

INTRODUCTION



In spite of rather gloomy advance booking figures, by the mid-April business had picked up well. There seems to be an increasing trend of last minute bookings. In spite of the recession, we continue to have a sound business base from a range of countries, although the biggest market share continues to be the UK.

Some excellent reviews for the lodge can be seen on TripAdvisor – we rate highly in the Pokhara listings, being top for speciality lodging. We welcome feedback from our guests, either directly, or on our own forms in

the rooms, or via TripAdvisor. For more information, follow this link:

http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g293891-d386884-Reviews-Tiger_Mountain_Pokhara_Lodge-Pokhara.html

In this newsletter, we include a short section on Nepal's political situation – a somewhat fluid one, it must be said! However, we remain confident that there will be no undue disturbance or a return to the former difficult times.

We all congratulate Hari Bhakta Adhikari, one of the guides, on his recent marriage to Kamala, an economics graduate from Syangja, west of Pokhara.

NEWS

On 23rd February, two guests saw a Common Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) below the swimming pool. Late last season (May 2009) guests also saw one near Room 6. Our staff has regular sightings, particularly the night guards. This is not cause for alarm, as the leopard will tend to avoid conflict with humans, but is a sign that the lodge's natural habitat is well maintained with little adverse environmental impact.

The Waterfowl Census 2010, in partnership with Bird Conservation Nepal, Pokhara and other local supporters was led by Jhalak Chaudhary, Guest Relations and Operations Officer and the Lodge guides in January. Dedication was shown when Jhalak stripped off in order to wade through deep bog at Maldi Tal in eager pursuit of snipe. Increased species and numbers were noted overall, but some lakes were well down, with greater concentration in fewer lakes. We attribute this to ever-increasing human disturbance. Details are available at www.tigermountain.com/pokhara.



We have had 11 new bird species for our TMPL Checklist so far this season.

A hot-air balloon service is now available in Pokhara. Jhalak attended the launch of the service and Marcus took an hour's flight over Fewa Tal – it was an amazing experience with fine views of Dhaulagiri and Annapurna Himal from about 10,100ft. This is run by Tara Air, an affiliate of Yeti Airlines, and uses professional balloon pilots from Austria. We recommend this for a special event for our guests.

Lalu, Head Cook, and his team have led training for kitchen staff from Tiger Mountain Karnali Lodge, Tharu Lodge, and Tiger Tops. This month they are providing bakery training cooks from Ker & Downey's comfortable trekking lodges in the Annapurna area. This is part of a growing partnership between TMPL and Ker & Downey.

Mark Titterington and Nathalie Mancen, working with Ker & Downey, visited the Lodge to review our kitchens and housekeeping. Impressed with our approach, they provided some excellent ideas and advanced training that will help the room stewards maintain the high standards our guests expect.

Staff Profile:



Ek Raj Ranabhat joined the team in November 2008 as night guard, on retiring from the Nepalese Army with the rank of havildar and seventeen year's service. He is from the village, close to the Lodge, and provides a smart yet friendly face to guests arriving in the evening, or returning later on from Pokhara Lakeside. The role of the Night Guards is primarily to be on call in the event guests need any assistance during the night. They will call the duty manager or senior staff. Ever alert, a call will have them running to help.

Responsible Tourism:

In March, we hosted a team of twenty staff from various municipalities from across Nepal on a day visit to see how we handle energy efficiency and waste management. This is part of our ongoing interactions with local and national government to enhance effective energy usage.

Having replaced one of our main water pumps, we can now use less electricity (which is currently in short supply in Nepal with daily load shedding of up to 12 hours) and have reduced generator-running times while still providing sufficient water up on the hill for our guests.

Continuing on a water theme – we have replaced all the flush systems in the guest loos to a more water saving device – it flushes as long as the user holds the button. Thus, one can flush just enough water and reduce waste. This should save significant amounts of water over time.

The Lodge continues to support Bird Conservation Nepal, Pokhara – with funding for its annual training to students at the Institute of Forestry. Hari Pariyar, one of our guides, assisted in the training programme on effective bird watching. We are also working with BCN on a new Vulture Restaurant, building on the successful partnership of Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge and Bird Conservation Nepal with a similar vulture restaurant near Chitwan National Park.

Nepal Situation:

The deadline for the constitution draws near and, so far, there is little evidence that a document will be ready. This is giving cause for concern to some pundits; however, we are confident that some effective interim document will be available, or an extension of the interim constitution approved. In recent days, there has been growing cooperation between the major parties to remove the “stumbling blocks.”

This spring has been the most strike-free for some years – what a welcome change! All the major parties have agreed a no-strike / road-block policy between now and the end of 2011 Nepal

Tourism Year. While it remains unlikely to yield a zero strike result, significant reduction in such irritating disruptions will be very welcome by the tourism industry and, we believe, the public.

Embassies tend to have a relatively faster turnover of staff and so their assessments cannot have the added benefit of the long-term experience and personal perspective such as is available from within Tiger Mountain Nepal's senior staff. We monitor the overall political and security situation and will always advise our friends, supporters, and tour operators if we have any cause for concern. We also have excellent and close relations with certain embassies for advice and input.

We seek all your support for Nepal's 2011 Tourism Year – *Together for Tourism*. After past hard times, tourism can make a real change in Nepal's economy and provide a wealth of opportunity, experience, and employment.

New Services:

We moved to our summer menu as the weather warmed up. This features lighter main courses, with cold soups and pates for starters. Flexibility is our watchword and so guests only have to ask if they wish to have lighter lunches or a traditional Nepali Thali for dinner. Lalu and his team continue to innovate providing a diverse range of dishes. A new pasta machine will ensure a good supply of homemade pasta from our pastry experts, Nar Bahadur and Laxman. We continue to receive excellent praise for the food – well done Lalu, Buddhi, and all the kitchen staff.



Jit Bahadur, our gardener, produced our first strawberries. Well, the singular might be more accurate! We are optimistic that this will be the start of a good supply for the kitchens. Likewise, elder cuttings from Devon have all taken and we hope to have elderflower cordial as a refreshing drink as soon as the bushes flower. The local species does not have any scent, hence the need for imports from England. Young kiwi fruit vines are being established that we hope will add diversity in future.

All bedrooms now include chappals (flip-flops) and smart dressing gowns. New bed covers (which arrived eventually) make the rooms lighter. We are currently investigating a biodegradable body wash / shampoo made locally, as an additional facility for the rooms.

Images of Tiger Mountain

Another view of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge - the Essence of Tranquillity....



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