

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Kingdom of Nepal

**CAPITAL:** Kathmandu

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Constitutional Monarchy

**AREA:** 145,391 Sq Km (5,6136 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION:** 22,340,100

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** Nepal is located among the southern slopes of the Himalayan Mountains in South Central Asia. It is bound by China to the north and India to the east, west and south. The country is divided into three main topographical regions. (1.) The high mountains of the main Himalayan Range, which include Mt. Everest, Mt. Lhotse and Mt. Makalu. (2.) Kathmandu Valley which is a circular basin enclosed by tertiary ranges known as the Siwalik Hills. (3.) The Tarai, which is a narrow flat belt of alluvial land that extends along the southern border with India. The principal rivers are the Kosi, Narayani or Gandak and Karnali Gogra. Major Cities (pop. est.); Kathmandu 419,100, Biratnagar 130,100, Lalitpur 117,200, Pokhara 95,300, Bhaktapur 68,800 (1991). Land Use; forested 39%, pastures 15%, agricultural-cultivated 17%, other 29% (1992).

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**CLIMATE:** Nepal has a climate that ranges from subtropical summers with mild winters in the southern lowlands to an alpine climate with cool summers as well as severe winters in the mountains. Average annual precipitation decreases from 1,778 mm (70 inches) in the east to 899 mm (35 inches) in the west. Average temperature ranges in Kathmandu are from 2 to 20 degrees Celsius (36 to 73 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 20 to 29 degrees Celsius (68 to 84 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

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**PEOPLE:** The population is divided into two broad ethnic groups. (1.) The Indo-Nepalese which include the Pahari, Newar, Tharu and the Indians of the Tarai, all of which account for nearly 80% of the population. (2.) Tibeto-Nepalese who account for the remainder and include the more numerous Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Bhote, Sunwar, Magar and Gurung tribes. The Tibeto-Nepalese are related racially and culturally to the Tibetans.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 131.7 persons per sq km (341.0 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 9.6% urban, 90.4% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 51.7% male, 48.3% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 55.4 years male, 52.6 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 42% under 15, 26% 15 to 29, 17% 30 to 44, 10% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1991). Birth Rate; 38.0 per 1,000 (1993). Death Rate; 13.0 per 1,000 (1993). Increase Rate; 25.0 per 1,000 (1993). Infant Mortality Rate; 98.0 per 1,000 live births (1991).

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**RELIGIONS:** The official religion is Hinduism which accounts for 90% of the population while 5.3% are Buddhists and 2.7% Muslims.

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**LANGUAGES:** The official language is Nepali, although over 20 distinct languages are also spoken with English also widely understood.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 41.2%, primary 29.4%, secondary 22.7%, higher 6.8% (1981). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 1,822,718 or 20.7% (1981).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** Until 1951 members of the Rana family held complete control of the government. In 1950 King Tribhuvan began a plot to overthrow the Rana family and when it was discovered, he fled to India. After which an armed revolt led by the Nepali Congress began, although order was quickly restored by India. In 1951 Bisweswore Prasad Koirala became the first non-Rana Prime Minister for more than 100 years. In 1959 the first free elections were held and a new constitution inaugurated, however, in Dec. 1960 King Mahendra banned all political parties and suspended the constitution. In 1962 a new constitution was established which set up a non-party council known as the Rashtriya Panchayat. In 1972 King Mahendra died and was succeeded by Prince Birendra. In May 1980 a referendum was held to give the people a choice between a reformed version of the existing system or a multiparty based system, which resulted in the return of the Rashtriya Panchayat. In June 1985 an opposition group launched a bombing campaign in which several people were killed. The government responded by arresting around 4,000 opposition supporters. In 1989 relations with India were strained when the Indian government imposed an economic blockage over a dispute regarding their 1950 "Special Relationship Treaty", although in July 1990 the crisis was resolved. In Feb 1990 violence erupted over demands by 10,000 civilians for an end to the Rashtriya Panchayat. Police and the Army responded and around 50 people were killed, following which the King announced that a new constitution would be drafted which would allow for a multiparty system of government. In May 1991 the Nepali Congress Party won general elections and Girija Prasad Koirala was elected Prime Minister. In June 1991 the government announced wide-ranging reform plans to reduce state control of the economy and in Sept. 1991 the US announced a 35% increase in aid to speed up the economic liberalization. During 1991 relations with India remained fair, although relations with Bhutan deteriorated after allegations that the Nepalese government was supporting pro-democracy activists there. In April 1992 anti-government demonstrations held by 2,000 civilians in Kathmandu in protest to price increases and corruption erupted into riots with police opening fire and killing 7 people. In July 1992 a Thai Airways jetliner crashed in Nepal killing 113 people and in Sept. 1992 a Pakistani Air bus crashed killing 167 people. In Oct. 1992 India's Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao visited Nepal and discussed issues on trade and water resource cooperation with Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala. In 1993 the United Nepal Communist Party led several strikes and

street demonstrations in protest to the government. On May 16, 1993 a road accident in which two communists lost their lives led to further conflict between the government and the communists through allegations that the government had killed the men, although an official investigation blamed driver negligence for the deaths. In June, July and Sept. 1993 the communists led general strikes and protests with police opening fire and killing at least 12 people. In Sept. 1993 King Birendra visited China while during 1993 China, Nepal's largest foreign aid source, assisted the country in developing its infrastructure that included the construction of highways, industries and hydroelectric power plants.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Rupee (NRs) divided into 100 Paisa.

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$3,174,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$1,938,000,000 (1993). Imports; NRs 36,978,500,000 (1993). Exports; NRs 17,307,400,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$110,000,000 (1992). Balance of Trade; NRs -21,781,000,000 (1993). Economically Active Population; 7,339,586 or 39.7% of total population (1991). Unemployed; 5.5% (1980).

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partner is India.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Barley, Cattle, Fruit, Jute, Medicinal Herbs, Pepper, Potatoes, Rice, Sugar Cane, Timber, Tobacco, Wheat.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, Cement, Cigarettes, Forestry, Garments, Jute Spinning, Sugar Milling, Textiles, Tourism.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Carpets, Jute, Leather Goods, Rice, Sugar, Timber.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; route length 53 km (33 mi) (1989), passenger-km N/A., cargo ton-km N/A. Roads; length 7,007 km (4,354 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 14,201 (1978), trucks and buses 9,988 (1978). Merchant Marine; nil. Air Transport; passenger-km 408,000,000 (253,519,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 10,884,000 (7,454,000 short ton-mi) (1989).

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 25 with a total circulation of 140,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 625,000 (1994). Television; receivers 250,000 (1994). Telephones; units 72,000 (1993).

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**MILITARY:** 35,000 (1994) total active duty personnel with 99.4% army, 0.0% navy and 0.6% air force while military expenditure accounts for 1.4% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).