Amazing Nepal

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I was awestruck by the stunning beauty of the Himalayan heights as our aircraft approached Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport. The snow capped peaks dazzled as the afternoon sun torched the majestic mountain chain.

The airport formalities were very simple and prompt and executed with smiles (Dhaka has a lot to learn). Soon we were whisked away through the rumbling dusty alleys of the countryside to Gokarna Forest Reserve -- home to our retreat.

The Resort, a half an hour drive from the airport, sits within 470 acres of the ancient Gokarna Forest with the majestic Himalayas -- rooftop of the world providing a dramatic backdrop. Traditionally the private Royal hunting grounds of the kings, this temperate forest could be considered a tranquil haven existing in serene harmony with nature. Nestled in the picturesque resort, it was a treat to enjoy the magnificence of the Himalayas, refreshing mountain air and scenic landscapes -- a perfect comfortable and peaceful sanctuary.



However, life in the evenings was different. Immediately after the day long business hours, we dashed to the city centre, namely Thamel. Thamel, the tourist hub, consists of two parallel streets stuffed with exotic restaurants, cafes, book stores and antique shops. Shoppers may purchase gifts and souvenirs from an interesting assortment of items such as handicrafts, carpets, wooden art works, bronze casting, metal work and the famous pashminas.The Dhakai Sarees are very popular, particularly Benarasi and Dhaka cotton sarees are sold in the market.

Kathmandu is an open air museum of famous sites, ancient temples and shrines, golden pagodas and is a city of inexhaustible historic, artistic and cultural interest. In fact, Kathmandu boasts one of the largest congregations of magnificent historical monuments and shrines ever built. The mesmerising Himalayan peaks are visible from several points on the mountains around the valley .The valley is encircled by a range of green terraced hills and dotted by compact clusters of red tiled-roofed houses.

Kathmandu is the capital of land-locked Nepal -- the only Hindu country in the world. It is said that Kathmandu was named after 'Kashta-Mandap' meaning the temple was made of wood in Sanskrit. The imposing temple near Hanuman Dhoka Palace contains no iron nails or support and is entirely made of wood. Legend has it that the timber used for this two-storey pagoda was obtained from a single tree.

Duly recognised as a world heritage site by UNESCO -- this particular area best known as Kathmandu Durbar Square lies in the heart of the city. Locally called as Hanuman Dhoka Palace Square, the Palace Complex consists of a huge Royal Square imposing a tremendous variety of temples dedicated to different Hindu gods and goddesses. The square is the complex of palaces, courtyards and temples that were built between the 12th and the 18th centuries by the ancient Malla Kings of Nepal. It is the social, religious and urban focal point of the city. The entire Palace Complex here is named after a monkey god called Hanuman. Handicrafts and merchandise of all kinds are crammed in the shops and littered in the pavements. The courtyard is frequented by colourfully dressed priests and beggars. Wayside restaurants offer sumptuous meals. The traffic appears chaotic with rickshaws, carts and vehicles moving in all directions. The roads are narrow, full of pot holes and rubbish.