

Trekking expedition to Nepal 2007 (30/03/04 – 23-04-07)

We left school on that Saturday, and prepared our self for the 5-hour bus journey and 14 hour plane flight. Relieved to get to Nepal, the culture and scenery was completely different to that of England. Everything was lush green and completely stunning. The 3 days in Kathmandu, at the start were an experience, everything was so cheap! But everyone was so welcoming and friendly that it felt like a second home. We saw 2 sides of Kathmandu: the Hindu side, and the Buddhist side. We visited the crematorium, and saw the Buddhist temples where monks and nuns go to pray. One thing that was a total contrast was over at the Hindu side, at the crematorium, they publicly burn people, whilst their families watch. This just goes to show that our bodies are just a shell and we go elsewhere.

We began our trekking on the 3rd. this involved a 3-hour bus journey to a place called Barabise, where we walked uphill for 3 hours to our first camp. Here I had my first experience of Nepalese children and family cultures. We played Frisbee with them, and they loved it, they had probably never seen one before. There was a boy, aged 16, called Simou, he could speak perfect English and was very chatty. It was from then n that I realised the type of country we were in. how could everything be so stunning and beautiful, yet the children and families were so poor. What made me happy is that they didn't care about that, just loved life itself.

We then trekked for 2 days through the Rhododendron Forests. The colours were blooming and the views were breathtaking. All during this time, our 25 Sherpas were carrying our bags, there's one reason to feel guilty. We carried on trekking through the forest until we reached Chilingkha, Buling, Gungar Khola, until we reached the river, next to our camp Simagon. Each day we walked on average for 6 hours, stopping for breaks and lunch. We then followed the river up to Beding- the place where we were going to do some work on the school. As Beding was 3800m we could feel the chill in the air, but when we arrived, we were relieved. The following day, we went up to the school and gave all our gifts to the teachers, as the children were not in season to go to school. We got the opportunity to sand down and paint all the benches, cupboards and tables in the school, to add some colour inside. Later on, the Sherpas and some of the local community came and helped us rip out the floorboards of the school, as they would be re furbishing it and re- doing the floor. It was then mine, and another's job to go through all the wood and collect as many nails as possible, so they could reuse them again, otherwise it would mean buying new ones, with the money they have not got.

After 2 days in Beding, we walked up to Na and this was the highest we were going to be, standing at 4350m. It was cold, but there were some brilliant views, and I saw my first yak!

We then began to walk back down, visiting some places where we camped before, walking through small farms and gardens. The way they live out there is so simple, so much simpler than how I live. They make their own houses out of mud and stones. Create heat and light, using fire, and grow their own meat. This is generally goat and chicken. Most girls of my age out there would have been soon married with children- a scary thought for me. This made me realise how lucky I am. We carried on following the river, its colour a vivid turquoise, reflecting off the suns rays. At this point on the trip, I was beginning to feel that they team were a unity, we were all comfortable with one another and felt at ease. It was a shame, however, that we were coming to the end of the trip. On the last night our cooks made us a nice meal and

then cooked us a cake. It was very yummy. In the evening we said thank you, gave tips and danced with them. We also brought them the traditional Nepalese beer: roxi. We arrived in Kathmandu, after a 5-hour bus journey, and having lunch with Simou (surprise visit) on the 20th. It was a relief to get to the guesthouse and have a nice long hot shower, after having short cold washes for the past 15 days. We had the chance to go into Kathmandu to look around and buy and presents, before going out in the evening to a restaurant, where I got the chance to have a buffalo burger, as they don't eat beef.

The next day we got up early to head off for a day of mountain biking. This was awesome! Mostly down hill, dusty tracks on mountains! An experience I will never forget. That night was our last meal and it felt like a celebration, but sadness. Being with these 10 other people for 3 weeks has been part of my life and it felt weird thinking of not seeing them every day. The last day was very chilled. We were free to do what we wanted.

I knew that I didn't want to go back home just yet, as I felt really comfortable in Nepal, but it had to be done.

The things I will never forget will be the friendliness of the people and villages. The contrast in cultures, but yet they still manage to negotiate and get on, the stunning views and crystal waters, they laughs and jokes we had in the group, brightening up the school with paint, and finally I have the photos to remind me of how much fun I had.

I would like to thank you for contributing to the amount I had to raise, and helping me experience this unforgettable 3 weeks.