

HIGH TEA

Beatrice Bowen visits Nepal for a sophisticated stay in the Himalayan Kingdom.



Kathmandu Durbar Square



Lake Phewa, Pokhara

For some, the first cup of tea in the morning is a near religious experience and there can be few more relaxing settings to enjoy the ‘champagne of the east’ than the terrace of the Himalaya Lodge at Ghandruk. The Annapurna range and the photogenic Machhapuchare (‘Fish Tail’ mountain) wait beyond the lip of your teacup as you sit back and enjoy this quintessentially British beverage in anticipation of the day ahead, but such simple pleasures have not always been possible for visitors.

For centuries, Nepal closed its borders to foreigners and the medieval towns, mountain villages and towering peaks of this hidden



Bodnath Stupa, Kathmandu Valley

kingdom were a secret from the outside world. Only 50 years ago the intrepid overlanders from Oxford and Cambridge universities reached this beautiful country en route to Singapore on their incredible 12,000 mile journey and found a community little changed by the outside world. Following in the tyre marks of this tiny band of explorers and in the wake of the successful ascent of Everest came others seeking thrills amongst the world’s highest peaks. For decades Nepal played host to two very separate groups of travellers. In the thin air of the Himalaya, mountaineers dared each other to greater feats of endurance while the bustling city of

Kathmandu and Freak Street teemed with bearded travellers seeking the last mountain Shangri-la. By the 1980s Nepal was welcoming rugged trekkers seeking an escape to the wilds with little more than a sheet of canvas to protect them from the elements, but thankfully Nepal now also caters for those who seek the solitude of the mountains in more comfortable surroundings.

Four ‘luxury lodges’ have been built in the Annapurna Region, providing pleasant accommodation in stunning surroundings. Constructed using traditional materials and techniques, they open up this incredible region to walkers and can be linked together to form multi-day routes



WEB PLUS

www.audley.co.uk/features/nepallodges

Details of lodges with links to Google Earth



Hindu holymen, Kathmandu



Himalayas, Nepal

with wonderful views of some of the world's highest peaks. Each lodge is unique and all the rooms offer en suite facilities with comfortable beds, crisp sheets, blankets and that most decadent of facilities – hot water bottles! The lodges themselves are very much part of the community and the entire operation, on the trail and in the lodges, is based on the strict principles and traditions of the Gurkha people. Born and raised in the shadows of the Himalayas, the legendary Gurkha Regiments have historically been the pride of Nepal. Known as some of the finest soldiers in the world, the hardy Gurkhas carry forward a 200-year tradition of service, loyalty and excellence which

ensure the smooth operation of the lodges to this day. Their local knowledge and expertise combined with the positive Nepalese disposition and eagerness to share their understanding of the area will make your stay a unique experience. On the trail the locally recruited porters will transfer your luggage leaving your hands free to take numerous pictures and absorb the beauty of the surroundings.

Away from the snowy peaks and terraced foothills the winding streets of Kathmandu are lined with a multitude of stalls selling everything you need – and many things you never knew you needed – as cycle rickshaws, Sadhus, scooters and

the occasional cow compete for space. Ancient alleyways open onto temples, towers and holy sites teeming with holy men and pilgrims, while the beautiful rooms at the exquisite Dwarika's Hotel provide a tranquil respite from the frenetic city streets. Despite the well publicised recent troubles, the political situation is improving and Nepal is recovering fast. Once again, this magnificent country has thrown open its doors to visitors.

Beatrice Bowen
Nepal Specialist

FACT FILE

A two-week itinerary to Nepal including trips to Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan National Park plus three days walking between luxury lodges in the Annapurna Range and return flights will cost approximately £2,250 per person based on two people travelling. Please contact Beatrice on 01993 838 313.

