

# **A DAY OF FAITH AND HISTORY: A JOURNEY TO GADHIMAI MELA**

**DATE: DECEMBER, 2024**

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The Gadhimai Mela, one of Nepal's most significant and culturally intense festivals, is a spectacle that draws millions of devotees. Driven by a mix of devotion and curiosity, we decided to experience it firsthand. Our plan was for a long, immersive day trip: to witness the vibrant and overwhelming atmosphere of the mela and then step back into history at the nearby Makwanpur Gadhi. Our trusted vehicle for this expedition was, as always, our sturdy Mahindra Scorpio, ready to handle the crowded roads.

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### **The Drive: Into the Sea of Devotees**

We left before dawn, the Scorpio cutting through the early morning quiet of the city. As we neared the Bara district, the traffic began to thicken. What was once a highway became a slow-moving river of buses, cars, motorcycles, and thousands of pilgrims on foot. The air grew thick with dust and an palpable sense of anticipation. Navigating through the crowds was a challenge, but the Scorpio's high ground clearance and robust build were perfect for the occasional diversions onto makeshift dirt tracks alongside the main road.

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## The Mela: A Sensory Overload

Arriving at the festival grounds was an assault on the senses. The sheer scale of it was staggering—a temporary city of tents, stalls, and millions of people. The air was a complex mix of smells: incense, dust, sweat, and the aroma of food from countless stalls. The sound was a constant, deafening roar of crowds, religious hymns blaring from loudspeakers, and the bells from the temple.

We joined the stream of devotees moving towards the main **Gadhimai Temple**. The energy was electric, a powerful blend of faith, frenzy, and tradition. While the festival is historically associated with animal sacrifice, the atmosphere we witnessed was predominantly one of deep devotion, with families offering prayers, animals decorated in red vermillion, and a collective spirit seeking blessings from the goddess. It was a profound, chaotic, and unforgettable glimpse into a deep-rooted aspect of Nepali culture.

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## An Afternoon Retreat to Makwanpur Gadhi

Needing a contrast to the intensity of the mela, we drove towards the historical site of **Makwanpur Gadhi**. The fort, perched on a hilltop, offered a complete opposite experience—peaceful, green, and silent.

Exploring the ancient fortifications, we walked through the remnants of old palaces, courtyards, and strategic walls that once played a crucial role in Nepal's unification history. Standing on the ramparts, we looked out over the beautiful expanse of the Makwanpur valley. It was a moment to breathe, reflect, and appreciate the layers of history that shape the region, from ancient warfare to modern-day devotion.

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## The Return: A Quiet Reflection

As evening set in, we began our drive back to Kathmandu. The chaos of the mela was now behind us, replaced by the quiet hum of the Scorpio on the darkening highway. We were physically tired but mentally enriched.

**Epilogue:** That one-day journey was a journey through two very different facets of Nepal. It was a day of stark contrasts: the overwhelming, raw energy of faith at the Gadhimai Mela and the silent, stoic whispers of history at Makwanpur Gadhi. It was more than just a trip; it was a deep dive into the living culture and layered past of the country, all experienced from the familiar comfort of our Scorpio, which had, once again, been the perfect vessel for our adventure.



Figure: At Makwanpur Temple.



