

## NEPAL

Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, is a sovereign state located in South Asia with an area of 147,181 square km and a population of approximately 27 million, Nepal is the world's 93<sup>rd</sup> largest country by area and the 41<sup>st</sup> most populous country. It is a land locked country located along the Himalayas and bordered to the north by China and to the south, east and west by India. Nepal is separated from Bangladesh by the narrow Indian Siliguri Corridor and from Bhutan by the Indian state of Sikkim. Kathmandu is the nation's capital city and largest metropolis.

The mountainous north of Nepal has eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, including the highest point on Earth, Mount Everest (Himalayan Mountains).

Hinduism is practiced by about 81.3% of Nepalese, the highest percentage of any country. Buddhism is linked historically with Nepal and is practiced by 9% of its people, followed by Islam at 4.4%, Kiratism 3.1%, Christianity 1.4% and animism 0.4%. A large portion of the population, especially in the hill region, may identify themselves as both Hindu and Buddhist, which can be attributed to the syncretism nature of both faiths in Nepal.

Nepal experiences five seasons: summer, monsoon, autumn, winter and spring. The Himalaya blocks cold winds from Central Asia in the winter and forms the northern limit of the monsoon wind patterns. In a land once thickly forested, deforestation is a major problem in all regions, with resulting erosion and degradation of ecosystems.

The country is home to people of many different national origins. As a result, Nepalese do not equate their nationality with ethnicity, but with citizenship and allegiance. Although citizens make up the majority of Nepalese, non-citizens make up the majority of Nepalese, non citizen residents, dual citizenry, and expatriates may also claim a Nepalese identity. Nepal is multi cultural and multiethnic country because it became a country by occupying several small kingdoms such as Mustang, Videha (Mithila), Madhesh, and Limbuwan in 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Wedge between the high Himalaya and the steamy Indian plains, Nepal is a land of snow peaks and sherpas, yaks and yetis, monasteries and mantras.