

# Nepal - Summary

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From 1 April 2019, Nepal's Tribhuvan International Airport will be closed from 10pm to 8am daily for runway maintenance work. It's expected that this closure will be for a period of 3 months. During this time, flight schedules are likely to be changed. For more information, visit the website of the [Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal](#).

Small scale politically motivated protests, demonstrations or strikes are fairly common in Nepal. They can occur at short notice and clashes between protesters and law enforcement agencies may occur. You should exercise caution and avoid any demonstrations.

There are reports that a local group has made efforts to extort businesses, NGOs and local and international schools. Two improvised explosive devices detonated in Kathmandu in February and March 2019, causing injuries and one fatality. You are advised to remain vigilant and report any incidents to the local police.

Nepal is in a major earthquake zone and remains at risk from further earthquakes and aftershocks. You should familiarise yourself with safety procedures in the event of an earthquake. The monsoon season normally runs from June to September. Flooding and landslides often occur during this time. Road travel anywhere can be hazardous, particularly in rural areas.

Never trek alone. Use a reputable agency, remain on established routes and walk with at least one other person. Take note of weather conditions and forecasts and come prepared. Altitude sickness is a risk in all trekking regions.

All air carriers from Nepal have been refused permission to operate air services to the EU due to safety concerns.

Car and motorbike accidents are one of the biggest causes of injury and death overseas. If possible, avoid travelling at night. Always travel in a well-maintained vehicle with seatbelts. If you travel by motorbike, wear a helmet and proper footwear.

High levels of air pollution can occur in Nepal. Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions may be especially affected by poor air quality. You can check the pollution index levels for real-time information, and the [WHO factsheet](#) on air quality. Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Nepal. Around 40,000 British nationals visit Nepal annually. Most visits are trouble-free.

If you need to contact the emergency services, call 100 (police) and 101 (fire). There is no central public ambulance service, though some private providers operate in the main cities. In an emergency, you should call the local hospital.

Take out comprehensive [travel and medical insurance](#) before you travel. If you are intending to travel at altitude, check that your insurance policy provides cover.

## **Safety and security**

### Trekking in Nepal

Never trek alone. Use a reputable agency, remain on established routes, and walk with at least one other person. Always observe national park regulations and follow your guide's instructions. Altitude sickness is a risk, including on the Annapurna, Langtang and Everest Base Camp treks. Read the [National Travel Health Network and Centre's advice on altitude sickness](#). Accidents happen due to insufficient information, inappropriate equipment or overestimation of your own capabilities. Follow the advice given by local authorities and guides. Ignoring such advice could put yourselves and other mountain users in danger.

The following hazards exist throughout the year, especially above 3,000m:

- sudden weather changes
- avalanches and snow drifts
- landslides and flooding
- glacial crevasses and hollows
- rockfall
- thunder storms and lightning
- altitude sickness
- sun exposure

You should:

- take note of weather forecasts and conditions
- make sure you're physically fit and have the necessary experience
- be in a team of at least 2
- inform someone of your plans
- take warm clothes and wet weather gear
- use sun block (SPF20 or higher) and sun glasses.

Make sure your insurance covers you for your intended activity, including travel above 3,000m, mountain rescue services and helicopter costs.

The [Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal \(TAAN\)](#) provides live updates on trekking conditions in Nepal. Online weather forecasts are available on the website of the [government of Nepal Department Of Hydrology and Meteorology](#).

Treks can take longer than expected. Flights across Nepal, particularly in high mountain areas, can be delayed due to poor weather conditions. Keep your tour operator, guide and family informed of your situation and travel plans. In remote areas, including long stretches of the Annapurna Circuit trek, mobile phone coverage and internet services are extremely limited. Consider renting a satellite phone.

A valid permit and Trekkers' Information Management System (TIMS) card are needed to enter Nepal's main trekking regions. See the [Naturally Nepal website](#)

#### Volunteering and adventure travel

If you're planning to volunteer or undertake adventure travel in Nepal you should research any organisation or company you're planning to use thoroughly before committing yourself. Read these information and advice pages on [gap year travel](#) and [safer adventure travel and volunteering overseas](#).

The Social Welfare Council of the government of Nepal maintains a list of registered volunteer organisations; you can ask for a copy by sending an email to: [info@swc.org.np](mailto:info@swc.org.np).

The British Embassy has received reports of volunteer opportunities at orphanages which are profit orientated organisations rather than charities. If you're volunteering at this type of organisation, you could be contributing to child exploitation. Contact the Nepali Central Child Welfare Board for confirmation before signing up to volunteer for one of these organisations.

#### Road travel

Road conditions are poor, especially during the monsoon season or in mountain areas. The 2015 earthquakes affected many roads and reconstruction work is still ongoing, making conditions worse. Bus accidents are common in Nepal and there are a number of accidents resulting in fatalities every year. Buses are often overcrowded, poorly regulated, poorly maintained, and driving standards are low. Avoid travel on overnight buses. Don't travel on overloaded or overcrowded buses. Tourist buses usually offer a higher standard of comfort and safety. General driving standards are poor. Many drivers are not properly licensed, trained or insured and vehicles, including taxis, are often poorly maintained. There are few pavements outside central Kathmandu and motorists don't yield right of way to pedestrians. Other road users often ignore motorbikes and bicycles. It's the law to wear a helmet when riding a motorbike. You should also wear a suitable helmet when riding as a passenger, and when riding a bicycle.

If you'll be driving in Nepal, an [International Driving Permit \(IDP\)](#) is recommended. UK driving licence holders are not eligible to drive in Nepal without a Nepali driving licence or an IDP. There is no time limit for the use of IDPs in Nepal. From 1 February 2019, you can only get IDPs over the counter from 2,500 UK Post Offices. You will not be able to buy an IDP outside the UK, so get one before you travel. Carry your IDP with you at all times as well as any vehicle registration documents.

#### Air travel

Check weather conditions before travelling. Bad weather conditions in mountainous and hill regions could further increase the risk to your safety and cause lengthy delays. Airfields such as Lukla's are among the most remote and difficult to land on in the world and are a challenge for even the most technically proficient pilots and well-maintained aircraft. There have been a number of recent air accidents in Nepal.

#### Crime

There's a low rate of serious crime in Nepal. Watch out for pick-pockets and bag-snatching, particularly in airports, on buses and in areas popular with foreign nationals like Thamel, Sanepa and Kupondol in Kathmandu. Take care when walking around at night. Assaults and robberies are more likely to occur in the evening in poorly lit areas. Avoid walking on your own and don't carry large sums of cash. Keep valuables in a hotel safe if possible.

Bars and restaurants close at midnight. Foreigners remaining in bars and clubs after hours have been detained by the police. Take care when entering 'dance bars' as some foreigners have been swindled or harassed.

Be wary of accepting drinks from strangers, and don't leave drinks unattended. There have been incidents of foreign nationals being sexually assaulted.

Victims of crime should call the Tourist Police in Kathmandu on 01 4700750 or the Tourist Police headquarters on 01 4247041.

### **Natural disasters**

#### Earthquakes

Major earthquakes on 25 April 2015 (epicentre Gorkha district) and 12 May 2015 (epicentre Sindhupalchok district) caused extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure particularly in northern parts of Gorkha, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchok and Dolakha districts. These include the Manaslu and Langtang national parks.

Reconstruction work is underway following the earthquakes and most of the country is fully open for tourism, including most trekking routes, though some trails are still affected in Langtang, Manaslu and Helambu. Check with your tour company before trekking in these areas.

Earth tremors are common across Nepal. Lack of adequate emergency preparedness, medical facilities and emergency equipment will increase the impact that an earthquake could have.

Check with your tour operator to find out what contingency plans the operator may have in place in the event of an earthquake. The British Embassy would seek to help British nationals to leave as soon as possible following a major natural disaster. However, Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) may be unusable following a large-scale earthquake, as will Nepal's road network. It could take some days for it to become operational.

The [National Society of Earthquake Technology](#) - Nepal (NSET) provides advice on what to do in the event of an earthquake.

#### Monsoon season

Travel during the monsoon season (June-September) can be hazardous. Monsoon rains cause flooding and landslides that can cut off some towns and villages for days at a time. Take care and check access routes before setting off. The Government of Nepal [Meteorological Forecasting Division](#) provides weather updates (in English) and flood forecasts during the monsoon. The [Department of Hydrology and Metrology](#) also provides daily updates. Make sure any vehicle you travel in is equipped to deal with the risk of landslides (eg winches, ropes).