

NEWS

This is written from Tiger Mountain's hilltop – not shrouded in cloud and with torrential rain, as is so many people's understanding of the monsoon. The garden is lush and green and teems with butterflies. Birdsong fills the air and the view of farmland and forest is perhaps at its most beautiful. The monsoon season is traditionally the off-season in Nepal and yet, with a little planning and flexibility, a wonderful holiday can still be taken that offers the majesty and diversity of Nepal's landscape and cultural richness. June and September are particularly good months for Nepal's monsoon season.



We had our second best operating season since opening, between September 2007 and June 2008. This is a good way to enter our tenth anniversary season (Sir Ed Hillary opened the Lodge 2nd October 1998) and I hope we can all work together to give Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge a record season befitting completion of our first decade. Although we are the 'baby' of the Tiger Mountain family, we have matured fast, thanks to the experience and history of our sister operations.

This issue of our newsletter looks at sustainable tourism and highlights some of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge's recent efforts to become more sustainable. The need to focus on sustainability – a subject that is not merely 'touchy feely' but solid economics, best operating practice and good common sense, is drummed home to us all daily with the exponential escalation of food and fuel prices.



Hari Bhakta Adhikari, known to all as Sanu, has been taking some time out from his duties as Guide at the Lodge to complete his Masters degree in English Literature at Prithivi Narayan Campus in Pokhara. We are all very pleased for him that he has successfully completed the course and is now finalising his thesis. In spite of this workload, he has regularly been escorting guests on local walks, assisting in the other guide duties and made time to provide guidance to the Machhapuchhare Tole Bikas Sanstha (our local Women's Group) to develop a waste recycling campaign among other issues. The group sent members on a waste recycling course and led a clean-up campaign in the village. The Lodge is working with Sanu to

help this good work with provision of waste storage facilities and rubbish bins. This will enhance the cleanliness of the community and provide some income to the group through sales of recyclable waste. This issue was raised in our Sustainable Action Group.



Guides, Sanu and Hari both assisted Bird Conservation Nepal and Britain's RSPB to capture four sub-adult White-rumped Vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*) from a nesting site monitored by Hari & Sanu as part of Nepal's captive breeding programme for this endangered species. This forms part of Nepal's contribution to the protection of south-asian vultures, particularly the Gyps genus, in partnership with the above charities, the National Trust for Nature Conservation and the Department of National Parks.

We have hosted many agent familiarisation visits this season. And several VIPs including the famous mountaineer, Reinhold Messner, with his family en route from Tiger Tops, diplomats and film star now UNICEF Ambassador, Orlando Bloom.

Staff Profile:

This newsletter our featured member of the Tiger Mountain Team is Mr. Ishwar Basnet. He works behind the scenes, for the most part, but is a vital member, handling all the company administration, and accounts. With no previous experience, Ishwar and Marcus, the resident director, set up accounts and a new management system that has evolved ever since and is now responsive and effective for a small enterprise like Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. The credit for this and for much patience, forbearance and candid comment goes entirely to Ishwar!



Ishwar comes to Tiger Mountain with some pedigree as his uncle, the much-respected Subedhar-sahib, Ram Krishna Basnet, worked at Tiger Tops for many years and was the key to the timely and effective construction of Pokhara Lodge, which was his final 'big project' for Tiger Mountain. Earlier milestones included the construction of both Tharu and Karnali lodges for our sister companies. Ishwar thus was under expert tutelage as he worked with many other current staff on the construction team for the Lodge. He pegged out the main lodge and dining room with its wonderful alignment of the front door with Fishtail Mountain. Truth be told, we suspect Ishwar was ¼" out of alignment...! Ishwar is also a keen sportsman and was captain of the lodge football team in its heyday. Having sustained a knee injury as a result of some spectacular football, he also is the lodge's expert on the orthopaedic specialists in Pokhara and Kathmandu! As well as routine work, he is happy to drive guests

and do airport runs in busy times as well as deputising for Gyan Paudel, in charge of all the stores and purchasing.

Sustainable Conservation Tourism:

The Tiger Mountain family has pioneered environmentally responsible and sustainable conservation tourism in Nepal from the earliest times of the founding of Tiger Tops and Mountain Travel. Long before the 'buzz words' were in existence, we were putting the concept into practice. This has provided Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge with bedrock experience and ideas applicable at the Lodge and with the partnership of the local community. To us, sustainability is so self-evident, it is somewhat surprising that there should be a need for seminars, workshops, and reams of paper on the subject! That notwithstanding, we make no boasts for ourselves as sustainability is never finite (almost by definition) and our efforts are evolving and developing in the light of our experience.

Current emphasis at the Lodge has been on several fronts, both direct and conceptual: reducing our carbon footprint and other environmental impacts, developing our Community Support Partnership, and piloting our Sustainable Action Group.

Environmental impact reductions – we have focussed on our major impact, a large diesel generator. In cooperation with the Nepal Electricity Board, we have installed a three-phase line that can handle all our electricity needs (pumping and heating water – where solar heating is not an option), lighting, fans (we have rejected installation of air conditioners as an unnecessary drain on power). Our engineers have also completely overhauled the generator – now a backup power source only – so that its emissions are minimised. With complete shielding, its noise disturbance has also been minimised for the community. Plans include the installation of on-demand water heaters to reduce power consumption and more solar water heating.

Community Support Partnership – this is a true community-based and lead force to assist in the development aspirations of the local community with an emphasis on environmental conservation and education. Our support to Amar Jyoti School is a regular feature in this newsletter and is one element of this partnership. We work closely with the Rakhi Shilling Community Forest in provision of support for a Forest Ranger, in developing non-timber forest products and in the regeneration of degraded forest through protection, natural and enrichment regeneration.

Sustainable Action Group – this is a staff-lead forum to discuss issues of sustainability and develop ideas to improve our sustainable conservation tourism concept. This was a key case study for the UNEP MAST Project (Marketing Assistance for Sustainable Tourism). The group is open to all and meets periodically with its discussions minuted and implementation followed-up. Future plans for the group include widening the forum to include community members and once the concept and operating practices of the group have been developed fully, rolling it out to our sister companies.

Projects and Community Support:

Amar Jyoti School – in our last newsletter we reported that funding to complete the classrooms had been received. We are now pleased to update our picture and show the 1st floor classrooms well on the way to completion in spite of significant price rises, since our initial estimates were drawn drafted. The works should all be completed in time for the new term after the monsoon holidays.



Amar Jyoti School - first floor classrooms now almost completed – no longer the hollow shell of earlier pictures.

The next phase of this project that, we hope, will make the school one of the best-appointed government schools in the district is to build a dedicated room for a computer lab. Another charity is considering the provision of the internal needs if we can have a suitable classroom built in time.

Community Forest – in partnership with our affiliate charity, ITNC, the community forest committee has completed a three-year project to protect and manage the community forest area, fence key degraded sites for both natural regeneration and development of non-timber forest products. We are currently evaluation the strengths and weaknesses of this project prior to developing plans in conjunction with the community forest committee.

New Services:

Refurbishment and Upgrades

Over the low season, the duty staff have carried out a range of refurbishment and enhancement works. These include improved gravel pathways to rooms – using special pale river gravel to be lighter at night. The pool area has been improved with a new terrace edging allowing guests to sit and relax at the poolside. More cane chaise longs are under construction in Pokhara in time for the season. This will make the pool an ideal place to relax even when the water temperature drops so that only the truly hardy wish to swim!

Magic of the Monsoon



Our Magic of the Monsoon package has been well received. Guests have enjoyed a range of complementary therapies and the deeply relaxing atmosphere of the Lodge in the monsoon. This is a real rejuvenation and escape from the pressured pace of ‘the real world’...or, truth be told, is Tiger Mountain Pokahra Lodge actually the real world?

New Day Walks

To add to our portfolio of diverse walks for next season, Jhalak Chaudhary has tested two new walks combining nature and culture both are typical of a day's trekking. With about 6-7 hours leisurely walking and a picnic lunch, they include plenty of time to stop to admire views, watch birds, and meet local people. One walk explores the southern rim of the Pokhara Valley with the added benefit of panoramic mountain views. The other takes guests from the northwestern end of Pokhara's main lake, Fewa Tal, over Naudanda ridge, and down into the Hemja Valley passing through a variety of village, forest and farmland habitat en route.

For winter visitors, our keen birding guides can take guests on a special day walk of the Pokhara Lakes to spot winter migrant wildfowl. There is even a chance of spotting various species of stork and sometimes even rare cranes.

Guests can also always opt to spend a day of exploration with our guides – seeking out new routes and exploring seldom visited villages. This can be a real voyage of discovery for both guide and guest alike.

Images of Tiger Mountain

Another view of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge - pure relaxation at the gateway to the Himalaya....



Lush organic salads from Jit Bahadur's Tiger Mountain vegetable garden

For rates and further information, contact Pragya, Kamal, or Dipu at Tiger Mountain Central Sales & Reservations:

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SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION TOURISM SINCE 1965**