

Pokhara: The city that proved solo travel isn't overrated after all

Many people dismiss solo travel as a most over-rated thing, and I was no different. It was my first overseas trip to Nepal; I started with two other friends, but later, for something personal, I desired to wander alone with a wish to make this more adventurous than relaxed. With my backpack and an open heart, I embarked on the journey that would become a defining chapter of my life.

My destination? Pokhara — a city known for its stunning views, serene lakes, and rich cultural heritage.

From the moment I arrived, I was captivated by the majestic mountain range that greeted me like an old friend whose face I almost forgot! My home for the next few days was a comfortable hotel where I rented a cosy rooftop room overlooking the Himalayan Mountains.

Each morning, I woke up to the golden hues of sunrise washing over the peaks, reminding me that life is not that bad the way we consider it, but full of possibilities. No wonder, I was alone, however, the beauty of my surroundings made me feel more like a companion than a burden.



Reaching the dreamland

Stepping off the bus and into the crisp mountain air, I was welcomed by the mesmerising views of the Annapurna range. In the afternoon, I visited the sprawling lakeside area of Pokhara teeming with colourful shops, cafes, and the scent of fresh momos wafting through the air.

On my first day there, I opted for a stroll along the lakeside. As the weather was not in my favour, I could not get the chance to ride a boat. Rather, I found love that spread like petals — couples were sharing tender moments under the canopy, children enjoyed playful antics with their parents, while groups of friends laughed and leaned on one another.

Paragliding over Pokhara

The following day was dedicated to one of the highlights of my trip: paragliding. As an adventure-seeker, the thought of soaring over the majestic mountains filled me with excitement. After a short drive to Sarangkot, I met my tandem pilot, a charming soul who reassured me through every step.

Before I even understood, I was strapped in and ready to take flight. As we lifted off the ground, I felt the rush of adrenaline course through me. The world below started to shrink, and I was engulfed in a

breath-taking panorama of hills, valleys, and the shimmering lake.

As I floated effortlessly in the sky, I gazed down at the vibrant cityscape of Pokhara. At that moment, I felt an exciting blend of empowerment and freedom.

After an elating ride, I touched down safely, my heart racing and my cheeks aching from my wide, joyful smile. This experience stretched my limits, and



filled me with an overwhelming sense of accomplishment. As women, we cherish our freedom, and paragliding made me feel like a bird — unrestrained and liberated.

Exploring the attractions

With an eagerness to explore, I decided to hire a bike guide for my next two days in Pokhara. My guide, Krishna was an enthusiastic local who was passionate about sharing the beauty of his homeland.

At the breath-taking Stupa Temple, known as the World Peace Pagoda, I felt the sacred air, thick with spirituality. I watched as the sun dipped below the horizon, painting the sky in vivid rays of orange and pink. Surrounded by fellow travellers and locals alike, I felt the gentle embrace of community while being enveloped in my solitude.

Next, I explored the mysterious Mahendra Cave and the interesting Bat Cave. As I navigated the dimly lit corridors, I found a strange comfort in my own company. The echoes of fluttering bats above me were just another reminder that adventure often lies in the heart of the unexpected. Each step further into the caves was a testament to my courage and curiosity.

At Bindabasini Temple, I immersed myself in the spiritual atmosphere and engaged with the warm-hearted locals. Their amiable smiles and curious inquiries about myself and my country reinforced my belief that kindness knows no borders and that sharing my experience with those around me only deepened my journey.

The following day, I found myself drawn to Nirmal Pokhari. Unable to resist the allure, I set my shyness down and immersed myself in the beauty of the surroundings, a timeless moment which I enjoyed alone, yet felt a deep connection to the universe. While there, I decided to try some local cuisine at a cosy restaurant, where I was the sole guest. The owner greeted me with a warm smile, making me feel right at home.

Breathing in the fresh mountain air by the Seti River, I marvelled at its shimmering greenery waters, a stark contrast to the bustling life that thrived around it. This serene spot was my perfect escape, a place where I found solace and reflection, where no other tourist was present. I spent hours contemplating my journey, realising that my sense of security did not come from the absence of risk but from my unwavering trust in myself.

Dancing to the end of the night

Evenings in Pokhara came alive at Club

16, where I found myself drawn to the magnetic rhythm of music. There, amidst beats that flamed the dance floor, I met three extraordinary women. Together, we embraced the night, twirling and laughing as if we were old friends. The experience reinforced the idea that joy resonates powerfully in companionship, even among strangers, an affirmation of sisterhood transcending borders.

One of the best parts of travelling solo is the chance to meet incredible people. During my stay at a rooftop hotel in Pokhara, I was particularly impressed by the hospitality of the owner, Chandra Bhandari, a man in his forties.

His name perfectly reflects his radiant character, as warm and welcoming as the moon. Chandra went out of his way to assist me with every detail of my trip and offered fantastic suggestions on places to visit. The hotel's tagline, "Guests are our God," truly describes the way I was treated. I felt genuinely cherished and valued throughout my stay.

As my days in Pokhara drew to a close, I reflected on my journey. Travelling alone opened my heart to new experiences and friendships that I never anticipated. I felt a deeper connection not only to the landscapes surrounding me but also to the people I met along the way.

If you are considering a trip to Pokhara, go for it! Whether you are flying solo or travelling with friends, the magic of this lovely destination awaits. Just like me, you might return from the land of lakes and mountains with a heart full of stories and a desire to explore even further.

By Iffat Ara Munia

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