting culture and spectacular natural beauty of Nepal as you witness some of the country's most iconic sights and encounter peoples and places that few others have the privilege to meet.

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### TOUR ITINERARY

#### **Wednesday 26 February - Day 1: Namaste and welcome to Nepal**

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On arrival, you will be met by your Namaste Journeys Guide and transferred to your hotel in the tourist district of Thamel. From the moment you step off the plane, you'll be mesmerised by the sights, sounds and smells of Kathmandu.

#### **Thursday 27 February - Day 2: Kathmandu (B, L, D)**

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We start the morning with cultural classes, orientation and a few "dos and don'ts" to help you relax into this exciting new country.

Spend the afternoon wandering the narrow streets and laneways of the tourist district, Thamel. We will explore town squares packed with extraordinary temples and monuments and watch the golden glow wash over the Kathmandu Valley as the sun sets on the Swayambhunath Monkey Temple. According to legend, the Kathmandu Valley was once a lake (geographical evidence supports this) and the hill on which Swayambhunath now sits spontaneously rose from the waters. Hence the name Swayambhu, which means "self-risen".

At 6pm, meet with your Namaste Journeys guides and fellow travellers for a welcome cultural dinner.

#### **Friday 28 February - Day 3: Kathmandu Valley (B, L)**

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This morning after breakfast we will make our way to Nepal's most sacred Hindu temple, Pashupatinath. Set on the banks of the holy Bagmati River (just as Varanasi is positioned on the Ganges), Pashupatinath is an open-air crematorium that is accessible to the public. Sadhus and devotees of the Hindu God Shiva are often found here worshipping and, if you're lucky, you may get the chance to have a photo or two taken with one of these famous dreadlocked holy men.

After Pashupatinath, we will head to Boudhanath - the largest stupa in Nepal and the holiest Tibetan Buddhist temple outside of Tibet. The original stupa was built sometime after AD 600 but was reconstructed again in the 14th century after being wrecked by Mughal invaders. Boudhanath is an impressive monument and thousands of pilgrims gather daily to make a kora (ritual circumnavigation) of the dome under the watchful eyes of Buddha, which gaze out from the square tower.

#### **Saturday 29 February - Day 4: Chandragiri to Chitwan National Park (B, L D)**

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This morning we head to the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley, where we'll stop at the sacred Chandragiri Hill that boasts outstanding views of the Kathmandu Valley and the Himalayan ranges. Ride the cable car up to the 2550-metre-high peak where the Bhaleshore Mahadev temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is found.

We will then head to the domestic airport in Kathmandu to take a short 30 minute flight towards the steamy, subtropical jungles of Chitwan National Park, whose name translates as "Heart of the Jungle".

After arriving at our hotel in Chitwan, enjoy a late lunch and time to settle in before we embark on a guided tour of a local Tharu village. Experience the daily comings and goings of life in this unique community and discover their close association with the natural world of the Terai plains. End the day watching the sun set over the Rapti River, with the calls of nature ringing around you.

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### **Sunday 01 March - Day 5: Chitwan (B, L, D)**

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Wake early this morning as we head down the river in a traditional dugout canoe. Keep an eye out for marsh mugger crocodiles sunning themselves on the river banks, as well as some of the more than 500 bird species found here.

Return to the resort for a buffet lunch, then head down to the river to assist Chitwan's working elephants as they enjoy a well-earned bath. In the mid-afternoon, venture off again wildlife spotting in the national park, this time on a jeep safari, renowned as home to the one-horned rhino and the elusive Bengal tiger. Your guide will help you spot the myriad of wildlife that inhabits the forests, marshes and grasslands of Chitwan, including sambar deer, rhesus monkeys and maybe even a sloth bear- if you're lucky! In the evening, you'll be treated to a cultural performance from the local Tharu community, including traditional dances and songs.

### **Monday 02 March - Day 6: Chitwan to Pokhara (B, L)**

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Wake early as we prepare for our journey north to the picturesque town of Pokhara. Situated on the edge of Phewa Lake, it boasts spectacular views of the snow-capped Himalayan peaks and has made a name for its adventure sports that include paragliding and white water rafting.

We'll stop en route to have lunch at a local restaurant in Bandipur. One of Nepal's most charming towns, Bandipur is a living museum of Newari culture, a beautifully preserved village crowning a lofty ridge, its main street lined with traditional row houses. We will arrive in Pokhara by late-afternoon where you'll have time to explore the town at your leisure, with plenty of funky cafes and handicraft shops.

### **Tuesday 03 March - Day 7: Pokhara (B)**

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This morning you'll have the option to soak up Pokhara's breathtaking views from the water during a boat ride along Phewa Lake. If you're feeling adventurous you'll be able to stretch your legs as we hike through local villages to the whitewashed Peace Pagoda that teeters atop Ananda Hill. Built as a monument to peace, the Shanti Stupa (as it's officially known) offers unparalleled view of the Himalayas, Phewa Lake and Pokhara below (weather permitting). Alternatively you can choose to spend the morning relaxing in this picturesque township.

Back in Pokhara, you'll have time to relax over lunch at a lakeside restaurant of your choosing before having the opportunity to visit a nearby settlement for Tibetan refugees in the afternoon. First we'll head to a Buddhist Monastery where you'll get to meet a Buddhist monk and learn about their monastic life and their daily studies and activities in the monastery. We will then get to enjoy Tibetan foods such as tsamba (roasted barley flour), butter tea and tibetan bread with a local family within the settlement. Without the right to work, many Tibetans earn a living selling handmade jewellery, trinkets, carvings and carpets, which you can also peruse whilst experiencing life in their community.

### **Wednesday 04 March - Day 8: Pokhara (B)**

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Enjoy a free day in Pokhara to experience one of its thrilling adventure sports, embark on a day hike or participate in a yoga class. Early birds can watch an unforgettable sunrise from the Sarangkot viewpoint while adrenaline junkies can get a bird's eye view of Phewa Lake while paragliding amongst the eagles.

Pokhara's picturesque lakeside setting also makes it ideal for doing absolutely nothing, giving you time to catch up on postcards or just kick back with a good book while soaking up the views.

### **Thursday 05 March - Day 9: Mountains to Medieval City of Bhaktapur (B)**

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This morning we'll depart Pokhara on a 30-minute flight to Kathmandu, with exceptional views of the soaring Himalayan peaks as we cruise just above their snow-capped summits (weather permitting).

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We will then make our way to Bhaktapur, one of Nepal's rich UNESCO listed heritage sites. Among the three major cities of the Kathmandu Valley, Bhaktapur, to this date, is the living representation of how the entire Kathmandu Valley would have looked like during the medieval periods. The city is celebrated for its glorious architecture; sky-high temples built in pagoda style – which is believed to be the stairway to the heaven, fine clay pottery, and massive royal courtyards whose existence date back to the 12th century, where devotees, still, celebrate their pre-historic festivals by equal amount of gusto and passion.

### **Friday 06 March - Day 10: Bhaktapur to Kathmandu (B)**

This morning you'll be taken on a guided walking tour of the medieval city of Bhaktapur. You will take in a number of interesting temples and shrines, and observe the timeless and seemingly unchained rituals of Nepali life.

Spend the afternoon back in Thamel where you can wander the little laneways at your leisure, browse the local supermarket or organise to go to the cinema and watch one of the latest Bollywood films.

### **Saturday 07 March - Day 11: Volunteering and Cooking Class (B, L, D)**

Today you will put your teaching skills to the test as we volunteer at Namaste Journeys sponsor school in Kathmandu. Here you will be met by the smiling faces of our dedicated students and staff. Spend the day attending lessons and interacting with the young learners as you discover the challenges of education in Nepal and the role you are playing in offering a brighter future.

In the late afternoon, your skills will again be put to the test, but this time in the kitchen as you prepare a traditional Nepali meal. We'll head off-the-beaten-track into the suburbs of Kathmandu to the home of a local Nepalese family where you'll get a unique insight of the "real" Nepal. With kids playing in the streets outside and workers heading home for the evening, you'll feel right at home as you learn about local ingredients and traditional cooking techniques whilst preparing a delicious feast to enjoy at the end.

### **Sunday 08 March - Day 12: Free Day in Kathmandu (B)**

Spend the afternoon drinking chai in one of the many hip courtyard cafes, fill your backpack full with some last-minute shopping and reflect on what has truly been a life-changing journey.

### **Monday 09 March - Day 13: Holi Festival (B)**

Today we get to experience first-hand the energy and spirit of Holi, which sees Nepalese (and foreigners) of all walks of life take to the streets to shower one another in coloured powder and throw water balloons. Don't be shy to join in the celebrations, with anyone (and everyone) considered fair game!

### **Tuesday 10 March - Day 14: Alas! It is time to say goodbye**

You will be transferred back to the airport in time for your departure flight "Khaba Alvida Na Khena": as the Bollywood Blockbuster title says – "Never say goodbye"!

## HOW TO BOOK

- Contact Travel Focus Group on 1300 733 323 or 02 4234 1175 or [office@travelfocusgroup.com](mailto:office@travelfocusgroup.com) to request a booking form and the complete T&Cs
- Pay a \$250 per person deposit to secure your place. Balance due 26<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019

*\* Price based on twin share accommodation. Ask for single supplement pricing. All prices and information correct at time of issue and subject to change or cancellation.*