

Tourism in Nepal

Tourism is the largest industry in [Nepal](#) and its largest source of [foreign exchange](#) and revenue. Home to eight of the ten highest mountains in the world, Nepal is a destination for mountaineers, rock climbers and adventure seekers. The [Hindu](#) and [Buddhist](#) heritage of Nepal and its cool weather are also strong attractions.^[1]



[Namche Bazaar](#), gateway to [Mount Everest](#), under snow

Overview

[Mount Everest](#), the highest mountain peak in the world (8,848.88m above the sea level), is located in Nepal. [Mountaineering](#) and other types of [adventure tourism](#) and [ecotourism](#) are important attractions for visitors. The [World Heritage Site Lumbini](#), birthplace of [Buddha](#), is located in the south of the West region of Nepal (which despite the name is located in the center of the country) and there are other important religious pilgrimage sites throughout the country. The tourist industry is seen as a way to alleviate poverty and achieve greater social equity in the country. Tourism brings \$471 million a year to Nepal.^[2]



World Peace Pagoda in Lumbini

According to statistics of 2019, there was a growth rate of 2.1%. According to statistics from [Nepal Tourism Board \(NTB\)](#), a total of 1,197,191 foreign tourists entered the country in 2019 as compared to 1,173,072 in 2018. The government of Nepal declared 2011 to be Nepal Tourism Year, and hoped to attract one million foreign tourists to the country during that year.^[3] The government of Nepal has also declared Lumbini Tourism Year 2012 to promote Lumbini. The government of Nepal has also recently declared [Visit Nepal 2020](#) with the aim of bringing in two million tourists by 2020.

Most of tourists visit for short stays. In 2022, 64.7% of the tourists came to Nepal for holiday vacations, 10.03% came for adventure, such as trekking and mountaineering, 12.87% came for religious visits, and 12.39% for other reasons. Tourists who come from the USA, UK, France, Spain, India, and Germany have a main target of activity: mountain climbing. [Mt. Everest](#), [Mt. Ama Dablam](#), and [Mt. Manaslu](#) are the most popular mountains.^[4]

The tourism industry of Nepal was affected after the destructive earthquake in 2015, by the [series of earthquakes in 2015](#). In 2020, the tourism sector in Nepal collapsed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^[5]

In 2022, tourism income increased by 190% from 2021. The gross foreign exchange earnings were Nrs 46,756,824 thousand (Around 326,282 thousand US\$).^[4]

Religious sites



[Janaki Mandir in Janakpur](#), the temple where the Hindu goddess [Sita](#) married Lord [Rama](#) in Nepal.

The majority religion in Nepal is [Hinduism](#), and the [Pashupatinath Temple](#), the world's largest temple of [Shiva](#), located in Kathmandu, attracts many pilgrims and tourists. This is arguably the most famous Hindu temple in the Indian Subcontinent. Adjacent to the temple is a crematorium where bodies are burned to ashes. Pashupatinath also listed in UNESCO heritage sites^[6]. Other Hindu pilgrimage sites include the temple complex in [Swargadwari](#) in the [Pyuthan district](#); [Janaki Mandir](#) in [Janakpurdham](#) in [Mithila region](#); Lake [Gosainkunda](#) near [Dhunchu](#); the temples at [Devghat](#); [Kalinchowk Bhagwati Temple](#) in [Dolakha](#); [Manakamana](#) temple in the [Gorkha District](#); [Pathibhara](#) near [Phungling](#); [Gaeshwor](#) Myagdi and Mahamrityunjaya Shivasan Nepal in [Palpa District](#) where the biggest metallic idol of [Lord Shiva](#) is located.

[Buddhism](#) is the largest minority religion. The [World Heritage Site](#) at [Lumbini](#), which is traditionally considered to be the birthplace of [Gautama Buddha](#), is an important pilgrimage site. Another prominent Buddhist site is [Swayambhunath](#), the Monkey Temple, in Kathmandu.



Ambikeshwari Temple is a [Shaktipeetha](#) which is supposed to have emerged due to the falling of right ear of [Satidevi](#) according to the [Swasthani](#) Purana.

[Dang](#) valley is a sacred place for Hindus as well as other religions. Kalika and Malika Devi in Chhillikot hill, Ambekeshawori temple, Krishna temple, Dharapani temple are among the sacred places in [Dang district](#). Chhillikot hill is also a good place for sightseeing and also an ancient palace of a king.

[Muktinath](#) is a sacred place for Hindus as well as Buddhists. The site is located in Muktinath Valley, [Mustang district](#).

[Badimalika temple](#) in [Bajura District](#), [Gadhimai Temple](#) in [Bara district](#), [Halesi-Maratika Caves](#) in [Khotang](#). [Bhageshwori Mandir](#) in [Nepalgunj](#).



Side view of the Bhageshwori Mandir

[Bhagwati Temple](#) in [Rajbiraj](#) are also some popular temples in Nepal.

Wilderness tourism



Paragliding on Pokhara



Rafting at Bhotekoshi River



Hot air ballooning over the mountains of [Himalayas](#), Nepal

According to [Nepal's Ministry of Tourism](#), major tourist activities include wilderness and adventure activities such as mountain biking, [bungee jumping](#), rock climbing and mountain climbing, [trekking](#), [hiking](#), bird watching, flights, paragliding and hot air ballooning over the mountains of Himalaya, exploring the waterways by raft, kayak or canoe and jungle safaris especially in the [Terai](#) region.^[7] International elephant polo is played at [Chitwan National Park](#).

Orphanage tourism

In 2018, research into global volunteering behaviour identified Nepal as one of the world's ten most popular destinations for orphanage [voluntourism](#).^[8]

Leading [responsible tourism](#) and [child welfare](#) organisations agree that it is irresponsible for short term and/or untrained international volunteers to work in [orphanages](#).^[9] Few volunteers are qualified to interact with traumatised, vulnerable children^[10] and many orphanages lack the facilities, trained staff, and child protection policies to create safe, nurturing environments for children in care.^[9]

There are over 800 orphanages in Nepal, with 80% of those in tourist areas.^[11] Out of the 75 districts in the country, most registered orphanages and children's homes are found in the five most-visited by tourists ([Kathmandu](#), [Lalitpur](#), [Bhaktapur](#), [Kaski](#), and [Chitwan](#)).^[12]

Orphanages attract well-meaning tourists who want to volunteer their time and [donate](#) money, unaware that they are supporting an industry exploiting impoverished families.^[13]

In Nepal, there are an estimated 16,886 children living in orphanages, 80% of whom^[14] have at least one parent who could care for them. With promises of an [education](#) and a better life, children are recruited into orphanages from rural areas which are still suffering from the economic effects of ten years of [civil war](#), to meet demands for donations^[14] – a phenomenon known as orphanage [trafficking](#).^[15]

The [ChildSafe Movement](#) (<https://thinkchildsafe.org/>) reports instances of orphanages keeping children in impoverished conditions to attract more donors.^[12] [ECPAT](#) has also identified a link between orphanage tourism, and an increase in [child sexual exploitation](#) by foreigners and volunteers.^[13]

Statistics



Tourists at [Jomsom](#)

Tourists trekking in [Annapurna](#) region in western [Nepal](#). Tourism plays a vital role in Nepal's economy.

In 2007, the number of international tourists visiting [Nepal](#) was 526,705, which was an increase of 37.2% compared to the previous year. In 2008, the number of tourists decreased by 5% to 500,277. In 2018, the number of international tourists arrival was 1.17 million. In 2019, the number increased to 1.19 million. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on tourism in Nepal, with tourist arrivals dropping to just 230,085 with a decrease of over 80.7% and further decrease by 30% in 2021 with a total number of 150,962. Pokhara is one of the main tourist destinations in Nepal.

In 2008, 55.9% of the foreign visitors came from Asia (18.2% from India), while Western Europeans accounted for 27.5%, 7.6% were from North America, 3.2% from Australia and the Pacific Region, 2.6% from Eastern Europe, 1.5% from Central and South America, 0.3% from Africa and 1.4% from other countries.

Foreign tourists visiting Nepal in 2008 stayed in the country for an average of 11.78 days which has now increased to 15.1 days and 15.5 days in 2020 and 2021 respectively^{[16][17][18]}

Arrivals

This statistic shows the number of international tourist arrivals by year, 1993–2021.^{[19][20] [21]}

No.	Year	Number of international tourists arriving in Nepal	% change from previous year
1	1993	293,567	-12.2%
2	1994	326,531	+11.2%
3	1995	363,395	+11.3%
4	1996	393,613	+8.3%
5	1997	421,857	+7.2%
6	1998	463,684	+9.9%
7	1999	491,504	+6.0%
8	2000	463,646	-5.7%
9	2001	361,237	-22.1%
10	2002	275,468	-23.7%
11	2003	338,132	+22.7%
12	2004	385,297	+13.9%
13	2005	375,398	-2.6%
14	2006	383,926	+2.3%
15	2007	526,705	+37.3%
16	2008	500,277	-5.0%
17	2009	509,956	+1.9%
18	2010	602,867	+18.2%
19	2011	736,215	+22.1%
20	2012	803,092	+9.1%
21	2013	797,616	-0.7%
22	2014	790,118	-0.9%
23	2015	538,970	-31%
24	2016	753,002	+40%
25	2017	940,218	+24.8%
26	2018	1,173,072	+24.8%
27	2019	1,197,191	+2.1%
28	2020	230,085	-80.7%
29	2021	150,962	-34.3%
30	2022	614,869	+307.3%
31	2023	1,014,885	+65.1%

Nepal received 614,869 and 1,014,885 tourists in 2022 and 2023, respectively, according to the Department of Immigration.^[22]

Arrivals by country

Most tourists arriving to Nepal on short-term basis were from the following countries of nationality.^{[23][24][25][20]}

No.	Country	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
1	India	254,150	194,323	160,832	118,249	75,124	135,343	180,974
2	China	169,543	153,633	104,664	104,005	66,984	123,805	113,173
3	United States	93,218	91,895	79,146	53,645	42,687	49,830	47,355
4	United Kingdom	61,144	63,466	51,058	46,295	29,730	36,759	35,688
5	Sri Lanka	55,869	69,490	45,361	57,521	44,367	37,546	32,736
6	Thailand	41,653	52,429	39,154	26,722	32,338	33,422	40,969
7	South Korea	29,680	37,218	34,301	25,171	18,112	23,205	19,714
8	Australia	38,972	38,429	33,371	25,507	16,619	24,516	20,469
9	Myanmar	36,274	41,402	30,852	25,769	21,631	—	—
10	Germany	36,641	36,879	29,918	23,812	16,405	18,028	22,263
11	Bangladesh	25,849	26,355	29,060	23,440	14,831	21,851	22,410
12	Japan	30,534	29,817	27,326	22,979	17,613	25,892	26,694
13	France	30,646	31,810	26,140	20,863	16,405	24,097	21,842
14	Malaysia	21,329	22,833	18,284	13,669	9,855	18,915	18,842
15	Spain	19,057	20,214	15,953	12,255	6,741	13,110	10,412
16	Canada	17,102	17,317	15,105	12,491	8,398	11,610	12,132
17	Netherlands	15,032	15,353	13,393	11,453	7,515	12,320	10,516
	Total Foreigner	1,197,191	1,173,072	753,918	753,002	538,970	790,118	797,616

See also

- [Visa policy of Nepal](#)

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External links

- [Nepal](#) travel guide from Wikivoyage
- [Official tourism website \(http://welcomenepal.com/\)](http://welcomenepal.com/)
- [Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation \(http://www.tourism.gov.np/\)](http://www.tourism.gov.np/)