

Safety in Nepal

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Ten years of internal conflict between the Maoist guerrillas and the establishment has meant that travelers are very concerned about the safety issue when planning their trips to Nepal. This fact, combined with some attacks by the guerrillas in remote districts and in the vicinity of the Kathmandu Valley on government targets and the international media coverage of these events have created more concerns on potential travelers. This is very understandable.

Here are some facts about the conflict that might help travelers make a more informed decision

- The Maoists have only targeted government targets – civilians and specially foreigners are not targets at all
- The Maoists also recognize the importance of tourism – in fact in many Maoist run villages in remote areas, they put welcome gates in the entrance of villages.
- There has not been any tourist casualty resulting out of the conflict in Nepal in these 10 years.
- Maoist charge a travel permit fee in their areas, amounting to about 20 USD and give you a receipt so that you do not get doubly charged.
- The agitating political parties and the Maoist sometimes announce valley wide and nation wide closures and blockades, which results in hassle and delays in surface travel. This does not affect air travel.
- Closures announced in Kathmandu mean that this is the perfect day to cycle around the city without the pollution and the public love it (when it is not for many days)
- The government sometimes imposes curfews (partial and sometimes complete) which means you might have to stay indoors. Its pretty boring and a big hassle. These are rare. This does not affect air travel, and special arrangements are there to shuttle travelers to and from the airports.
- These closures, blockades and curfews do not affect tourism activities in remote villages, where most of the tourism takes place in Nepal.
- These closures, blockades and curfews however, can affect access to these areas, if the timing is wrong.
- There are lesser tourists in Nepal now (scared because of the conflict) which means it is a better time to come. You get better service and can enjoy the attractions and activities more.

Suggestions

- Be informed of planned activities by the political activists and the Maoists and plan your trip accordingly.
- Be prepared to modify your plans when in Nepal to account for the unplanned events.
- Pad your travel with a few extra days to allow for unforeseen delays due to the country situation. (Not really applicable for travel only into Kathmandu)