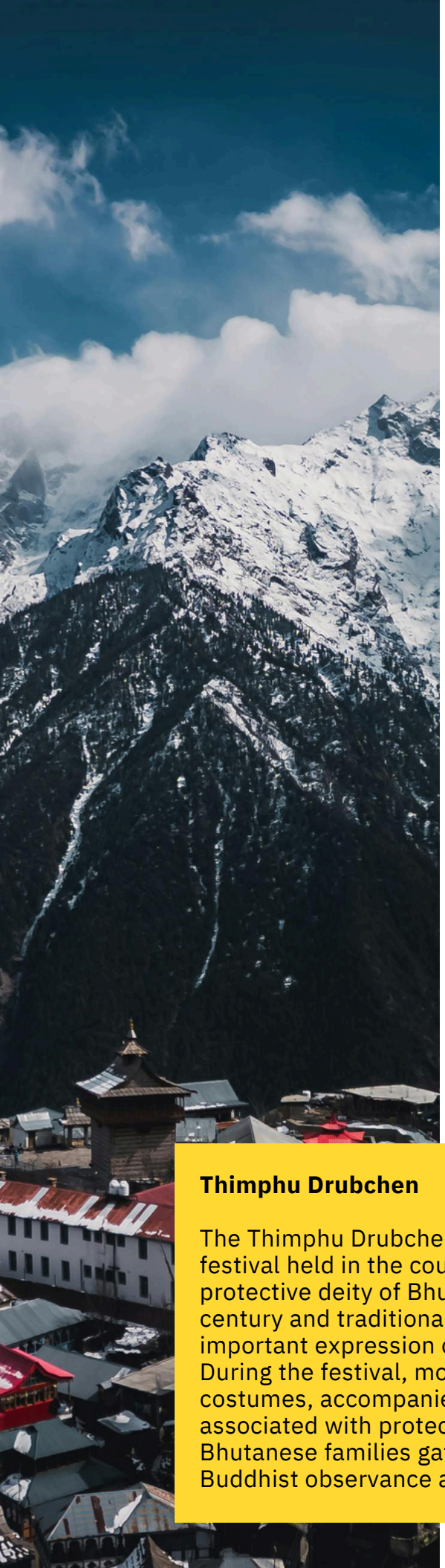


September 30 - October 13, 2027

NEPAL - BUTHAN

Himalayan Kingdoms

WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL
OF GREATER HOUSTON
Global Perspectives, *Local* Conversations



NEPAL - BUTHAN

with thimphu druchen festival

September 30 - October 13, 2027
14 Days /11 Nights

Tibet extension October 13-17,2027

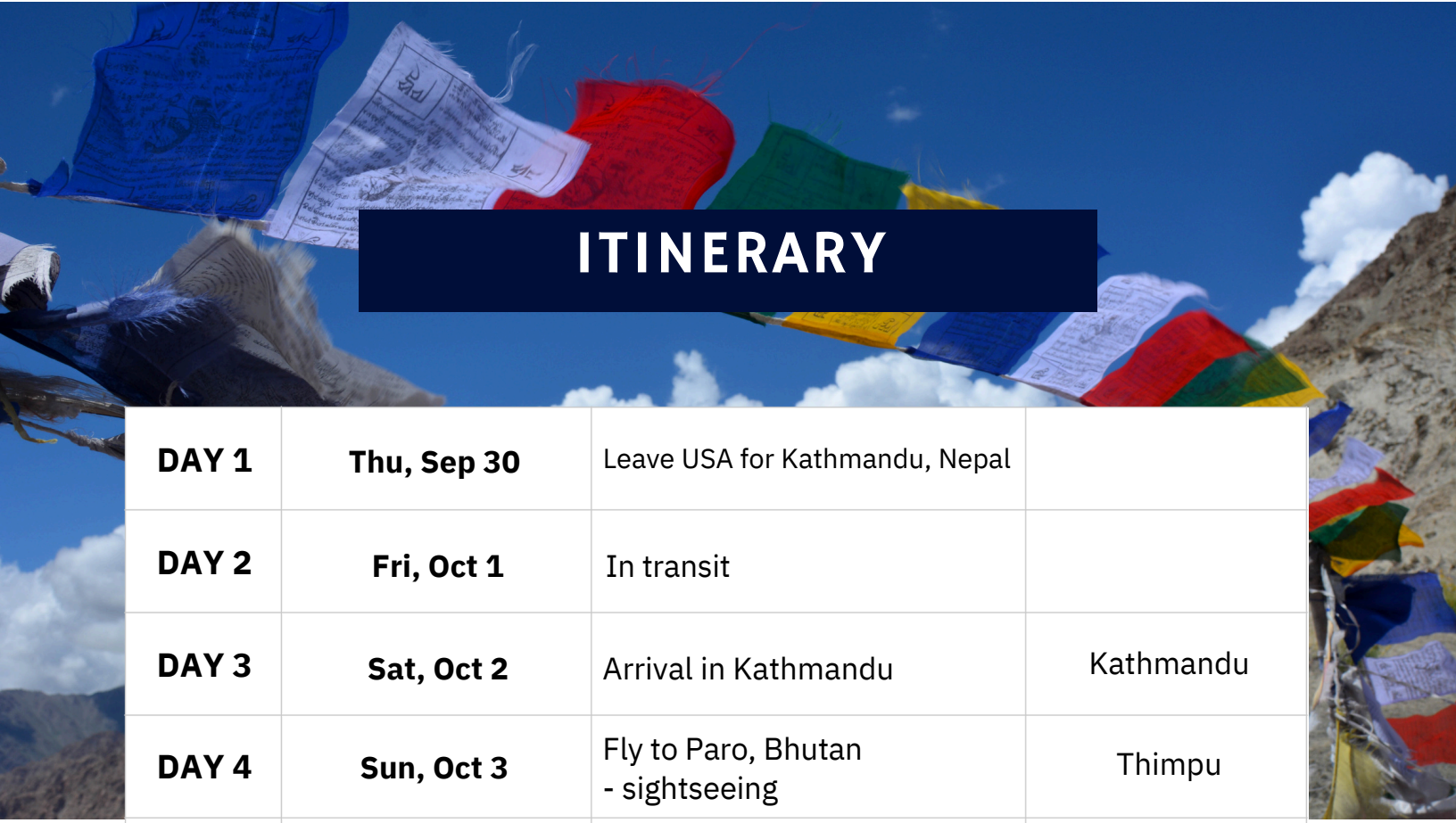
This journey through Nepal and Bhutan reveals the extraordinary cultural and spiritual heritage of the Himalayas. Beginning in the Kathmandu Valley, ancient royal cities, sacred stupas, Hindu temples, and lively historic quarters reflect centuries of exchange between South Asia and the Tibetan plateau. In Bhutan, forested valleys, fortress-monasteries, traditional arts, and places of pilgrimage illuminate a society where Buddhist traditions remain closely woven into daily life.

From Thimphu and Paro to the dramatic cliffside monastery of Taktsang, the program balances celebrated monuments with encounters that deepen understanding of Himalayan history, belief, architecture, and contemporary culture. Mountain scenery forms a magnificent backdrop throughout the journey, while experienced local guides bring context to the rituals, artistic traditions, and communities encountered along the way.

The optional Tibet extension continues across the Himalayas to Lhasa, one of Asia's most evocative cultural centers. Visits to the Jokhang Temple, Barkhor pilgrimage circuit, Norbulingka, Potala Palace, and Sera Monastery introduce the artistic achievements and enduring spiritual traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, providing a compelling conclusion to an exploration of three distinct yet historically interconnected Himalayan worlds.

Thimphu Drubchen

The Thimphu Drubchen, also known as the Lhamoi Dromchoe, is an annual religious festival held in the courtyard of Tashichho Dzong. Dedicated to Palden Lhamo, the protective deity of Bhutan, the observance was introduced in the early eighteenth century and traditionally precedes the better-known Thimphu Tshechu. It remains an important expression of faith for Bhutan's monastic and lay communities.
During the festival, monks perform sacred cham dances in elaborate masks and brocade costumes, accompanied by ritual music and prayer. These dances are religious rites associated with protection, the removal of obstacles, and the bestowing of blessings. Bhutanese families gather in national dress, making the Drubchen both a solemn Buddhist observance and a special community occasion.



ITINERARY

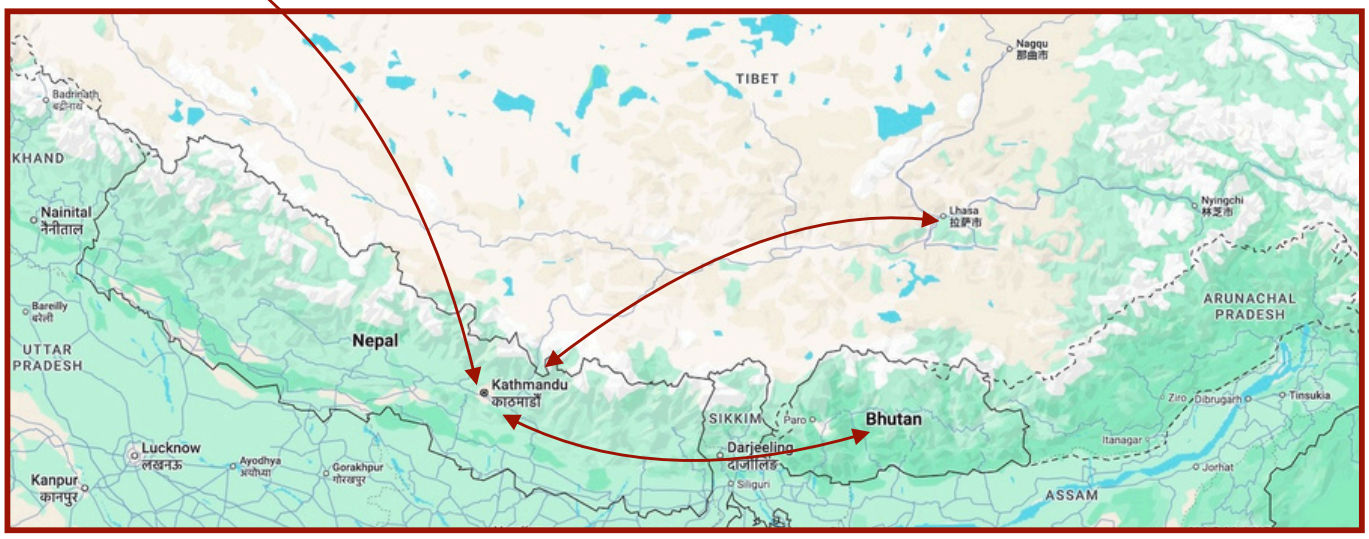
DAY 1	**Thu, Sep 30**	Leave USA for Kathmandu, Nepal	
DAY 2	**Fri, Oct 1**	In transit	
DAY 3	**Sat, Oct 2**	Arrival in Kathmandu	Kathmandu
DAY 4	**Sun, Oct 3**	Fly to Paro, Bhutan - sightseeing	Thimpu
DAY 5	**Mon, Oct 4**	Thimpu sightseeing	Thimpu
DAY 6	**Tue, Oct 5**	Thimpu sightseeing	Thimpu
DAY 7	**Wed, Oct 6**	Paro sightseeing	Paro
DAY 8	**Thu, Oct 7**	Paro and Tiger's Nest	Paro
DAY 9	**Fri, Oct 8**	Fly to Kathmandu -sightseeing	Kathmandu
DAY 10	**Sat, Oct 9**	Kathmandu sightseeing	Kathmandu
DAY 11	**Sun, Oct 10**	Fly to Pokhara - sightseeing	Pokhara
DAY 12	**Mon, Oct 11**	Sightseeing - fly to Kathmandu	Kathmandu
DAY 13	**Tue, Oct 12**	Kathmandu sightseeing	Kathmandu
DAY 14	**Wed, Oct 13**	Departure / or continue to Tibet	

TIBET EXTENSION

DAY 14	**Wed, Oct 13**	Continue to Tibet	Lhasa
DAY 15	**Thu, Oct 14**	Tibet sightseeing	Lhasa
DAY 16	**Fri, Oct 15**	Tibet sightseeing	Lhasa
DAY 17	**Sat, Oct 16**	Fly to Kathmandu - overnight	Kathmandu
DAY 18	**Sun, Oct 17**	Departure	



MAP TRAJECTORY









HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Kathmandu's sacred and royal heritage, including Boudhanath Stupa, Pashupatinath Temple and the historic Durbar Square area.
- Discover the artistic traditions and graceful architecture of Patan, one of the Kathmandu Valley's great former royal cities.
- Visit the medieval city of Bhaktapur, renowned for its palace courtyards, temples, carved woodwork and traditional pottery.
- Experience the hilltop town of Kirtipur and gain insight into the history and culture of the Newar people.
- Fly across the Himalayas to Bhutan, with spectacular mountain views when weather conditions permit.
- Explore Thimphu's temples, memorials, traditional arts school and imposing Tashichho Dzong.
- Learn about Bhutan's Buddhist heritage and its distinctive philosophy of Gross National Happiness.
- Attend Thimphu Drubchen Festival with monks' masked dances.
- Visit Paro's Rinpung Dzong and the National Museum, with collections devoted to Bhutanese art, ritual traditions and natural history.
- Hike through pine forest to Taktsang, the celebrated Tiger's Nest Monastery dramatically positioned above the Paro Valley.
- Enjoy the mountain landscapes of Pokhara and, in clear conditions, sunrise views over the Annapurna range from Sarangkot.
- Meet knowledgeable local guides who provide historical, religious and cultural context throughout Nepal and Bhutan.

- **Optional Tibet extension** featuring Lhasa's Jokhang Temple, Barkhor pilgrimage circuit and Norbulingka gardens.
- Visit the monumental Potala Palace, the former seat of the Dalai Lamas and one of the great landmarks of the Tibetan plateau.
- Observe the living monastic traditions of Tibetan Buddhism at Sera Monastery.

INCLUDED

- 11 nights' hotel accommodation with breakfast in listed hotels.
- Daily breakfast, lunch and dinner with two special meals. Drinking water during all included meals.
- Kathmandu (Nepal) - Paro (Bhutan) - Kathmandu international flight.
- Two domestic flights in Nepal (Kathmandu - Pokhara - Kathmandu.)
- Compulsory government fees in Bhutan.
- Visa fee for Bhutan.
- English speaking professional tour guides in each country.
- Transportation with private vehicles with very good drivers.
- Arrival and departure transfers - only for suggested flight arrival & departures.
- All entry fees to places mentioned in the itinerary.
- Cultural program with farewell dinner in Bhutan.
- A lecture on Gross National Happiness in Bhutan.
- Local taxes.

NOT INCLUDED

- International airfare from/to USA.
- Visa fees for Nepal if applicable.
- Drinks with included meals, except tea or coffee for breakfast.
- Gratuities for guides & drivers.
- Personal expenditures like phone calls, laundry, medical expenses.
- Travel insurance.





TIBET EXTENSION

INCLUDED

- 4 nights' hotel accommodation with breakfast in listed hotels.
- Lunch and dinners as indicated in the itinerary. Drinking water during all included
- meals.
- Kathmandu (Nepal) -Lhasa (Tibet) -Kathmandu international flight.
- Tibet permit fee.
- English speaking professional tour guide.
- Transportation with private vehicles with very good drivers.
- Arrival and departure transfers.
- All entry fees to places mentioned in the itinerary.
- Local taxes.

NOT INCLUDED

- Drinks with included meals, except tea or coffee for breakfast.
- Gratuities for guides & drivers.
- Personal expenditures like phone calls, laundry, medical expenses.
- Travel insurance.



SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

More information coming soon.....

Preferred Travel Partner

UNITED

September 30 - October 13, 2027
14 Days /11 Nights

ACCOMMODATIONS

September 30 - October 13, 2027
14 Days /11 Nights

Yak & Yeti Hotel

Kathmandu

https://yakandyeti.com/





Hotel Druk

Thimpu

https://drukhotels.com/thimphu/





Terma Linca Resort

Paro

https://www.termalincabhutan.com/





ACCOMMODATIONS

September 30 - October 13, 2027
14 Days /11 Nights

Fishtail Lodge

Pokhara

https://www.fishtail-lodge.com/





TIBET EXTENSION

October 13-17,2027

Intercontinental Lhasa Paradise

Lhasa

https://www.ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/us/en/lhasa/lxaha/hoteldetail







PROGRAM DETAILS

Day 1: Thu Sep 30 2027 **Depart Houston**

Depart Houston. Flight details and check-in instructions will be provided with the final travel documents.

Overnight en route **Meals: -**

Day 2: Fri Oct 1 2027 **In transit**

Continue the international journey onward toward Nepal.

Overnight en route **Meals: -**

Day 3: Sat Oct 2 2027 **Arrive in Kathmandu**

Arrive in Kathmandu, where the local team welcomes you and assists with the transfer to the hotel. The remainder of the day is reserved for rest after the long journey, with time to settle in and adjust to the elevation before the program begins. Dinner is served at the hotel or a nearby restaurant.

Overnight Kathmandu **Meals: D**

Day 4: Sun Oct 3 2027 **Fly to Paro - Transfer to Thimphu**

Fly from Kathmandu to Paro, where the approach follows the narrow Paro Valley to Bhutan's international airport. After immigration formalities, meet the Bhutanese guide. Depending on the flight arrival time, pause in Paro for lunch or light refreshments before continuing to Thimphu.
The drive takes about one hour and passes Chuzom, where the Paro Chhu and Wang Chhu rivers meet. Continue through the wooded valley to Bhutan's capital, check in at the hotel, and enjoy time to rest. Later, take an introductory stroll through town.

Overnight Thimphu **Meals: L- D**

Day 5: Mon Oct 4 2027 **Thimphu Valley Excursion**

Begin at Kuensel Phodrang, or Buddha Point, where the 51.5-meter image of Shakyamuni Buddha overlooks the Thimphu Valley. Continue to the Motithang Takin Preserve to see Bhutan's national animal and hear the traditional account of its association with the Buddhist teacher Drukpa Kunley.

Drive through Kabesa village to the Choki Traditional Art School, where students learn skills connected with Bhutan's painting, carving, sculpture, weaving, and decorative traditions. When classes and school activities permit, meet students at their workstations and take part in an introductory hands-on cultural activity. Conclude at the Craft Bazaar, a row of small shops offering work by Bhutanese artisans.

Overnight in Thimphu **Meals: B –L- D**

Day 6: Tue Oct 5 2027 **Thimphu Drubchen Festival**

Visit Changangkha Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in the Thimphu Valley. The temple has long been associated with blessings for newborn children, and its hillside position opens views across the capital.

The principal event today is the Thimphu Drubchen, also known as the Lhamoi Dromchoe, an annual religious festival held in the courtyard of Tashichho Dzong. Dedicated to Palden Lhamo, the protective deity of Bhutan, the observance was introduced in the early eighteenth century and takes place before the better-known Thimphu Tshechu. It remains an important act of devotion for Bhutan's monastic and lay communities.

Monks perform sacred cham dances in elaborate masks and brocade costumes, accompanied by ritual music and prayer. These are religious rites rather than staged entertainment; their symbolism is connected with protection, the removal of obstacles, and blessings. Local families gather in national dress, making the festival both a solemn Buddhist observance and an important social occasion. Festival timing, access, and photography remain subject to final local confirmation. Later, stroll through Thimphu while the city is in a festive mood.

This evening, a talk on Gross National Happiness, Bhutanese history and culture, and international relations will be arranged, followed by an interactive question-and-answer session.

Overnight in Thimphu **Meals: B –L- D**





Day 7: Wed Oct 6 2027 **Thimphu to Paro**

Begin at the Zilukha nunnery, home to a community of Buddhist nuns whose daily life centers on study, prayer, and ritual practice. Continue to the Centenary Farmers Market, where stalls display seasonal produce and regional foods. Market access is subject to its operating schedule.

Drive about one hour to Paro. Visit Rinpung Dzong, the Fortress on a Heap of Jewels, a seventeenth-century complex that has served both religious and administrative purposes. Continue to the National Museum in the former Ta Dzong watchtower for an introduction to Bhutanese art, ritual objects, textiles, and natural history. In the evening, stroll through Paro's market area, handicraft shops, and cafes.

Overnight in Paro **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 8: Thu Oct 7 2027 **Tiger's Nest Monastery**

Hike to Taktsang, the Tiger's Nest, Bhutan's best-known pilgrimage site. The path climbs through pine forest to viewpoints across the Paro Valley before reaching the monastery complex on a cliff about 900 meters above the valley floor. Bhutanese tradition links the site with Guru Padmasambhava, who is said to have meditated here in the eighth century. The operator estimates about three hours uphill and two hours downhill, in addition to the monastery visit.

Guests who prefer not to make the full hike will follow a separate Paro Valley program. Visit Kyichu Lhakhang, among Bhutan's oldest temples, and Drukgyel Dzong, the fortress associated with Bhutanese victory over invading Tibetan forces in the seventeenth century. Continue through the valley with stops at scenic viewpoints and an opportunity to try traditional archery, subject to weather and local arrangements.

Overnight in Paro **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 9: Fri Oct 8 2027 **Fly to Kathmandu - Patan**

Transfer to Paro Airport and fly to Kathmandu. On a clear day, the route offers another perspective on the Himalayan chain. After arrival and hotel check-in, visit Patan if the flight schedule permits.

Known historically as Lalitpur, the City of Beauty, Patan developed as a major center of Newar Buddhist and Hindu art. Its Durbar Square brings together royal courtyards, tiered temples, stone shrines, and finely worked metal and wood decoration. The visit introduces the artistic traditions that shaped sacred architecture throughout the Kathmandu Valley and influenced neighboring Himalayan regions.

Overnight in Kathmandu **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 10: Sat Oct 9 2027 **Kathmandu Sacred and Royal Sites**

An optional early-morning mountain flight may be offered for aerial views of the Himalayas, weather permitting. After breakfast, begin in old Kathmandu at Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square, the former royal and civic center of the city. The courtyards, temples, palace buildings, Kumari Ghar, and reconstructed Kasthamandap reveal the craftsmanship and ritual life of the Newar city-states.

Continue to Boudhanath, one of Nepal's largest stupas and a center of Tibetan Buddhist life. Pilgrims and residents walk clockwise around the great white dome while monasteries, prayer wheels, and rooftop terraces ring the surrounding square.

Later, visit the Pashupatinath temple precinct on the Bagmati River, Nepal's most important sanctuary dedicated to Shiva. Non-Hindu visitors view the principal temple from across the river while the guide explains the site's temples, cremation ghats, ascetics, and continuing role in Hindu religious life. This evening, enjoy a Nepalese dinner accompanied by a cultural presentation.

Overnight in Kathmandu **Meals: B - L – D**





Day 11: Sun Oct 10 2027 **Fly to Pokhara**

Transfer to the airport for the flight to Pokhara, a lakeside city beneath the Annapurna and Machhapuchhre massifs. The region has long connected Himalayan trade routes with the middle hills and is now an important gateway for journeys into the Annapurna range.

Visit the International Mountain Museum, whose exhibits examine Himalayan geology, mountaineering history, mountain communities, and the people who have explored the world's highest peaks. Later, take a boat ride on Phewa Lake, weather permitting, with views toward the forested hills and the small Tal Barahi Temple set on an island in the lake.

Overnight in Pokhara **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 12: Mon Oct 11 2027 **Pokhara Sightseeing - Fly to Kathmandu**

Leave early for Sarangkot, where clear morning conditions may reveal sunrise over the Annapurna range. After breakfast, visit the Gurkha Museum for an account of the soldiers from Nepal who served in British, Indian, and other forces and became known internationally for discipline and courage.

Continue to Gupteshwar Mahadev Cave and, subject to access and local arrangements, a Tibetan settlement and the SOS Children's Village. These visits provide context for the Tibetan refugee communities that established new homes and craft traditions in Nepal after the mid-twentieth century. Fly back to Kathmandu in the afternoon and transfer to the hotel.

Overnight in Kathmandu **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 13: Tue Oct 12 2027 **Bhaktapur and Kirtipur**

Travel to Bhaktapur, one of the three historic royal cities of the Kathmandu Valley. Its brick- paved squares preserve palace courtyards, carved timber windows, shrines, and tiered temples associated with the Malla period. Visits may include Durbar Square, the Palace of Fifty-Five Windows, and nearby Taumadhi Square, dominated by the five-tiered Nyatapola Temple.

Continue to Kirtipur, a Newar hill town whose lanes, temples, and traditional houses retain the scale of an older valley settlement. Its strategic position made it a center of resistance during Prithvi Narayan Shah's eighteenth-century campaign to unite the Kathmandu Valley. From the ridge, clear weather opens views across the valley and toward the surrounding hills.

Overnight in Kathmandu **Meals: B - L - D**

Day 14: Wed Oct 13 2027 **Departure for Main Tour - Or Tibet Extension**

Guests concluding the main Nepal and Bhutan program transfer to Kathmandu Airport for their return journey. Extension guests fly to Tibet.

Overnight in Kathmandu **Meals: B**





TIBET EXTENSION

Day 14: Wed Oct 13 2027 **Fly to Lhasa**

Extension guests fly across the Himalayas to Lhasa; when skies are clear, the route may reveal Mount Everest and other high peaks.

After arrival at Gonggar Airport, meet the Tibetan guide and drive to Lhasa, situated at approximately 3,650 meters. The afternoon is kept deliberately light to support acclimatization. Time and operating hours permitting, a brief visit to the Tibet Museum may introduce the region's art, manuscripts, textiles, and historical objects before hotel check-in.

Overnight in Lhasa **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 15: Thu Oct 14 2027 **Norbulingka - Jokhang - Barkhor**

Allow a slow morning for further adjustment to Lhasa's altitude. After lunch, visit Norbulingka, begun in the eighteenth century as the summer residence of successive Dalai Lamas. Its palace buildings, chapels, and gardens form part of Lhasa's UNESCO-listed historic ensemble and illustrate the ceremonial and residential life of the former Tibetan government.

Continue to the Jokhang Temple, founded in the seventh century and regarded as the spiritual heart of Tibetan Buddhism. Its architecture reflects Tibetan traditions as well as early influences from India, Nepal, and China. Around the temple, the Barkhor circuit brings pilgrims, traders, and residents together in a continuous clockwise movement through the old city.

Overnight in Lhasa **Meals: B - L – D**

Day 16: Fri Oct 15 2027 **Potala Palace and Sera Monastery**

Visit the Potala Palace, the monumental palace-fortress rising above Lhasa on Marpo Ri, or Red Hill. The White Palace contained administrative and residential spaces, while the Red Palace holds chapels, assembly halls, and the gilded memorial stupas of past Dalai Lamas. The complex is a central symbol of Tibetan Buddhist religious and political history. Entry times, stair routes, and visit duration are controlled by local authorities.

In the afternoon, drive to Sera Monastery, founded in 1419 by Jamchen Chojey, a disciple of Tsongkhapa. Sera became one of the great Gelug monastic universities. When the monastic schedule permits, observe the courtyard debates in which monks use formal gestures, questions, and responses to sharpen their understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

Overnight in Lhasa **Meals: B -L-D**

Day 17: Sat Oct 16 2027 **Fly to Kathmandu**

Transfer to the airport for the flight from Lhasa to Kathmandu. Upon arrival, meet the local representative and continue to the hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure for rest, independent exploration, or final shopping.

Overnight in Kathmandu **Meals: B**

Day 18: Sun Oct 17 2027 **Depart Kathmandu**

At the appropriate time, transfer to Kathmandu Airport for journey back to Houston.

Meals: B





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