

Earthbound Expeditions

Chitwan National Park Safari

4 days, from US$367 per person

Duration **4 days**	Grade **Easy**	Altitude **150 m**
Start and end **Kathmandu**	Best season **Oct to Mar**	Accommodation **Jungle resort**
Meals **Breakfast daily**	Group size **Up to 15**	Getting there **Drive or fly**

Chitwan National Park Safari Overview

A lowland trip combining guided jungle safaris with a stay at a luxury eco-lodge on the edge of Chitwan National Park.

Tour overview

You spend two full days in Nepal's first national park, on the Terai plain at 150 m, which is very different from the Himalaya in climate, vegetation and pace. Chitwan is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the last strongholds of the greater one-horned rhinoceros. It is also home to Bengal tigers, sloth bears, gharial crocodiles and more than five hundred species of bird.

Wildlife

You are very likely to see rhinos: Chitwan has several hundred, and they are often seen in the grassland at dawn. Deer, monkeys, wild boar and crocodiles are seen regularly, along with a great many birds. Tigers are seen only occasionally and by chance, and no operator can guarantee a sighting. Sloth bears are sometimes seen.

After a trek

We add this trip to the end of Himalayan itineraries more often than any other, for physical as well as scenic reasons. After ten days above 3,000 m, two nights at 150 m in warm air, with a swimming pool and a comfortable bed, is a good way to recover. Chitwan also sits roughly halfway along the drive between Kathmandu and Pokhara.

Key highlights of the Chitwan National Park Safari

- Private luxury eco-lodge
- Guided game drives and canoeing
- Rhino, deer and birdwatching
- Tharu cultural performance

Itinerary

Day	Route	Hours	Distance	Altitude
1	Drive to Chitwan, afternoon in the park	5 hrs	-	150 m
2	Jungle walk, canoe, safari and a Tharu village	-	-	150 m
3	Back to Kathmandu or on to Pokhara	5 hrs	-	1,400 m
4	Departure, or carry on	-	-	-

Day 1

Drive to Chitwan National Park

You travel from Kathmandu to Chitwan by car or tourist bus on winding roads past clear rivers and evergreen hills, then transfer to the resort for refreshments. In the afternoon there is a jeep safari or a guided walk on the edge of the park to look for one-horned rhinoceros, deer and, with luck, a Bengal tiger.

Altitude: 150 m On foot: None, 5 hr drive Night: Resort, Chitwan Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 2

Chitwan National Park activities

The day begins with a morning jungle walk, followed by a canoe trip on the Rapti River, where you may see gharial crocodiles, a jeep safari into the park, and birdwatching in a park with more than 500 bird species. You also visit Tharu villages to learn about rural Nepali culture through traditional dances.

Altitude: 150 m On foot: Jungle walk, 2–3 hrs Night: Resort, Chitwan Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Return to Kathmandu or Pokhara

After breakfast, you drive back to Kathmandu, or take a scenic flight at additional cost. There are opportunities to shop for souvenirs and see more of local Nepali life along the way.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, 5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 4

Departure or tour extension

The trip ends with a transfer to the airport, or you can extend your stay. Breakfast is included.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Airport transfers and ground transport
- Licensed English-speaking guide
- Accommodation throughout the trip
- All permits and national park fees
- Meals as per the itinerary
- Four-star hotels in Kathmandu, upgraded from three-star
- Single en suite room wherever available on the route
- One porter per traveller rather than one between two
- Domestic flights in place of the longest road transfers
- Down jacket and sleeping bag provided
- Farewell dinner in Kathmandu

Not included

- International flights
- Travel and rescue insurance
- Tips and personal expenses
- Nepal entry visa (on arrival)

Permits and other costs

Permit	Fee	Issued by
Chitwan National Park entry. SAARC nationals pay NPR 1,000. Children under ten enter free.	NPR 2,000 a day, about $15	At the park gate, inside the trip price

Licensed naturalist. A guide is required to enter the park on foot and is recommended in a jeep. Chitwan guides carry a stick and are trained in what to do if a rhino approaches, which is a real possibility here.	Inside the trip price	-
Trekking permits. This trip does not include a trek, so no TIMS card is required.	Not required	-

Other cost	Amount	Note
Chitwan National Park entry	$15 a day	NPR 2,000. SAARC nationals NPR 1,000
Resort, full board	$60–110 a night	Two nights, with a naturalist and activities included
Ground transport in both directions	$40–90	Air-conditioned car or shared tourist coach
Bharatpur to Kathmandu flight	$124	Optional, 25 minutes, at the airline's quoted fare
Jeep safari	$25–40	Half a day, included
Dugout canoe on the Rapti	$12–20	Included, and one of the highlights of the trip
Tharu cultural show	$8–12	Included with the Nepali dinner
Tips for the guide and driver	$30–50	Per traveller, given at the end

Packing list

Neutral colours and a warm layer for the mornings

Wear green, brown or khaki in the park. Bright colours and white are visible from a long distance, and animals move away from them. From December to February the jeep leaves in fog at around 10°C and the temperature reaches the mid twenties by lunchtime, so bring a fleece you can take off. If you fly back from Bharatpur, the domestic baggage allowance is lower than on your international ticket and bags are weighed. Anything you do not need in the park can be stored free of charge at our Kathmandu office.

Headwear and sun protection

- Sun hat with a brim
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen SPF 50 and lip balm
- A warm hat for foggy winter mornings, December to February

Clothing

- Light long-sleeved shirts and long trousers in green, brown or khaki
- A fleece or light jacket for early mornings from November to February
- A light rain jacket from May onwards

- Swimwear for the lodge pool

Footwear

- Closed walking shoes or light boots for the jungle walk
- Socks that come above the ankle, to protect against leeches and ticks after rain
- Sandals for the lodge

Bags

- A soft bag or small suitcase
- A daypack for water, camera and a layer
- A dry bag or plastic liner for the canoe

Health

- Insect repellent with DEET
- Any medication you take regularly, and a small first aid kit
- Antihistamine for bites
- Ask your doctor about malaria tablets. The risk in the Terai is low but not zero

Camera and binoculars

- Binoculars, which are more useful than a camera for birdwatching
- A long lens if you have one
- Spare batteries and memory cards

Documents and money

- Passport and a photocopy
- Travel insurance certificate
- Cash in small notes for tips and drinks. There are cash machines in Sauraha and Bharatpur

Accommodation

The lodge

The two nights in Chitwan are at a luxury eco-lodge on the edge of the national park. Rooms have a private bathroom with hot water, and the lodge has a swimming pool and a restaurant where meals are served. The safari activities start and finish at the lodge. Chitwan is warm for most of the year; in December and January the early mornings can be cool and foggy, so bring a warm layer.

The third night

On the third day you drive back to Kathmandu or on to Pokhara, and the last night is in a hotel there, depending on where you go next.

Where	Nights	Type	Room	Bathroom
Chitwan, on the edge of the park	2	Jungle lodge	Double or twin, air-conditioned	Private, hot water

Kathmandu, or Pokhara if you travel on	1	Four-star hotel	Double or twin	Private, hot water

Cooling
Air conditioning and a ceiling fan in the room. Power cuts are now rare, and the lodge has a generator as a backup.

Hot shower
In your room, at no extra cost.

Charging
Sockets in the room. Nepal uses round two-pin and three-pin plugs, so bring an adapter.

Wi-Fi
Free, and strongest in the main building. Suitable for messages, but not always for video calls.

Phone signal
Ncell and NTC both work at the lodge. There is little or no signal inside the park.

Swimming pool
At the lodge. A good place to spend the hottest part of the afternoon.

Mosquitoes
Every room has nets or screened windows. We still recommend wearing repellent at dusk.

Laundry
Available for a small charge, returned the same day in dry weather.

Meals

Meal	Time	What it is like
Tea	Before the early activity	Tea or coffee and biscuits before the walk or the canoe trip
Breakfast	8:00 to 9:00	Eggs, toast, porridge, fruit, pancakes, Nepali and Indian dishes, tea or coffee
Lunch	12:30 to 13:30	Dal bhat, curries, salads, pasta and fresh fruit
Dinner	19:00 to 20:30	Nepali, Indian and continental dishes, often a buffet, with a Nepali dinner on the cultural evening

Diet	How we manage it
Vegetarian	Easily catered for. Much Nepali and Indian cooking is vegetarian, and dal bhat is the best dish on the menu.
Vegan	Manageable with notice. Tell us when you book and we will inform the lodge kitchen before you arrive.
Gluten free	Rice, dal, curries and fresh fruit are safe. Please tell us in advance, as the kitchen cannot rule out cross-contamination.
Halal	The kitchen is not halal certified. Vegetarian food is the practical option, or you can ask the kitchen about the chicken.
Allergies	Tell us when you book and remind the kitchen when you arrive. The nearest hospitals are in Bharatpur, 30 to 40 minutes from the lodges.

A typical day

Time	What happens
5:45	Tea or coffee and biscuits on the veranda
6:15	Jungle walk with a licensed naturalist, or a canoe trip on the Rapti, while the animals are active
8:30	Return to the lodge for breakfast
10:00	Free time: the pool, a rest, or birdwatching notes with your naturalist
12:30	Lunch at the lodge
14:00	Jeep safari into the park, about four hours
18:00	Return to the lodge at dusk
18:30	Tharu cultural programme (on the cultural evening)
19:30	Dinner, and a briefing from the naturalist on the next day

Difficulty and preparation

Difficulty 1 of 5

Easy. If you can manage a morning walk on flat ground in warm weather, you can do everything on this trip.

- The jungle walk is two to three hours on flat, sometimes muddy paths, at a slow pace with frequent stops.
- The jeep safari is about four hours on rough, dusty tracks, seated in an open vehicle.
- You remain seated in the canoe. You do not paddle; the boatman does.
- The main discomforts are heat, insects and early starts, usually before six in the morning.
- The drive from Kathmandu takes about five hours each way and is the longest part of the trip.

Getting ready

4 weeks before: Walk regularly

No training is needed for this trip. If you do not walk much, a few two-hour walks on flat ground will make the jungle walk more comfortable. Wear the shoes you will bring.

1 week before: Adjust to early mornings

The best time in the park is the first few hours after dawn. If you are arriving on a long-haul flight, try to reach Kathmandu a day early so that the first 5:45 start does not follow your first night.

Weather by month

Typical conditions on this route in each month, including the months we do not run this trip.

Month	Daytime in the park	Night-time at the lodge	Early morning, at jeep departure	Conditions	Note

January	23°C	8°C	10°C	Good	Cool, with thick fog most mornings until ten or eleven. Villagers cut grass in the park for two to three weeks this month, which improves visibility.
February	26°C	10°C	12°C	Best	Warm days, short grass after the annual cutting, and good wildlife sightings.
March	31°C	14°C	16°C	Best	Hot in the afternoon. The grass is short and rhinos are easy to see.
April	34°C	19°C	21°C	Good	Hot. Animals gather at water and are easier to find. Activities take place in the early morning and late afternoon.
May	35°C	23°C	25°C	Hard	Very hot and humid before the monsoon. Good wildlife sightings for those who can tolerate the heat.
June	34°C	25°C	26°C	Hard	The monsoon arrives. Safaris inside the park stop around the end of the month.
July	33°C	25°C	26°C	We do not run it	Monsoon. The park is closed to visitors and the rivers are in flood.
August	33°C	25°C	26°C	We do not run it	Similar to July. The park is closed to visitors.
September	32°C	24°C	25°C	Hard	Safaris in the park usually restart in late September or early October. Hot and humid, with grass taller than the jeep.
October	31°C	19°C	21°C	Good	Green and clear after the monsoon. Tall grass makes animals harder to see early in the month.
November	28°C	13°C	15°C	Best	Warm days and cool nights. The most comfortable month of the year.
December	24°C	9°C	11°C	Good	Cool and often foggy in the mornings. Bring a warm layer for the jeep.

Approximate averages from Department of Hydrology and Meteorology records for the Chitwan area. Winter mornings are often foggy until mid-morning and feel colder than the figure, and pre-monsoon afternoons can run several degrees above it.

Booking and payment

How to book

Write to us, or send a WhatsApp message, with your approximate travel dates. You will receive a personal reply from a member of our team who has done this trip. There is no obligation at any stage before you pay a deposit.

Deposit

A 30 per cent deposit secures your dates, and the balance is paid when you arrive in Kathmandu, in cash or by card. At the same time we ask for a copy of your passport, your insurance certificate and any dietary or medical information.

Payment

You can pay by bank transfer or by card through a secure link. Card payments carry a bank fee of about 4 per cent, which we show you before you pay. The balance in Kathmandu can be paid in US dollars, pounds, euros or Nepali rupees.

Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before departure, the deposit can be transferred to any other date or trip we run, with no time limit. If you cancel within 30 days, the deposit is retained, because the permits, flights and crew have been booked by then. If we cancel for any reason other than weather, you receive a full refund.

Private and group departures

Both cost the same for a party of five or more. A private departure runs on your dates at your pace and can be arranged for one person. A group departure runs on the dates in the table above. Most people book privately, at no extra cost.

Late bookings

Three days' notice is enough outside the Christmas and New Year period. No permit application is needed and flight seats are readily available, so this trip is easy to add at short notice.

Frequently asked questions

Answers to the 6 questions travellers ask us most often. If your question is not here, contact us and we will answer it.

How hard is this trip?

We grade this trip as Easy. Rest days are included in the itinerary, and a good level of everyday fitness is enough. Tell us about your experience when you enquire and we will advise you on whether the trip is suitable.

When is the best time to go?

The best time to go is from autumn to spring (October to March), when the weather is most settled and the views are clearest. We also run the trip outside these months on request. Please ask us and we will tell you what to expect.

How big are the groups?

Groups are small. Many of our trips run for just one or two people, and we keep group sizes low so that the pace suits you and your guide has time for everyone. You can also book the whole trip privately.

What do I need to pay to book?

A 30% deposit, about $110 on this trip, secures your place, and the balance is due before you travel. You can change your dates free of charge up to 60 days before departure.

Do I need permits, and are they included?

Yes, permits are required, and they are included. We arrange all the national park fees and permits for this route, and they are included in the price. You only need a valid passport and a Nepal entry visa, which you can obtain on arrival.

Can you tailor the itinerary?

Every itinerary can be adjusted to suit your dates, your pace and the time you have available. If you would like extra rest days, a different start date or an additional region, let us know and we will plan the trip accordingly.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/chitwan-national-park-safari