

Language

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Nepali is closely related to Hindi, and both languages belong to the Indo-European family. It's quite easy to get by with English in Nepal; most of the people visitors will have to deal with in the Kathmandu Valley and in Pokhara will speak some English. Along the main trekking trails, particularly the Annapurna Circuit, English is also widely understood.

Nonetheless, it's interesting to learn at least a little Nepali and it's quite an easy language to pick up. For a more comprehensive language guide, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Nepali Phrasebook*, which includes Nepali script throughout.

Although Nepali is the national language and is used as a lingua franca (linking language) between all the country's ethnic groups, there are many other languages spoken. The Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, for example, speak Newari; other languages are spoken by the Tamangs, Sherpas, Rais, Limbus, Magars, Gurungs and other groups. In the Terai, bordering India, Hindi and Maithili, another Indian language of this region, are often spoken (see the table on this page for a breakdown of first languages spoken in Nepal).

Even if you learn no other Nepali, there is one word every visitor soon picks up – *namaste* (pronounced 'na-ma-stay'). Strictly translated it means 'I salute the god in you', but it's used as an everyday greeting that

LANGUAGES OF NEPAL

Language	% of Total Population
Nepali	50.3
Maithili	11.9
Bhojपुरी	7.5
Tharu	5.4
Tamang	4.9
Newari	3.4
Rai	2.4
Magar	2.3
Abadhi	2.0
Limbu	1.4
Gurung	1.2
Sherpa	0.7
Other	8.6

encompasses everything from 'Hello' to 'How are you?' and even 'See you again soon'. It should be accompanied with the hands held in a prayer-like position, the Nepali gesture equivalent to Westerners shaking hands.

STUDYING NEPALI

Peace Corps and other aid workers pick up a working knowledge of the language very quickly and there are language courses available that will enable you to get by with just four to eight weeks of intensive study. See Courses (p357) for details. In books, the best source for the serious language student is *Teach Yourself Nepali* by Michael Hutt and Abhi Sabedi, which concentrates on both written and spoken Nepali.

PRONUNCIATION

Vowels

a	as the 'u' in 'hut'
ā	as the 'ar' in 'garden' (no 'r' sound)
e	as the 'e' in 'best' but longer
i	as the 'i' in 'sister' but longer
o	as the 'o' in 'sold'
u	as the 'u' in 'put'
ai	as the 'i' in 'mine'
au	as the 'ow' in 'cow'

Consonants

Most Nepali consonants are quite similar to their English counterparts. The exceptions

are the so-called retroflex consonants and the aspirated consonants. Retroflex sounds are made by curling the tongue tip back to touch the roof of the mouth as you make the sound; they are indicated in this guide by an underdot, eg **ṭ**, *Kaṭhmanḍu*.

Aspirated consonants are sounded more forcefully than they would be in English and are made with a short puff of air; they are indicated in this guide by h after the consonant, eg **kh**, *khānuhos* (please). You should ensure that you don't confuse the Nepali aspirated combinations **ph** and **th** with their English counterparts in words such as 'phone', 'this' and 'thin'. In Nepali, **ph** is pronounced as the 'p' in 'pit', and **th** is pronounced as the 't' in 'time'.

Both retroflex and aspirated consonants are best learned by having a native speaker demonstrate them for you. You could start with *Kaṭhmanḍu*, which contains both retroflex and aspirated consonants.

ACCOMMODATION

Where is a ...?	... <i>kahā chha?</i>
guesthouse	<i>pāhuna ghar</i>
hotel	<i>hoṭel</i>
camp site	<i>shivir</i>
lodge	<i>laj</i>

What is the address?

thegānā ke ho?

Please write down the address.

thegānā lekhnuhos

Can I get a place to stay here?

yahā bās paunchha?

May I look at the room?

kothā herna sakchhu?

How much is it per night?

ek rātko, kati paisā ho?

Does it include breakfast?

bihānako khāna samet ho?

room	<i>kothā</i>
clean	<i>safā</i>
dirty	<i>mailo</i>
fan	<i>pankhā</i>
hot water	<i>tāto pāni</i>

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

Hello/Goodbye.	<i>namaste</i>
How are you?	<i>tapāilai kasto chha?</i>
Excuse me.	<i>hājur</i>
Please (give me).	<i>dinuhos</i>

Please (you have).
Thank you.

khānuhos
dhanyabad

Unlike in the West, verbal expressions of thanks are not the cultural norm in Nepal. Although neglecting to say 'Thank you' may make you feel a little uncomfortable, it is rarely necessary in a simple commercial transaction; foreigners going round saying *dhanyabad* all the time sounds distinctly odd to Nepalis.

I	<i>ma</i>
Yes. (I have)	<i>chā</i>
No. (I don't have)	<i>chhaina</i>
OK.	<i>theekcha</i>
Where?	<i>kahā?</i>
here	<i>yahā</i>
there	<i>tyahā</i>
good/pretty	<i>ramro</i>
I don't need it.	<i>malai chahina</i>
I don't have it.	<i>ma sanga chhaina</i>
Wait a minute.	<i>ek chhin parkhanos</i>

EMERGENCIES

Help!	<i>guhār!</i>
It's an emergency!	<i>āpaṭ paryo!</i>
There's been an accident!	<i>durghaṭanā bhayo!</i>
Please call a doctor.	<i>dāktarlai bolāu-nuhos</i>
Where is the (public) toilet?	<i>shauchālaya kahā chha?</i>
I'm lost.	<i>ma harāye</i>

HEALTH

Where can I find a good doctor?	<i>rāmro dāktar kaha pāincha?</i>
Where is the nearest hospital?	<i>yahā aspatāl kahā chha?</i>
I don't feel well.	<i>malāi sancho chhaina</i>
I have diarrhoea.	<i>dishā lāgyo</i>
I have altitude sickness.	<i>lekh lāgyo</i>
I have a fever.	<i>joro āyo</i>
I'm having trouble breathing.	<i>sās pherna sakdina</i>
medicine	<i>ausadhi</i>
pharmacy	<i>ausadhi pasal</i>
I have ...	<i>malāi ... lāgyo</i>
asthma	<i>damko byathā</i>
diabetes	<i>madhu meha</i>
epilepsy	<i>chāre rog</i>

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak English?	<i>tapāi angreji bolna saknu hunchha?</i>
I only speak a little Nepali.	<i>ma ali nepāli bolchhu</i>
I understand.	<i>ma bujhchu</i>
I don't understand.	<i>maile bujhina</i>
Please say it again.	<i>pheri bhañuho</i>
Please speak more slowly.	<i>tapāi bistārai bolnuhos</i>

NUMBERS

0	<i>sun-ya</i>	शून्य
1	<i>ek</i>	एक
2	<i>dui</i>	दुइ
3	<i>tin</i>	तीन
4	<i>chār</i>	चार
5	<i>pañch</i>	पाँच
6	<i>chha</i>	छ
7	<i>sāt</i>	सात
8	<i>āth</i>	आठ
9	<i>nau</i>	नौ
10	<i>das</i>	दस
11	<i>eghāra</i>	एघार
12	<i>bā-hra</i>	बाह्र
13	<i>te-hra</i>	तेह्र
14	<i>chau-dha</i>	चौध
15	<i>pan-dhra</i>	पन्ध्र
16	<i>so-hra</i>	सोह्र
17	<i>satra</i>	सत्र
18	<i>a-thāra</i>	अठार
19	<i>un-nais</i>	उन्नाईस
20	<i>bis</i>	बीस
21	<i>ek kais</i>	एककाईस
22	<i>bais</i>	बाईस
23	<i>teis</i>	तेईस
24	<i>chau bis</i>	चौबीस
25	<i>pach-chis</i>	पच्चीस
26	<i>chhab-bis</i>	छब्बीस
27	<i>sat-tais</i>	सत्ताईस
28	<i>at-thais</i>	अट्ठाईस
29	<i>u-nan-tis</i>	उनन्तीस
30	<i>tis</i>	तीस
40	<i>chālīs</i>	चालीस
50	<i>pachās</i>	पचास
60	<i>sā-thi</i>	साठी
70	<i>sat-tari</i>	सत्तर
80	<i>a-si</i>	असी
90	<i>nab-be</i>	नब्बे
100	<i>ek say</i>	एक सय
1,000	<i>ek hajār</i>	एक हजार
10,000	<i>das hajār</i>	दस हजार
100,000	<i>ek lākh</i>	एक लाख
200,000	<i>dui lākh</i>	दुइ लाख
1,000,000	<i>das lākh</i>	दस लाख

SHOPPING & SERVICES

Where is the market?	<i>bazār kata parchha?</i>
What is it made of?	<i>kele baneko?</i>
How much?	<i>kati?</i>
That's enough.	<i>pugyo</i>
I like this.	<i>malai yo ramro lagyo</i>
I don't like this.	<i>malai yo ramro lagena</i>

money	<i>paisa</i>
cheap	<i>sasto</i>
expensive	<i>mahango</i>
less	<i>kam</i>
more	<i>badhi</i>
little bit	<i>alikai</i>

bank	<i>baink</i>
... embassy	<i>... rājādūtavas</i>
museum	<i>samgrāhālaya</i>
police	<i>prahari</i>
post office	<i>post afis</i>
stamp	<i>tika</i>
envelope	<i>kham</i>
tourist office	<i>turist afis</i>

What time does it open/close?

kati baje kholchha/banda garchha?

I want to change some money.

paisā sātnu manlāgchha

SIGNS

खुला	Open
बन्द	Closed
प्रवेश	Entrance
निकास	Exit
प्रवेश निषेध	No Entry
धूम्रपान मनाही छ	No Smoking
मनाही/निषेध	Prohibited
शाचालय	Toilets
तातो	Hot
चिसो	Cold
खतरा	Danger
रोक्नुहोस	Stop
वाटो बन्द	Road Closed

Internet

Is there a local Internet cafe?

ya-hā intarnet kyah-phe chha?

I'd like to get Internet access.

ma-lai intarnet cha-hi-yo

I'd like to check my email.

imel chek gar-nu-par-yo

I'd like to send an email.

imel pa-thau-nu-par-yo

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	<i>kati bajyo?</i>
It's one o'clock.	<i>ek bajyo</i>
minute	<i>minet</i>
hour	<i>ghantā</i>
day	<i>din</i>
today	<i>ājā</i>
yesterday	<i>hijo</i>
tomorrow	<i>bholi</i>
now	<i>ahile</i>
week	<i>haptā</i>
month	<i>mahinā</i>

What day is it today?

ājā ke bār?

ājā ... ho

Monday	<i>som bār</i>
Tuesday	<i>mangal bār</i>
Wednesday	<i>budh bār</i>
Thursday	<i>bihī bār</i>
Friday	<i>sukra bār</i>
Saturday	<i>sani bār</i>
Sunday	<i>āita bār</i>

TRANSPORT

bus	<i>bus</i>
taxi	<i>taxi</i>
boat	<i>nāu</i>
ticket	<i>tikaṭ</i>

How can I get to ...?

... kolāgi kati paisā lāgchha?

Is it far from here?

yahābata ke tādā chha?

Can I walk there?

hiḍera jāna sakinchhu?



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Nepali Phrasebook

I want to go to ...

ma ... jānchhu

Where does this bus go?

yo bus kahā jānchha?

How much is it to go to ...?

... kati parchha?

I want a one-way/return ticket.

jāne/jāne-āune tikaṭ dinuho.

Does your taxi have a meter?

tapāi ko taxi mā meter chha?

TREKKING

Which way is ...?

... jāne bato kata parchha?

Is there a village nearby?

najikai gaun parchha?

How many hours/days to ...?

... kati ghanṭā/din?

Where is the porter?

bhariya kata gayo?

I want to sleep.

malai sutna man lagyo

I'm cold.

malai jado lagyo

Please give me (water).

malai (pani) dinuho

way/trail	<i>sāno bāṭo</i>
bridge	<i>pul</i>
downhill	<i>orālo</i>
uphill	<i>ukālo</i>
left	<i>bāyā</i>
right	<i>dāyā</i>
cold	<i>jāḍo</i>
teahouse	<i>bhatti</i>