

EXPATS & DIASPORA / EXPATS & DIASPORA

Coming Home as a Tourist: Rediscovering Nepal From Abroad

For Nepalis abroad, a holiday home can become a negotiation between the country remembered and the country that exists.

OCTOBER 8, 2026



Coming Home as a Tourist: Rediscovering Nepal From Abroad

For Nepalis abroad, a holiday home can become a negotiation between the country remembered and the country that exists.

By Nepal Digest - October 8, 2026 - Nepal

The visit begins before the visitor reaches the city. There may be an aunt calling repeatedly to ask whether the aircraft landed, someone negotiating luggage in the arrivals hall, and a family meal already prepared. Hours after arriving in Nepal, a returning Nepali can be surrounded by people they know and still feel slightly out of place.

That uneasy familiarity is becoming a defining experience of diaspora travel. A country remembered through childhood roads, festival rituals and family stories has continued to change while the person living abroad has been building a different daily life.

A return to Nepal is therefore often two journeys at once: back to relatives and forward into a place that requires rediscovery.

A homeland kept in memory

Memory preserves scenes selectively. Someone who left years ago might remember a neighbourhood before a flyover, a market before digital payments or a path before a new road. On returning, the ordinary place may look unexpectedly unfamiliar.

It is tempting to judge the country through a comparison with the moment of departure. The street was quieter. The food tasted different. The hills seemed greener. Those impressions can be emotionally true without being a reliable assessment of social change. Residents have not had the luxury of pausing Nepal while family members worked or studied abroad.

Sometimes the returned visitor has changed most. Familiar prices can feel surprisingly low when converted from a foreign wage and surprisingly high when compared with what relatives earn locally. Habits developed overseas may affect expectations of punctuality, public space or service. Neither set of habits is an automatic measure of superiority.

The visit that is never just a holiday

Family obligations consume much of the typical homecoming: a wedding, ceremonies, meetings with elders, errands, document

renewals and visits to relatives who may live far apart. The arrival of a diaspora family can create real work for the relatives hosting them.

Amid those demands, an unexpected desire can emerge. Rather than only revisit familiar places, the visitor wants to travel within Nepal—to spend a few nights in another region, return to a village with fresh eyes, or introduce children raised abroad to the places that shaped their family.

A trip to Pokhara, a local museum, a community homestay or a walk around Bhaktapur can become a form of learning. These journeys are most useful when they move past checklist tourism and allow room for local histories and conversations.

A child visits a country called home

For the second generation, the journey can be more complicated. Parents may say ‘we are going home’, while a child who has lived their whole life overseas understands home as the place containing school, friends and ordinary routines.

Some children speak Nepali comfortably. Others understand family conversations but respond in another language. At gatherings, their accent or preferences may draw constant remarks. What adults intend as affection may feel to the child like an examination of authenticity.

The best heritage travel does not demand that children perform an identity perfectly. A child may connect through a meal prepared together, a grandparent explaining a family photograph or a patient visit to an ancestral village. Identity is strengthened by participation and understanding, not by public tests of whether someone is 'Nepali enough'.

Parents, too, may have to accept that their children will love a different version of the country from the one they remember.

The economic divide inside a family trip

Visitors earning abroad may have choices that relatives living in Nepal do not. They might use domestic flights instead of long road journeys, book more expensive hotels or cover large restaurant bills. Their spending can support local tourism operators, but it can also unsettle family relationships.

Expectations around gifts and paying for gatherings can be difficult to voice. Generosity may be voluntary and joyful; in some cases it becomes a burden. Diaspora travel advice that assumes all returnees are wealthy is both inaccurate and insensitive to workers repaying debt or living on modest wages overseas.

Tourism businesses should likewise avoid treating overseas Nepalis as a single high-spending market. A parent travelling for a short Dashain reunion and a young professional seeking curated

heritage experiences may have very different needs.

What arrival data cannot capture

The Nepal Tourism Board's published visitor-arrival information is useful for understanding international tourism. It does not by itself tell us how many diaspora Nepalis are returning to see family, especially when citizenship and travel-document categories differ.

That distinction matters. A homecoming is not necessarily counted as foreign tourism, and a person born overseas may be recorded in a way that reveals little about their relationship to Nepal.

Sweeping claims that diaspora trips account for a particular percentage of tourism should not be made without a transparent methodology.

There are useful questions for original reporting: how many visitors travel beyond their parents' home district, what barriers discourage internal tourism, and which services make travel possible for mixed-age families? The answers would help local businesses plan without turning identity into a marketing cliché.

Seeing the country on its own terms

Travelling as someone with Nepali roots does not automatically make a visitor considerate. The same basic responsibilities apply: seek permission before photographing people, respect religious spaces, use local expertise, avoid littering and pay fairly for

services.

There is also a subtler responsibility. A visitor should not expect a neighbourhood to look as it did two decades earlier. Residents have the right to improve infrastructure, pursue livelihoods and reinterpret their own culture. Nostalgia can be cherished without being imposed on others.

Learning the country anew might mean taking seriously a younger relative's account of urban life, visiting destinations beyond the usual social-media circuit, or asking why a village is changing rather than lamenting the change.

The return departure

At the end of a visit, familiar rituals return: gifts packed tightly, unfinished goodbyes, a promise to come again. Someone may already be making plans for the next trip before the taxi reaches the airport.

For the person leaving, Nepal can now mean both an inherited memory and a living reality. Being a visitor does not erase belonging; it can make belonging more deliberate.

The deepest homecoming may be the moment a traveller stops demanding the Nepal they remember and begins to know the Nepal that is here.

Alongside the journey, leave time for the practical tasks in our
Nepal holiday checklist for Nepalis abroad.

Originally published by Nepal Digest - <https://nepaldigest.com/coming-home-as-tourist-nepal-diaspora/>