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Kathmandu | Nepal

Pemba Sherpa showed Jordan Kestle (SHL) Kathmandu's culture, people, and, of course, its food.



Pemba is a Nepal-based mountain guide and expedition leader with a deep personal connection to Switzerland, where he lived until 2010. After returning fully to the mountains post-2015, he founded an extremeclimbing business called Xtreme Climbers and began manufacturing technical gear locally. He believes travel in Nepal should be slow, conscious, and inseparable from the people who sustain it.

Kathmandu is a base camp in every sense of the word. Every journey in Nepal begins here, whether it leads to a quiet village or a serious Himalayan expedition. The air is dusty, traffic moves according to its own logic, and the city carries a constant sense of motion. Nothing feels passive. Kathmandu doesn't ease you into Nepal, it confronts you with it. You learn quickly that travel here requires attention and patience.

Our way in is through Pemba Sherpa, a Nepali mountain guide, entrepreneur and employer operating at the intersection of tourism, logistics and community development whose life has stretched between

Nepal and Switzerland. He lived and worked in Zermatt for nine summer and three winter seasons and still speaks of it as home, but it is Nepal's uncompromising nature that drew him back. What he values most is not a single place, but Nepal's rare compression of worlds: deep valleys and the highest peaks on earth, dozens of cultures layered into small regions or journeys that range from quietly reflective to physically extreme. Travel here, he insists, only makes sense when you slow down enough to understand what (and who) sustains it.

Pemba and Jordan walked through Kathmandu together during Yomari Punhi, a Newar festival celebrated on the December full moon. Between street processions, food offerings and tightly packed neighbourhoods, it became clear that hospitality in Nepal is not something staged for visitors.

SHL IN NEPAL

In collaboration with Swisscontact, SHL is developing a sustainable training programme in Pokhara, Nepal focussing on green skills in hospitality, sustainable tourism business management and a train-the-trainer programme for local hospitality and tourism colleges.



Favourite Places

When Pemba Sherpa thinks of a favourite getaway, his mind travels west to Phoksundo Lake. Remote, intensely blue and surrounded by silence, it remains one of Nepal's most untouched places. Reaching it takes commitment, either by foot or helicopter, but its presence lingers long after you leave. It's no surprise it featured in the Oscar-nominated film «Caravan».

Food & Drink

For quintessential Nepali food, look no further than Dal Bhat: rice, lentil soup, vegetable curries, pickles and spices, eaten daily by most Nepali families – hence the famous saying in Nepal: «Dal Bhat Power 24/7». Best experienced in a traditional Thakali restaurant, where the food isn't adapted or softened, just served as it has always been. Street-side ravings often lead to Pani Puri, Momos and Buff Choila.

Coffee is non-negotiable, and for Pemba Sherpa that means Himalayan Java. A brand that nearly collapsed before quietly expanding across Nepal and beyond.

Activities & Experiences

Nepal rewards those who look beyond its most famous names. Mount Everest and Annapurna are iconic, but they are also crowded and increasingly commercial. Pemba Sherpa gently redirects attention elsewhere – towards Dolpo, Makalu, and Kangchenjunga, regions that remain quieter, restricted, and deeply immersive. Treks here can last two days or nine months. Some routes offer tea houses and road access; others demand teams, permits and patience.

Insider Knowledge

More than 140 ethnic groups coexist within Nepal's borders, each with distinct languages, traditions and regions. Many do not understand one another's mother tongues and true diversity is lived daily.

Personal Moments

Pemba's most defining chapter began after 2015, when he returned fully to the mountains after years away. Guiding again felt like reclaiming an inheritance. From there came an extreme-climbing brand, local manufacturing of technical gear, and providing work opportunities for hundreds of families. For him, travel in Nepal is never neutral. Every expedition supports education, feeds families, and sustains remote regions. Visitors may come seeking experience, but they leave having participated in something far bigger.