

MOUNT EVEREST

AND ITS ASCENT



WHERE IS THE EVEREST REGION?

Everest is just one of 30 peaks of the Himalaya range which rise to more than 25,000 feet (7620 metres). The vast Himalayan complex covers an area of about 594,400 sq km (about 229,500 sq miles) and extends in an arc of about 2410 km (about 1500 miles). It stretches from the Indus River in northern Pakistan eastward across the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir; down into northern India; across part of southern Tibet and over most of Nepal, the Indian state of Sikkim, and Bhutan.

The world's highest mountain lies at the northern edge of the Solu-Khumbu administrative district and within the Sagarmatha National Park (established in 1976) in Nepal. The park was identified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979 and is home to around 5000 Sherpas who live within the park. The word *Himalaya* comes from a Sanskrit term meaning "abode of snow".

NEPAL - FACT FILE

- 24,302,653 million people live in Nepal (July 1999 est.)
- Population below poverty line: 42% (1995-96 est.)
- Sex ratio:
 - at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female
 - under 15 years: 1.06 male(s)/female
 - 15-64 years: 1.04 male(s)/female
 - 65 years and over: 0.99 male(s)/female
 - total population: 1.05 male(s)/female (1999 est.)
- Ethnic groups: Newars, Indians, Tibetans, Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Bhotias, Rais, Limbus, Sherpas
- Religions: Hindu 90%, Buddhist 5%, Muslim 3%, other 2% (1981)
- Languages: Nepali (official), 20 other languages divided into numerous dialects
- Literacy:
 - total population: 27.5%
 - male: 40.9%
 - female: 14% (1995 est.)
- Agriculture provides a livelihood for over 80% of the population and accounts for 41% of GDP

From International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development <http://www.icimod.org/index.htm>

A useful website for more detailed information is a network of thirty Nepali organizations that have come together to share sustainable development information on Nepal - <http://www.panasia.org.sg/nepalnet/>

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Nepal is officially known as the Kingdom of Nepal. Kathmandu is the capital city. It contains some of the most difficult rugged and mountainous terrain in the world. Partly as a result of this geographical isolation, Nepal is the one of the poorest countries in the world with 42% of the population living below the poverty line. However poverty rates vary across and within the regions. In rural communities, poverty incidence is as high as 72% whilst in Kathmandu valley, only 4% live below the poverty line.

One of Nepal's main natural resources is its forests, which cover one-sixth of the country and provide valuable timber, firewood, and medicinal herbs. Forestry is an important industry. Hardwood predominates and is mostly used for fuel; wood supplies most of the energy consumed in Nepal. The wide use of wood for fuel has resulted in widespread deforestation and severe erosion.

Rice is the leading staple. Corn (maize), wheat, potatoes, sugarcane, and millet are also widely grown. Nepal is a major producer of medicinal herbs, which grow on the slopes of the Himalayas. Cattle, buffalo, goats, and sheep are raised.

Although its birth and death rates are both relatively high, Nepal's population is growing at a fairly rapid rate. More than two-fifths of the population is younger than 15 years of age. Nearly all the population is located in rural areas. The urban population is mostly concentrated in Kathmandu. The government is trying to reduce the high population density in the Tarai region with improved transportation and communication networks.

Tourism is becoming an increasingly important source of foreign exchange. The Kathmandu valley, however, is the only area equipped with the necessary facilities for foreign tourists. Tourism has brought major economic changes to the region, leading to prosperity for many, but also changing patterns of land use and resource management.

Nepal has many different ethnic groups that are facing many difficulties brought about by changes in access to natural resources, education and development activities. As survival from farming alone becomes increasingly difficult, people express great hope in education as a means for their children to find employment, although isolation and poverty are a major constraint on access schooling. Education is also recognized as being empowering; enhancing the position of women, preventing people from being cheated by others and breaking down social barriers between higher and lower castes.