The Pokhara Nomad Village: A concept for a nomad community at the base of the Himalayas

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In September 2026, at the 2026 Nepal Nomads Basecamp conference, I had the privilege of giving a presentation entitled "Who Digital Nomads Really Are & How to Build the Nomad Hub You Actually Want," aimed at detailing a realistic and accurate perspective of the average digital nomad and their needs, based on research I conducted for the 2022 Global Digital Nomad Study and based on ideas from my book Digital Nomad Nation. The aim of the presentation was to help digital nomads better understand each other, for community building purposes, and to help the local business owners and the Pokhara Tourism board in better understanding and engaging with digital nomads as customers.

After the conference, several local entrepreneurs and I discussed and brainstormed, based on the inherent strengths and advantages of the city, Pokhara, Nepal, and inherent needs and expected evolution of the global digital nomad population, how could the interested business owners and the Pokhara Tourism Board capitalize on the nomad opportunity in front of them in a mutually beneficial way?

For background, among 6,744 cities analyzed for livability and cost of living in 2024, Pokhara was the cheapest livable city appropriate for digital nomads, with a cost of living of $475 per month at the time. Pokhara is situated lakeside at the base of the beginning of the Annapurna Mountain range, and the Himalayas, and is a gateway to accessible nature and adventure tourism throughout the region, all set against a unique cultural and religious/spiritual backdrop. From the standpoints of cost of living, geoarbitrage opportunity, quality of life, and novelty, Pokhara is poised as a town that can be come not only a stronger adventure tourism destination, but a potential hub for nomads and flexpats.

The following concept paper is the result of discussions asking, "How can Pokhara and its local business owners and tourism board transform the existing opportunity into a mutually beneficial reality?"

A replay of the presentation is available at: https://abrotherabroad.com/presentation-who-digital-nomads-really-are/



Pokhara Nomad Village

1. The idea: Coordinate Pokhara's existing tourism infrastructure into an ecosystem that adds up to a "Nomad Village" and tourism village

Pokhara already has most of what a digital nomad needs: cafés with strong WIFI that tolerate laptops, accommodation within walking distance, outdoor and adventure sports culture as foundations for the beginnings of a wellness tourism industry, and a lake against a backdrop of the Himalayas that differentiates the experience. What the opportunity lacks is coordination. Currently, each asset, each café, apartment, and event, must be found individually by a nomad, with luck, through a WhatsApp group or a Facebook post.

The first opportunity is to coordinate awareness of and accessibility to the existing resources in Pokhara to integrate them. Value is added, for the nomad and other customers, by offering not single service providers but an ecosystem, entered via one touchpoint (a café, a guesthouse, or a tour) then funneled through the entire experience of a time in Pokhara as a connected village, as opposed to the nomad/customer experiencing a new "customer journey" being created with each new need (food, accommodation, wellness, tourism experience, transportation, etc.).

Guiding thesis: currently for nomads staying in Pokhara, every new need produces a new customer journey. A single stay requires dozens of separate journeys – a journey to discover, screen and experience restaurants, improvised workspaces, accommodation, events, etc. Each of those journeys from research to satisfaction then starting over become fatiguing.

An ecosystem offers one entry point, and optimally a single customer journey across the entire stay with the "ecosystem," and all services within a stay.

Pokhara Nomad Village is the idea that the city itself is the coworking and coliving space. The process of transforming Pokhara into the Pokhara Nomad Village: connect what exists currently, make knowledge of the ecosystem known and options accessible (for visitors) making it clear where to stay, what to do, where to eat, etc., then find what is missing based on nomad needs and the ideal ecosystem overlapped with the mapped existing ecosystem in Pokhara, and only then build new infrastructure (co-living, coworking spaces, wellness villages, etc.), based on identified and demonstrated need.

Before building anything, map what exists against one simple framework that covers every experience a visitor has within a stay in Pokhara. This is both the audit checklist for what Pokhara already has and the general guideline for thinking through what Pokhara Nomad Village would need going forward:

- Food
- Drink and social
- Accommodation
- Work
- Wellness
- Transportation
- Connection beyond Pokhara (other cities, adventures that use Pokhara as a hub)

1a. The elephant in the room: Why local business owners would benefit from choosing cooperation over competition in building the Pokhara Nomad Village ecosystem

Business owners will inherently and naturally want to avoid doing anything that 1) sends customers to competitors or 2) appears to be forgoing sales or customers. Additionally, they may prefer to wait and build the entire ecosystem (or a miniature version) on their own, intending to capture more market, more sales, and more authority in the market.

The strength of the coordinated "ecosystem":

- It accelerates how quickly Pokhara reaches the critical point of accessibly offering all of the essential elements of a "nomad village," (and that a nomad needs for a seamless stay) and achieves a new offering proposition to attract new nomads (new customers) that wouldn't come without all of the essentials visible. Teaming up immediately attracts more nomads to a newly coordinated "nomad village" instead of just a city. The influx of nomads drawn to the new coordination grows the size of the market with no additional tangible investment, in hard assets, just sweat equity required.
- It allows Pokhara to achieve the level of essential offerings for a cohesive nomad village and optimal offerings while each partner focuses on what they're best at. No need for new skills, new ventures, or new risks yet.
- Network effects — of having more partners in the cooperation.

2. Who this village is for (the target customer): The 90-day nomad

The customer this village concept is designed for first is a digital nomad staying about 90 days.

Why this customer:

- The 2022 Global Digital Nomad Study found most nomads stay three to six months in one place, and about 80% stay three to nine. (Note: At that time, their average budget was about $1,875 a month).
- Current Nepal immigration guidelines make a 90 day stay easy, and 150 days possible with effort.
- The connection an ecosystem provides responds to nomads' #1 need (connection) and #1 problem (loneliness), creating stickiness. They will stay due to ease and fulfillment. They will return because this follows in the footsteps of successful examples like Madeira's Digital Nomads Village and Malaysia's De Rantau program — destinations that chose to deliberately design for this instead of leaving it to chance.
- The shape of the service offerings for a 90 day nomad will differ significantly from a daily or weekly stay customer.
- If captured successfully, the 90 day nomad creates a very different revenue, profit, and cost model, and potentially, higher lifetime value for the same acquisition costs as the daily and weekly stay visitor.
- 90 day stay nomads, in the right environment, will have higher stickiness (returning during their stay, returning to Nepal after their stay) compared to short stay vacation tourists

The number one reason nomads return home is loneliness and lack of connection, not money or wifi or visa. A coordinated ecosystem is a connection product, not just an infrastructure project.

Points related to profiting from other demographics, and the benefit of targeting "90 day nomads" first

- In other locations, the ecosystem that has sprouted around nomads, responding to their needs, has attracted shorter stay, higher value tourists as a follow-on demographic (Canggu, Tulum, etc.), as the ecosystem can naturally be dual purpose once established, with nomads being a foundational, recurring customer across seasons, and short stay tourists becoming an additional, variable revenue stream.
- For other transient demographics (Nomadic retirees, retiree expats, travelers in limbo) pieces of the improved infrastructure will serve them better, attracting/growing these market demographics as well.

Using the framework — the same seven categories from Section 1, read through what changes once someone is staying 90 days, not passing through:

- Food: Leans less towards "eat out every meal" and more towards eat with work at a cafe, eat out socially, and cook at home. Opens opportunities for "social dinners" where restaurants are concerned, and events based opportunities.
- Drink and social: Recurring events matter more, and have better ROI when an existing customer has a 90 day window to return. Leaves more opportunity to capture via specific needs.
- Accommodation: Monthly stays have a different cost model, platforms searched change, and desired layouts (hotel room vs. studio vs. kitchen included) change.
- Work: Monthly coworking options become more appealing compared to day-use cafes.
- Wellness: Monthly memberships become more appealing than single drop-in classes, changing how wellness studios price and package for longer stays, and how they can plan their cost models.
- Transportation: More likely to hire a motorbike and drive — how can they do that legally and easily? How do they explore beyond Pokhara? How to avoid undercutting local transport providers?
- Connection beyond Pokhara: Renting a monthly apartment *and* exploring beyond Pokhara without wasting paid accommodation becomes a question and opportunity for coliving. Bag storage? Flexible breaks in stay? Sharing a single monthly rental payment across guesthouses/teahouses in different regions? In-house tourism booking desks tailored to nomads?

3. What Pokhara has, and what it needs

The same framework, now as an audit of what's already in Pokhara per category, and what's still missing:

Category	Already here	Known gap
Food	Cafés with reliable wifi	To be mapped and published
Drink and social	Café and community-event culture	A coordinated and publicized calendar (see Section 4)

Category	Already here	Known gap
Accommodation	Hotels and guesthouses	Coliving, short and long stays; apartments and long-stay options, capacity and location assessed and then publicized. Ensuring enough variations of accommodation sit within the ecosystem footprint (near the lake or target core of the ecosystem)
Work	Cowork-friendly cafés	Coworking within walking distance of the hub
Wellness	Wellness and yoga studios	To be mapped and published. Second stage, assess wellness villages and gyms with best practices in existing nomad hubs and borrow designs, frameworks, and lessons learned
Transportation	—	Transport information availability across short-haul and long-haul options, public or private
Connection beyond Pokhara	Adventure operators	Coordinated visibility of what's already offered, visible and reservable from abroad as a planned portion of a 90 day stay, within the region, to other cities, and to other adventures on the rise, just as much as known treks.

The need for one, central information source for visitors to Pokhara

Cutting across every category: one information portal is needed that tells people what exists, what is certified, and what is happening in the Pokhara Nomad Village. This is the connective layer, between what exists in Pokhara at any time and the visitor/nomad that intends to stay in Pokhara, not a category of its own.

Without this central information point, broadcasting what is available across the Pokhara Nomad Village ecosystem, even a fully developed and mapped ecosystem stays invisible to potential visitors and customers.

Note on accommodation: While Pokhara has ample accommodation to start the project, a survey of existing accommodation options is needed, assessing location (proximity to target nomad village center, Phewa lake, transportation hub, and core locations in the ecosystem), accessibility for accommodation rental (which platforms are they listed on, and are these platforms where the target customer reserves accommodation before arrival), and assessing quality against regional competitors (what Chiang Mai, Da Nang, Sri Lanka, etc. offer). Currently, a cursory review of Airbnb and Booking.com shows a lack of suitable accommodation options on or near the lake, which matters, as the lake is the draw, and transportation and core restaurants and cafes are adjacent to the lake.

This assessment could identify a need for more accommodation in the right location, *or* a need to coordinate by helping business owners make their accommodation accessible on the right platforms, the platforms nomads abroad are currently searching on.

4. The coordination layer: start small, add as demand grows

Proposed order:

Phase 1 (first 90 days) | Focus on visibility, coordination, and auditing: three cheap, visible functions

- A shared map and directory of what already exists (cafés, stays, cowork, wellness) for visitors
- One coordinated events calendar
- A drive for local business owners, tour guides, and other touch points to point visitors to these central resources

Note: Avoid the urge to create another app or anything with a gate. Create a central Pokhara Nomad Village information point that is open, easily accessible without a signup or download, and simple to use.

Options for ownership are either government run (Pokhara Tourism Council, Tourism Ministry, etc.), as it lends credibility, or a private "non-profit" partnership (e.g., chambers of commerce). See Section 5 for the full comparison of who could run this.

Models to use for an information hub in a location with lots of apps:

Kazakhstan's official tourism hub lists preferred apps rather than building a new one (http://www.safetravel.kz).

Phase 2: Build ecosystem connectivity

- Light support program for businesses who want to serve foreigners better, open to all sizes (e.g., research and advise best platforms to set up and advertise services on based on where customers are searching and share with local business owners, shared Pokhara Nomad Village branding for businesses that commit, etc.)
- A simple Pokhara Nomad Village badge for the things nomads depend on that are to be assessed (e.g., internet, workspace, safety), with criteria local businesses need to meet to get and keep it.

Additionally, then listing all participant business owners in an accessible directory, connected to the central information resource described above.

Phase 3: Assess/map follow-on infrastructure improvement opportunities

- Transport coordination (no clear model yet; songthaews in Thailand are a starting point to study). Needs deep research, but light coordination of existing assets increases visibility and ease of use for foreigners that drop in. Key question: if nomads weren't going to hire a tour provider or use InDrive, how could they get around during a 90 day stay?
- Gap-filling builds: coworking, coliving, long-stay units, gyms/wellness facilities. See Section 6 for benchmark models to study for each.

One rule: someone must have coordination as their actual job. Without that, this effort decays into another chat group.

5. The question of who runs the Nomad Village ecosystem coordination and information point: public, private, or hybrid

Someone needs to own this, and the precedents are hybrids between public and private ownership/execution.

Model	Example	Strength	Weakness
Public-led	Malaysia's MDEC (De Rantau)	Immediate credibility; visa and policy levers	Slower; ongoing funding question
Public plus paid architect	Madeira's Digital Nomads Village	Government funding, a dedicated coordinator	Depends on a funded program
Private, revenue-based	Letswork, Nomad365	Agile; can charge for the network	Needs trust and a credible neutral role
Hybrid (proposed)	Private operator with public endorsement	Speed plus credibility	Governance must be designed

Notes on these models:

- **Madeira** was run by the regional government and Startup Madeira, with Gonçalo Hall as a paid consultant. It concentrated everything in one village, Ponta do Sol, anchored by a free community hub.
- **MDEC's De Rantau** is a certification layer across existing accommodation and workspaces in multiple locations (Penang, Langkawi, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Perak, Terengganu), reporting about 2,183 certified hubs. Certification is partly outsourced to a private startup. This is structurally closer to Pokhara than Madeira is.
- **Letswork** is a private, asset-light membership network across independently owned spaces. **Nomad365** certifies nomad-friendly businesses commercially.

Revenue lanes for a private operator (choose one to start, not all): a membership or pass; referral commission from partner businesses; listing or badge fees; curated bundled stays.

A note on goodwill of individual business owners (shared within the ecosystem): the Pokhara Nomad Village ecosystem's collective owners' brands' goodwill will be what binds the ecosystem together, helping nomads trust their individual recommendations and recommendations of the network. That distribution and flow of goodwill (similar to link juice in SEO flowing between a network of sites) works only if each individual owner routes attention to partners, not just to their own space.

Because of these factors, design this commitment to "share goodwill within the network" in writing along with membership within the network/ecosystem rather than relying on good intentions.

On certification: open listing and support for every business, plus a light criteria badge. A certifier that also competes in the market is not neutral, so decide who holds the certifying role.

6. Benchmark venues in other nomad hubs, and what to take from each

- **Coworking:** Yellow (Chiang Mai), Tropical Nomad (Bali), Tribal Coworking (Bali), B Work (Bali). *What to take: workspace design and membership structure.*
- **Coliving:** Tribal Co-Living (Bali). *What to take: how a coliving operation runs alongside a coworking brand.*
- **Wellness:** Nirvana Life (Bali), Body Factory (Bali), Wanderlust (Bali). *What to take: how wellness is packaged for long stays.*
- **Wellness coliving:** Wanderlust Fitness Village (Bali), Body Factory CoLiving (Bali). *What to take: how wellness and accommodation bundle into one offer.*
- **Transport:** none yet. Songthaews in Thailand as a starting model.
- **Organic neighborhoods:** Nimman (Chiang Mai) and My An (Da Nang). *What to take: what grew naturally, and what is worth deliberately copying.*
- **Designed hub:** Madeira. *What to take: the anchor hub and host team.*
- **Information aggregator for the ecosystem:** Kazakhstan's official tourism hub for app and resource recommendation (safetravel.kz). *What to take: when an ecosystem already has too many individual apps, one simple government-endorsed directory beats building another one.*

7. Guardrails for the people who live in Pokhara

Lisbon, Bali, and Mexico City each grew faster than anyone planned for: rising rents, strained infrastructure, and friction between newcomers and residents. Decide the terms before the growth arrives:

- Who benefits, and how do local businesses of every size participate?
- What housing and neighborhood limits protect long-time residents?
- How do long-stay nomads integrate culturally rather than living in a bubble?

8. Opportunity: skill sharing

A nomad village can connect international professionals with young Nepali entrepreneurs: workshops, mentorship, and paid skill exchanges. However, this opportunity must be understood and pursued as it won't fruit anything naturally. *(To develop with NYEF: what formats would be most useful to the entrepreneurs you work with?)*

9. Opportunity: sister cities

Identify neighborhoods and villages globally that have gone through this process already, each with a tourism council or stakeholder who can be contacted for insight — a mentor potential relationship to start and a successful nomad related tourism example to ask questions. As Pokhara's own ecosystem develops, this (relationships with intentional sister cities and “sister nomad hubs”) could be cultivated into something mutually beneficial: a nomad finishing their 90 days in Madeira could be pointed to Pokhara, and vice versa.

The same works at the level of a single business owner, not just a whole destination. If one major player or stakeholder can be identified in another city (co-working space owner, co-living space owner, wellness village owner), or if a single business owner wants to drive the cross-border connection themselves, that relationship can be cultivated directly — a coworking space here partnering with B Work, a wellness operator here partnering with Wanderlust Village or Nirvana Life.

Most visas for nomads run out in 3 to 6 months (similar to Nepal) and a visa run is required anyways. If a pre-existing relationship between service providers funnels nomads to a vetted partner in a nomad village, a channeler is created, with the potential for recurring long stay visitors.

(To develop: which cities make the best first sister-city candidates — Madeira is the obvious first call given the research already done here — and whether the relationship starts as a casual information exchange or something more structured.)

10. Open questions

- Which festivals, holidays, and seasons can anchor attraction, in Pokhara and the wider region?
- Who owns the coordinating body, and how is it funded in year one?
- What is the long-term ambition beyond Pokhara: a regional wellness tourism network?

11. How this paper will become the full presentation

Paper section	Slide(s)
1. The idea	Title and one-line pitch
2. The 90-day nomad	Customer profile with study data
3. Has and needs	Map of existing assets and gaps
4. Coordination layer	Three-phase roadmap
5. Who runs it	Model comparison and recommendation
6. Benchmarks	What to take from each
7. Guardrails	Lessons from Lisbon, Bali, Mexico City
8 to 10. Skill sharing, sister cities, open questions	Discussion and next steps