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## GEEO ITINERARY

Nepal and Bhutan 7/6/2025

**Day 1: Kathmandu Arrive in Kathmandu at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., followed by an included entrance and self-guided walk in Patan Durbar Square.**

Arrive in Kathmandu at any time. The Kathmandu airport is **Tribhuvan International Airport (KTM)**. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in South Asia at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jet lag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Kathmandu before the trip. We also recommend booking an arrival airport transfer through us ahead of time—or paying for a transfer inside the airport—rather than trying to catch a taxi outside the airport. **Hotel Check-in and Welcome Meeting** Please note that hotel check-in usually opens around **2:00-3:00 p.m.**, so if your flight arrives early in the morning, you may wish to book a pre-trip hotel night so that you can rest when you arrive. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another. After the orientation meeting, enjoy a self-guided tour of the spectacular Patan Durbar Square, built primarily in the 16th and 17th centuries. Located in the square are the Royal Palace and many temples built in the traditional Newari pagoda style. You will also visit the Golden Temple and Patan Museum. South of the square lies the Kumari Chowk, home to Nepal's living goddess, the Kumari, a prepubescent girl chosen as the incarnation of the Hindu goddess Talejn. The Kumari lives a cloistered life, rarely leaving the confines of the chowk. When she does, it is for important religious festivals, but her feet are not allowed to touch the ground. Once the Kumari reaches puberty, another 3-5-year-old girl will take her place. If she is receiving visitors, we may be able to stop by for a blessing. **Joining Instructions** When arriving at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, you will notice from the sky how small the city is—the distance from the downtown area to the airport is only 7 km, and the only way to get there is by taxi. You can arrange a prepaid taxi with the Airport Queue Taxi Service Management Committee from a counter in the airport near the baggage hall. The cost is around 700-800 NPR. Please be aware that you may be approached by people offering to help you with your luggage; if you accept, they will ask for money once you reach your taxi. **Accommodation:** Hotel Traditional Stay (or similar) \* *For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher.*

**Day 2: Kathmandu Take a guided tour of the royal city of Bhaktapur, and the Bodhnath Stupa. Enjoy a cooking demonstration and learn how to make Nepalese momos (dumplings). Afterwards, taste the delicious dishes made during an authentic local lunch. The evening is free to do as you please.**

Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur constitute the valley's three medieval Newari cities. Today, our group will go on a guided tour of Bhaktapur. Bhaktapur is the best preserved of the three cities, with incredibly well-preserved ancient architecture, much of which withstood a devastating earthquake in 2015. The ancient town, known as the City of Devotees, was founded in the 12th century and became renowned for its culture, festivals, and multitude of Hindu temples. Explore Bhaktapur's markets, tea stalls, wood-carved temples, and vibrant squares, including Durbar Square. You can pick up clay pots and other souvenirs in the colorful open markets and taste homemade yogurt, known as khopa dhau, which Bhaktapur is famous for. We will also visit the Bodhnath Stupa, one of the largest Buddhist stupas in the world. Built in the 5th century, this UNESCO World Heritage site still attracts many pilgrims, particularly Tibetan Buddhists and local Nepalis. Take in the peaceful atmosphere and observe Buddhist monks in prayer in the monasteries surrounding the stupa. Afterward, enjoy a cooking demonstration at a local establishment and learn how to make momos (traditional dumplings). Afterward, taste the delicious dishes made with an included Nepali lunch. The evening is free to do as you please. **Approximate**

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**travel time:** 1 hr by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Traditional Stay (or similar) **Meals included:** Lunch

**Day 3: Kathmandu/Pokhara Drive across the mountains to beautiful Pokhara and immerse yourself in the views of the spectacular Annapurna Range - or opt to take a quicker flight for a smoother journey. Upon arrival, set out on an orientation walk along Phewa Lake.**

Drive across the mountains to beautiful Pokhara. Immerse yourself in the views of the spectacular Annapurna Range. The drive is long, and the road is curvy and can be rough. You also have the option to upgrade to a flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara for \$133. Upon arrival in Pokhara, breathe in the fresh air and take in the views of the Himalayas and Phewa Lake while getting your bearings around this scenic city with an orientation walk. **Approximate travel time:** 8-9 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Queens Park (or similar)

**Day 4: Pokhara Spend the day as you please, indulging in a variety of optional activities in Pokhara.**

Spend the day as you please, indulging in a variety of optional activities in Pokhara. Find a cute cafe to sip some tea in or maybe go for a short hike in the Annapurna ranges. You could also walk up to Sarangkot for incredible views or spend time boating in Phewa Lake and walk through the gardens. **Accommodation:** Hotel Queens Park (or similar)

**Day 5: Pokhara to Chitwan National Park Leave Pokhara behind and transfer by private vehicle to Chitwan. Upon arrival enjoy a welcome by the Chitwan Community Guesthouse.**

Leave Pokhara behind and transfer by private vehicle to Chitwan. Enjoy the hospitality of the Tharu, an indigenous community from the Terai belt of Nepal who live in eco-friendly homes. Experience their unique culture through dances, songs, and a delicious traditional meal. Stay on the property in private guesthouses that resemble the traditional village architecture of the local Tharu people. Enjoy modern conveniences like running water, comfortable beds, and mosquito nets. The 14 cottages are each named after the local woman that manages the property. There are also tended gardens and small patches of farmland in the village compound with animals tethered inside the pastures. Any meals will be eaten in the communal dining hall, and the local women will serve you food entirely sourced from the surrounding land and community. **Approximate travel time:** 4-5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Barauli Community Homestay (or similar) **Meals included:** Dinner

**Day 6: Chitwan National Park Take a 4x4 jeep safari through the national park and search for the elusive tiger. Explore the village and its surroundings with a guided bike ride. Enjoy sunset on the banks of the Narayani river over a cup of tea.**

Today we explore the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Royal Chitwan National Park in a 4x4 jeep safari. Keep your eyes peeled for the many animals that live there, including birds, monkeys, crocodiles, and rhinos. If you're lucky, you might get to see an elusive tiger. You will also have some free time in the park. Known as the Terai Tarai ("moist land"), the landscape you travel through today is a belt of marshy grassland, savannah, and forests at the base of the Himalayas. The Terai-Duar region is home to the endangered Indian rhinoceros, as well as elephants, Bengal tigers, bears, leopards, and other wild animals. The Royal Chitwan National Park and Royal Bardia National Park preserve significant sections of habitat for these animals, making them home to some of the greatest concentrations of rhinoceros and tigers left in South Asia. Later, explore the village and its surroundings with a guided bike ride. Enjoy the sunset on the banks of the Narayani River over a cup of tea. **Accommodation:** Barauli Community Homestay (or similar)

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### **Day 7: Chitwan National Park to Kathmandu Travel back to the capital city and enjoy a free evening for last minute shopping and exploring.**

We will return to Kathmandu and where you will be able to enjoy a free afternoon to continue exploring or shopping. We recommend visiting the burning ghats at Pashupatinath and Swayambhunath, also known as the Monkey Temple. **Approximate travel time:** 6 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Traditional Stay (or similar)

### **Day 8: Kathmandu to Thimphu via Paro Fly from Nepal to Bhutan today for the start of the next leg of your adventure. Transfer to Thimphu from the Paro airport and have a group dinner.**

Fly from Nepal to Bhutan today for the start of the next leg of your adventure. Your Nepalese tour leader will drop you off at the airport in Kathmandu, and you will be picked up by your Bhutanese tour leader in Paro. You will be transferred from the Paro airport to Thimphu where you will have a group dinner. Thimphu is the capital of the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. It is also Bhutan's largest city and displays loads of traditional Bhutanese art, architecture, and culture. It's a modern city with a unique character. You'll see the old and the new blend together here as you walk the streets lined with restaurants and cafes that sit alongside old fortresses and monasteries. Did you know that Thimphu is the only capital city in the world without any traffic lights? Get to know the area on an orientation experience by visiting sites like the textile museum and old clock tower. In Bhutan, all meals are included in the trip's price, including tonight's dinner. **Approximate travel time:** 1 hr by plane, 1.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Damisa Bhutan (or similar) **Meals included:** Dinner

### **Day 9: Thimphu Visit the National Memorial Chorten, the Buddha Point, and Motithang Takin Preserve. In the evening, visit Tashichho Dzong.**

Start the day off with a visit to the National Memorial Chorten. The chorten is one of the most prominent religious structures in Thimphu, and for local Bhutanese, it is a popular part of their daily prayers. Watch locals walk around the Chorten, spinning the prayer wheels and meditating in this lovely and peaceful spot. We will then travel to "Buddha Point," home to Thimphu's most recognized landmark, the Buddha Dordenma. Guarding the entry to the Thimphu Valley, this 51-meter (167ft) gilded bronze statue is filled with 125,000 miniature statues and sits atop a three-story base housing a chapel and thousands of donated statuettes. The statue was commissioned to mark His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck's 60th birthday and was initially made in China before being transported to Thimphu in pieces. Later, visit the Motithang Takin Preserve, which was once a mini zoo. The area was converted into a preserve for Bhutan's national animal, the takin, a cross between a goat and an antelope. In the evening, visit the Tashichho Dzong, a Buddhist monastery and fortress. Its main building is typical of Bhutanese architecture, with whitewashed walls and a golden roof. The original structure was built in 1216 and now houses the civil government. **Accommodation:** Hotel Damisa Bhutan (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

### **Day 10: Thimphu/Punākha Travel to Punakha in the morning crossing Dochula Pass. After a pleasant stop for views enjoy a short hike to Chimi Lhakhang Temple learning about its historical significance. In the afternoon explore the stunning Punakha Dzong.**

We depart the Thimphu Valley and drive to Punakha, with a stop at the Dochula Pass. This mountain pass is 10,171 feet above sea level. The wife of the former King of Bhutan has built 108 stupas here in honor of Bhutanese soldiers who were killed in a battle against insurgents from India in 2003. When the weather is clear, the pass offers panoramic views of the Himalayan Mountains. After arriving in Punakha, we will take a short hike to Chime Lhakhang, temple of the "Divine Madman." We'll pass through rice paddies, a small neighborhood, and then up steep stairs to get to the temple. Built in 1499, it is mainly visited today by women as it is known as the temple of fertility. The hike there and back will take about a little less than an hour. In the afternoon, we visit Punakha Dzong. The winter seat of the Je Khenpo and the Monk Body, it is located between the rivers of the Mo (female) Chu and Pho (male) Chu. It is the

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second oldest and second largest dzong (fortress) in Bhutan and one of its most majestic structures, housing many sacred relics. It is also the winter capital of the Je Khenpo (chief abbot). Built by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in around 1637. Arguably, it is the most beautiful Dzong in the country. The Dzong guards Bhutan's most treasured relic, the Rangjung Kharsapani, an image of Chenresig kept away from the public in the utse (tower). It has survived Tibetan invasions, numerous fires, floods, and a glacial lake burst. The Dzong served as the capital and seat of the Bhutanese Government until the early 1950s; and the coronation of the His Majesty the First Druk, Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuck, took place here. **Approximate travel time:** 3-4 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel River Valley (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

**Day 11: Punākha/Paro Take a scenic drive back to Paro this morning with a few stops en route. Upon arrival the group will visit the Paro Dzong as well as the local archery grounds. This evening you'll have free time to wander and indulge as you please.**

This morning we will drive to Paro, which lies at the center of a valley full of ancient sites and buildings. The area is covered with terraced paddy fields, quaint farmhouses scattered throughout the valley and green forests overlooking the Paro Chhu River snaking below. Enjoy an orientation walk of this beautiful place and learn about ancient Bhutanese artifacts and artwork. We will visit the Paro Rinpung Dzong (fortress), meaning 'Fortress on a Heap of Jewels'. The original construction of this dzong is believed to have been completed in 1458 and restored to its present glory by His Majesty the Third of Bhutan, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, to mark his royal wedding in 1951. If possible, we will visit a local archery ground to watch locals practice or compete with unbelievable accuracy and precision as they hit distant targets. You'll have free time to visit other sites in Paro like the ruins of the Drukgyel Dzong or Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the two oldest monasteries in Bhutan. Maybe head for a visit to the National Museum of Bhutan. There are statues, paintings, sacred masks, and costumes all located in a seven-story watchtower. **Approximate travel time:** 3-4 hours by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Rema Resort (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

**Day 12: Paro Enjoy a hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest), one of the most venerated pilgrimage sites of the Himalayan world. After finishing the hike you'll have the rest of the evening free to explore more of Paro on your own before one last dinner with the group.**

Hike up to the Taktsang monastery (Tiger's Nest), containing 13 holy relics, it's considered one of the most venerated pilgrimage sites of the Himalayan world. It is also where Guru Padmasambhava is said to have landed on the back of a tigress in the 8th century. Take in the stunning views en route and the incredible vista from this monastery, which clings to the rock towering 2,953m above the valley. The group will hike from 7,875 feet elevation to 10,170 feet at the Taktsang Monastery before returning to 7,875 feet on the same day. The climb should take around 6 hours for a total distance of 7 km. Your tour leader can arrange a horseback ride that will take you roughly halfway to the Taksang Monastery. A handler leads the horse, so is possible for travelers who have little to no experience riding horses. You will have some free time in Paro after you return for last-minute shopping or exploring. We'll also have one last group dinner. **Accommodation:** Rema Resort (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

**Day 13: Paro Depart Paro at any time. Airport transfer is included. Your tour leader will help arrange your transfer to the airport and all exit formalities before your journey home.**

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Paro at any time. A complimentary transfer to Paro International Airport is included, and your tour leader will help arrange all exit formalities before you begin your journey home. Your fellow travelers are also likely to be on the same flights, either to Kathmandu or Delhi. If you wish to extend your stay in Paro, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in

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the same school year and receive a discount! GEE0 will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEE0 program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book. **Meals included:** Breakfast

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**\*Itinerary Disclaimer:** *While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.*