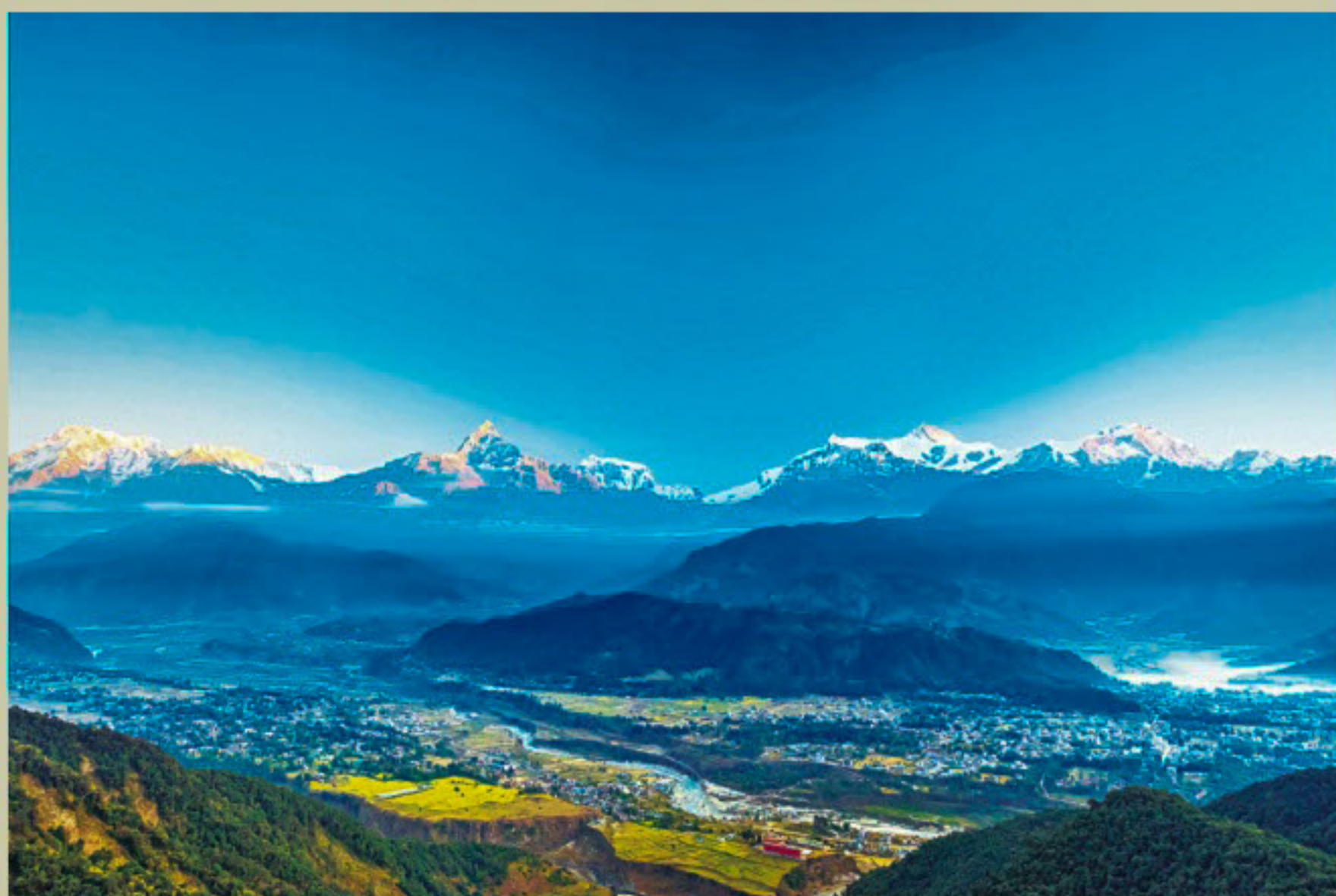
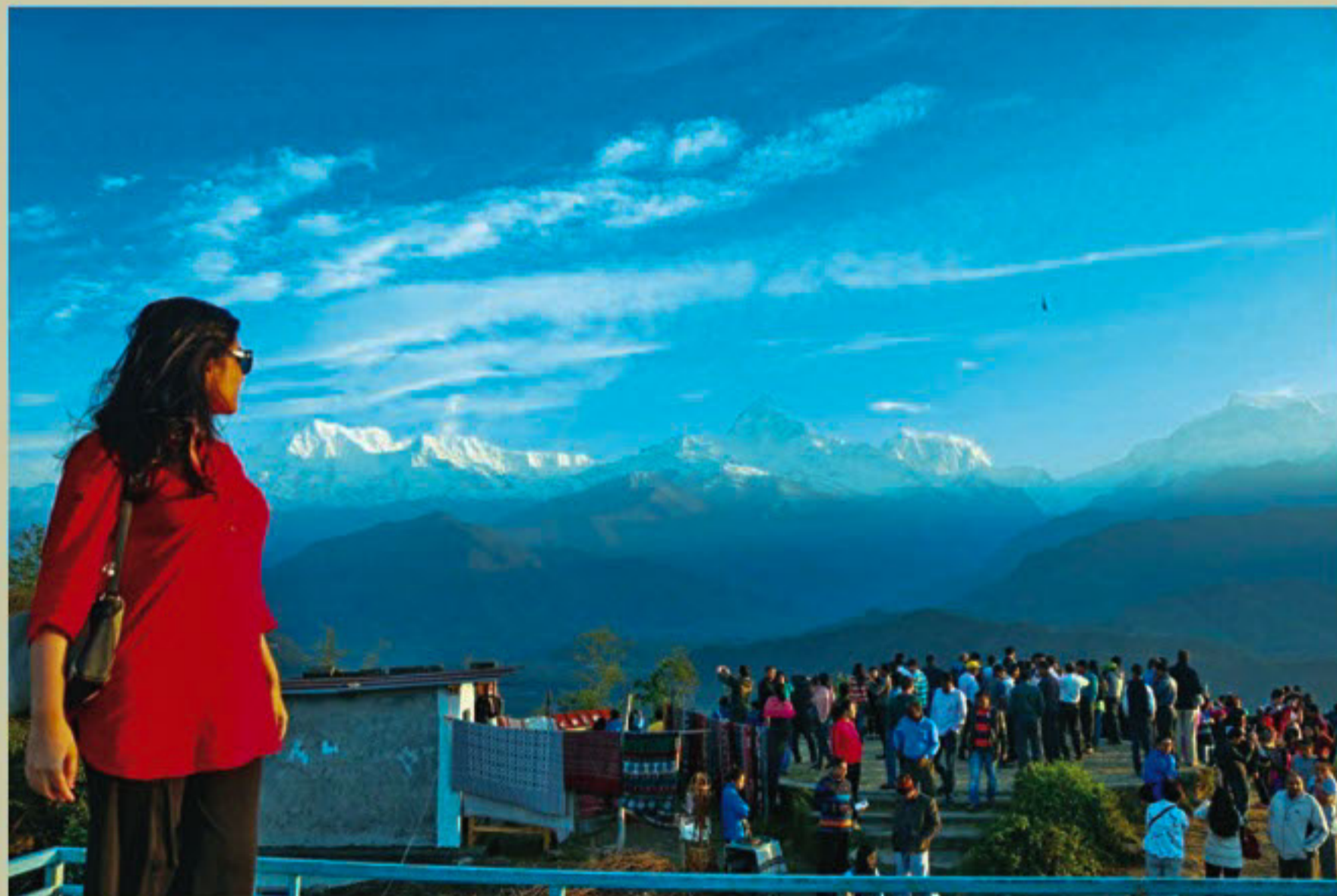


A QUICK GETAWAY

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An hour and a half flight away from Dhaka is a land of humble people, soothing climate and the highest peaks in the world. Everything about this country will sweep you off your feet. The alluring sceneries, panoramic views of the Himalayas, the serenity, and the amazing nightlife are only to name a few.



Nepal is home to a vast number of places to visit, but we were unable to accommodate all of them in our weeklong trip. So, we'll be talking about the places we managed to tick off our checklist. Consider this article a recommendation if you're contemplating a quick vacation this holiday.

KATHMANDU

Being the capital, Kathmandu is the busiest and the most happening city in all of Nepal. Sitting 1400 metres above sea level, it is a vibrant and noisy city in the centre of the country and is home to some very well-known heritage sites. We picked a hotel in Thamel, which is the tourist hub of the city. Buzzing with locals and foreigners alike, Thamel is the ideal spot with lots of budget hotels and restaurants to choose from and the streets are lined with local shops that boast a wide range of items that define the culture of the country. If you want to bring a bit of Nepal back home, you know where to shop.

Our Kathmandu sightseeing included:

- Swayambhunath Temple: Also known as the Monkey Temple, Swayambhunath sits atop the Kathmandu valley and is known for its architecture. It consists of several shrines and temples and way too many monkeys.

- Patan Durbar Square: Located in a small town outside Kathmandu called Lalitpur, Patan Durbar Square is a UNESCO World Heritage Site where the royal family once resided. It now consists of a number of temples.

- Bouddhanath Stupa: The Bouddhanath Stupa, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a Buddhist temple located on the outskirts of Kathmandu. It is

home to some breathtaking architecture and a large gold spherical *stupa* of Buddha in the centre.

- Narayanhiti Royal Museum: Once, not too long ago, Nepal was a kingdom and the last royal family resided in this Naranhiti Royal Palace. It has been converted into a museum since Nepal was declared a republic and is open to visitors who are interested in getting a hint of the lifestyle that past monarchs enjoyed.

Also, the nightlife of Kathmandu, especially in Thamel, was quite cool with restaurants and jazz bars open till late.

POKHARA

The favourite part of our trip was the two-day stay at Pokhara, the nature capital of Nepal. The six-hour bus journey from Kathmandu initially appeared to us as long and monotonous, but instead we found ourselves gazing at the scenic beauty along the way with our jaws dropped. Midway through the journey we stopped at the Manakamana Temple which required a cable car ride to get to. Mind you, up there is a whole different world.

Mild temperature, beautiful lakes, and stunning panoramic views of the Himalaya create an ambience of peace and magic in Pokhara. This place helped us put behind the fatigue of travel. Our hotel was on a street adjacent to the gates of the Phewa Lake. Bordered by hills, the Phewa Lake is one of the largest lakes in Nepal and is a popular spot for boating.

If you go to Pokhara, waking up early in the morning to see the sunrise is a must. We went all the way to Sarangkot, the whole time gasping and

gazing at the splendour that nature offered. Finally, we got atop of Fishtail range just in time for sunrise. The sky was clear, the air crisp, and the Annapurna range was basking in its own magnificence. White, blue and green never looked so beautiful together.

We also did a bit of sightseeing around the city. The places we visited are:

- Davi's Fall: It's a waterfall that leads to an underground tunnel and is named after a Swiss woman, Davi, who drowned in the water.

- The Gupteshwar Cave: This cave is situated just opposite to Davi's Fall and you must walk through a lot of shops before even getting to its ticket booth. The cave is every bit of spooky one can imagine.

- The International Mountain Museum: The traditions of the Himalayan range are showcased at the International Mountain Museum which has been established at the feet of Fishtail peak. The shape of the museum roof itself resembles a mountain skyline. It is just one-storeyed, so it wouldn't take you long to observe the entire museum.

- White River (Seti River Gorge): The roaring Seti River passes right through Pokhara, but you won't see it unless you go looking for it. The river has carved a deep, narrow gulf through the middle of town, turning the water milky white in the process. The best place to catch a glimpse of the Seti River is the park just north of old Pokhara, near the Gurkha Museum.

Lastly, one attraction of Pokhara that is expanding every year is adventure sports. Bungee jumping, paragliding, zipline flying, rafting – you name it.

Challenging the fear of heights and paragliding across the Sarangkot Hills and above the Phewa Lake was an astounding experience and one that every individual should experience in a lifetime. Bird's eye view of the city is something that cannot be compared.

Pokhara was indescribably gorgeous and peaceful. It is a must-visit place for those who want to take a break and relax for a few days.

NAGARKOT

A two-hour car ride to the east of Kathmandu is Nagarkot, a village situated on top of hills. The ascent to Nagarkot offers breath-taking views of hills and greenery, and many hotels are available for tourists here. What makes Nagarkot a popular tourist spot is the sunrise with views of the Himalayan Range. Rising early in the morning, from the comfort of our hotel balcony, we witnessed one of the most amazing sunrises with the silhouette of the Everest partly visible through the clouds in the backdrop.

Kathmandu, Pokhara and Nagarkot are the three cities we could manage to visit within the short time but there are a lot of other locations in Nepal that appeal to tourists. Also, the most splendid mountains and peaks are located in this country – making it an absolute destination for mountaineers and trekkers. We enjoyed the culture and heritage of Nepal and although the food wasn't much to our liking, we did love the dumplings, or as they call it locally, "momo".

Our trip to Nepal was unforgettable and refreshing, and it is one inexpensive escape from the stressful hustle and bustle of Dhaka.

