



spice *route*

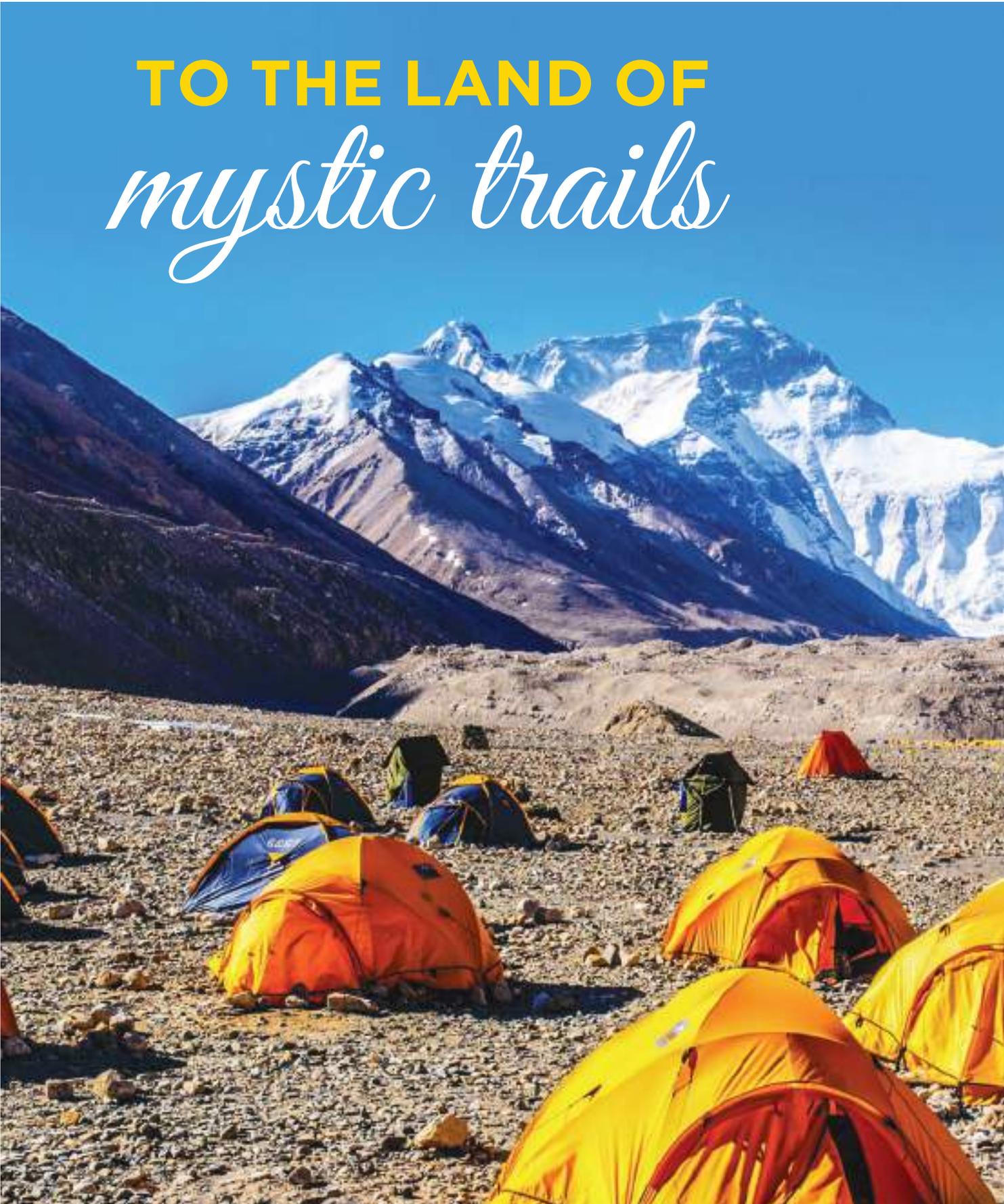
THE INFLIGHT MAGAZINE

**Love
Your
Planet**

#GLOBALRECYCLINGDAY

TO THE LAND OF *mystic trails*

54



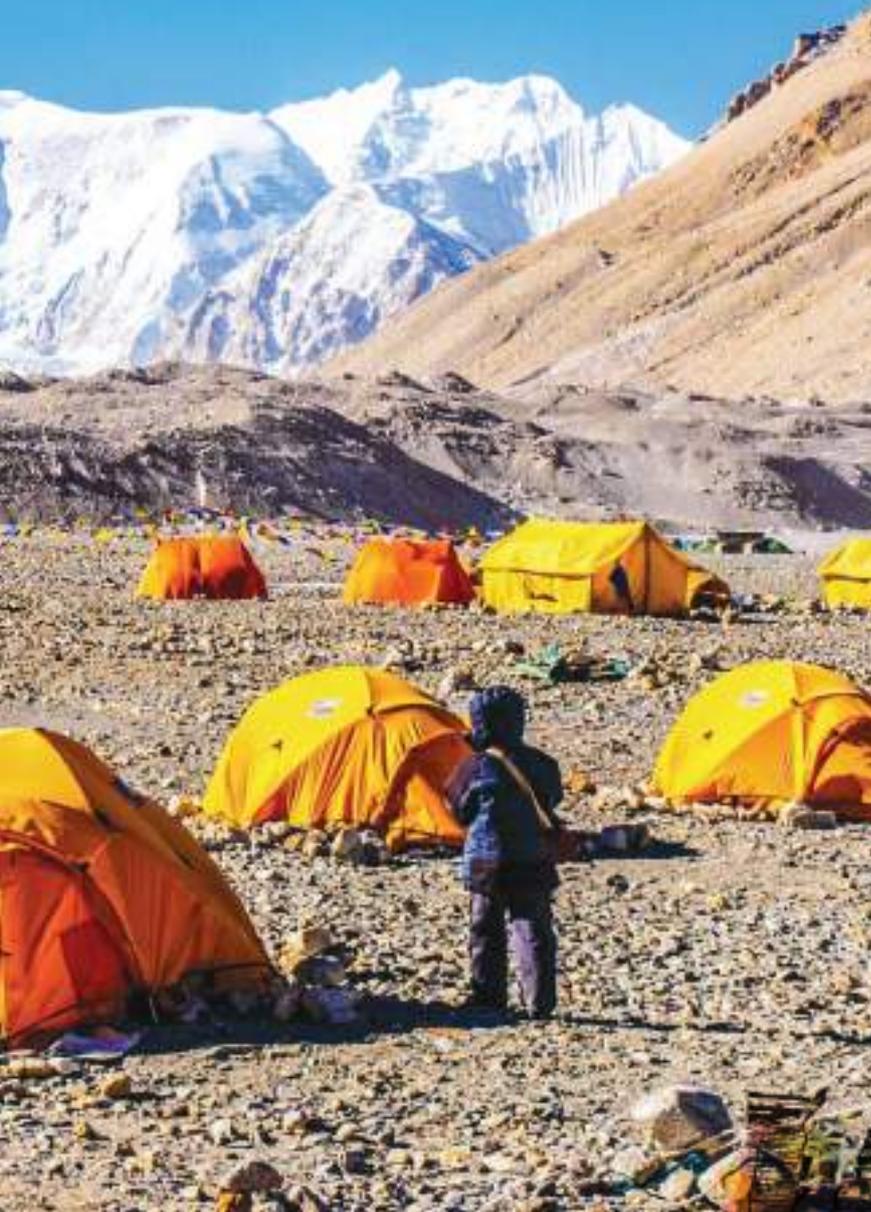


This spring, visit the beautiful city of Kathmandu in Nepal, where Holi or Fagu Purnima is celebrated with great fervour and devotion. Also, explore the stunning mountain nation

TEXT: BINDU GOPAL RAO



Image: visitnepal.com



Kathmandu celebrates Holi, the festival of colours, in all its gaiety as it marks the end of winter and the onset of spring. The week-long festival celebrates the triumph of good over evil. It is said to be the day when demon princess Holika, Hiranyakashipu's sister, was killed when she tried to burn her nephew, Prahlad, and instead got burnt to death herself. Most of the festivities take place in the first three days when the Basantapur Durbar Square in Kathmandu transforms into a carnival space. The first day sees a decorated wooden or bamboo pole being set on fire, and women in colourful sarees circle around it seeking blessings for a prosperous year ahead. Symbolically, this custom is meant to reflect the burning of evils of the past year. There are special bonfires lit on the second day to symbolise the death of Holika and the third day is all about throwing colours at each other - in the form of powder, water and more, while popular Nepali singers perform. The festival is celebrated across Nepal and most of the traditions include singing, dancing and visiting temples.

WILD CALL

The lush landscape of Kathmandu lends itself to some amazing flora and fauna that





AROUND KATHMANDU

Kathmandu is surrounded by many serene destinations. Located close-by, Nagarkot offers excellent panoramic mountain views with stunning sunrises. Dhulikhel is home to the famed peaks of Langtang Lirung, Dorje Lakpa, Gauri Shankar, Melungtse, and Numbur. About 147 km away is Bandipur with the thriving Newari culture. A hilltop settlement above the Marsyangdi River, it is a great pit-stop to experience traditional village architecture and a lush countryside.

CULTURAL CANVAS

Nepal's vibrant festivities and performing arts reflect its rich traditions and culture. Tiji, Janai Purnima, Chhath, Indra Jatra, and Mha Puja are some of the widely celebrated festivals. Integral to some of these are rhythmic masked dances in traditional costumes, such as Nava Durga nach, accompanied by local music instruments.



Image: [insta/nepaltourism/](https://www.instagram.com/nepaltourism/)Russell Pradhan

take centre stage in the valley — the Ranibari Community Forest near Lazimpat, is popular for bird watching. You can also spot the jackal, jungle cat and small mammals. The Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park in Kathmandu Valley, Ichangu, Taudaha lake, Godawari, Gokarna Sahid Smarak Park in Gokarneshwor, pine forests of Hattiban, and fields of Khokana are some biodiversity hotspots. One of the must-do experiences is the exploration of the Chitwan jungle. The UNESCO-listed Chitwan National Park, around 200 km from capital Kathmandu, is where you can spot crocodiles while enjoying a canoe cruise, the elusive one-horned rhino and even

the tiger while on a jeep safari. Plan a tour to a village of the local Tharu community, which has been living in the forests for centuries, and has nature at the heart of its local culture. Try Tharu dishes like *ghonghi* (snail dish), *dhikri* (rice flour stick), *bhakka* (rice flour steamed cake), *sikarni* (sweet yogurt), and *patushni* (rice or legume wrap). Food in Nepal is an assortment of rich indigenous flavours. Sample authentic local delicacies, from Newari-special steamed fish-shaped dumpling, *yomari* to the traditional *dal bhat*, served with fresh seasonal veggies. Nepal *chiya* (milk-based tea), made with aromatic spices, is also popular due to its distinct taste.

TREKKERS' PARADISE

In the northeastern province of Nepal are vast glaciers, high mountains and deep valleys that make up a serene landscape for travellers and an adventurous trail for trekkers. One of the most sought-after trekking routes, the Everest Base Camp trek tests physical strength while offering deep cultural experiences. Apart from the usual hike up the Everest, experienced trekkers also take the route from Jiri through Solu to



Image: [insta/nepaltourism/](https://www.instagram.com/nepaltourism/)



TASTE OF HOLI

Some of the dishes that you must try around the Holi festivities include *bhang* (drink made from buds and leaves of cannabis) *lassi*, *thandai* (cooling drink) and sweets like *laddoo*, *gujiya* and milk *peda*.





Five places to visit in Nepal

Pokhara, the second-largest city in Nepal, is famous for trekking, being the starting point for treks to the Annapurna Range. Indulge in boating, paragliding, river rafting and more. The old city is known for woodwork and woollen goods.



Lumbini is the birthplace of Lord Buddha and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore ancient stupas and monasteries that have stunning paintings. If you like trekking, the Lumbini Circuit Trek is a must. Visit the Maya Devi Temple, where Lord Buddha is said to have been born, and the Bodhi Tree nearby.



Khumbu and Sagarmatha National Park. There are other trails in the Annapurna, Langtang, and Kanchenjunga regions with stunning Himalayan views.

HERITAGE HUES

Kathmandu is home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Start your exploration at the revered Pashupatinath Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. The Kathmandu Durbar Square, despite being damaged in an earthquake, is stunning. This is where Nepal's rulers used to be crowned. The Swayambhunath Temple on a hillock features a dome stupa and the sanctum is revered as one of the holiest Buddhist sites. The Patan Durbar Square hosts several Buddhist and Hindu temples, and heritage buildings. At Boudhanath Stupa near the city centre, a ritualistic circumambulation is believed to open the doors to heaven after death! Also, visit Bhaktapur Durbar Square, the erstwhile home of the region's royal family.



Janakpur, said to be the birthplace of Goddess Sita, is known as the 'city of ponds'. The grand Janaki Mandir is well-known. Also, check out the Rolwaling Valley, Jaleshwar, Ram Sita Vivah Mandap and Dolakha Bhimsen Mandir.



MUST-TRY

Explore the antique charms of Nepal in Bhaktapur and Patan.



RETAIL THERAPY

Visit Thamel, a vibrant space with restaurants and shops. Buy Tibetan singing bowls, glass pipes, Kukri swords, and more.



Patan (Lalitpur), the city of artisans, has a Durbar Square with statues, temples, and palaces. Stop by the Patan museum to see local handicrafts and traditional jewellery.



Dharan, often referred to as the 'Gateway to Mahabharata Hills', is a low-lying hilly region in eastern Nepal. With a salubrious climate through the year, this is where you can golf, hike to Namche, and drive to Bhedetar hill station.

