

# Nepal Tourism Board

## *E-Newsletter*

April 1, 2005

### **Lhasa-Kathmandu bus service to kick off from May 1**

The Lhasa-Kathmandu bus service is all set to begin from May 1 as China and Nepal have completed official formalities to start operations, which is expected to drastically cut travel costs. The two-way flow of Nepalese and Chinese travellers across the border in recent years has prompted the two governments to begin a shuttle service. The bus service will enable many Nepalese to make affordable trips to the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, as the transport fare will come down significantly. Travellers have to pay 28,000 Nepalese rupees to go to Lhasa from Kathmandu by air, but once the road transport begins, they will pay only about 5,000 rupees (about 71.4 dollars) for one-way travel.

It will take 20 hours to reach Lhasa by land, as the narrow Arniko Highway makes the road travel time-consuming. Therefore, a team of Chinese experts will travel along the highway to assess the road condition in the coming weeks. The two governments signed the agreement of direct bus link between the two cities in November 2004.

### **Nepali New Year to be celebrated in grand manner**

With an objective to celebrate the Nepali New Year, New Year Cultural and Touristic Festival-2005 is being constituted. The committee has made a series of programmes to be organized in this event starting April 13. Various programmes such as folk songs and dances, national songs, dohori songs, religious rituals, blood donation will be organized in different parts of Kathmandu valley including Thamel, Bhaktapur. This event is being promoted by Nepal Tourism Board and will last till April 17.

### **Nepali Lodge voted among World's Top Five Rooms with a view**

The UK based Independent newspaper on March 19, 2005 voted Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge as one of the World's Top Five Rooms with a View. According to the paper, this lodge offers the sort of views usually reserved for climbers. The lodge has uninterrupted vistas of the Annapurna range, from their subtropical base right up to the 8,000m Fish Tail, the region's highest and most distinctive peak.

Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge supports a range of education and community forestry initiatives in Kandani Danda and the area. This lodge is located on a ridge in the Annapurna Mountains. The lodge was inaugurated by Sir Edmund Hillary in 1998.

### **Nepali women headed to Khumbu region to scale the Everest**

Susmita Maskey, 24-year-old lady from Kathmandu is attempting to become the first woman from Newar community to reach atop the world's snow covered 8,848 metre highest peak Mt. Everest.

With main objective of spreading messages of peace from the top of the world, a mid-twenties girl has been warming up herself to conquer Mt. Everest. She will also aim create awareness to discourage Use of child labours for the expeditions. She is setting her effort to create awareness against child rights, raise money for education to the children from remote areas, and distribute educational materials as well as medicines in the Khumbu region. Her Peace Everest Expedition (that includes Ramesh Man Dangol, and Sonam Dongol, also well experienced supporters in adventure field) is in offing for Lukla on March 30 and will have acclimatization there till the time she goes up to try her fate by climbing the world's top peak - Mt. Everest from mid-May 2005.

In the same fashion, three Rotarians are attempting to scale Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) to mark the centennial of the Rotary International (RI). Under the expedition entitled Rotary Centennial Everest Expedition- 2005 organised by Rotary Clubs of Nepal (RCN), Kami Sherpa, Prem Dorjee Sherpa and Ms Moni Mulepati have left Kathmandu for Lukla on March 28 to conquer the world's highest peak.

They are planning to hoist Nepal's national flag as well as the flag of Rotary International atop the 8,848-metre mountain. Minister for Tourism Culture and Civil Aviation Budhi Raj Bajracharya provided the national flag to the expedition team at a press conference organized to mark the same on March 27. Nepal Tourism Board is promoting the event.

### **Ghode Jatra : The Festival of Horse**

Ghode Jatra falls on the late March or early April. This year it is going to be celebrated on April 8. Ghode Jatra is the festival, which doesn't have many religious ceremonies, but the parade of horses is a big attraction.

There was a time when the festival was considered only for the residents of Kathmandu. But today its popularity has attracted people from all over Nepal. Legend reveals that this festival is held to celebrate the victory over a demon named Tundi who resided over the meadow, today known as Tundikhel. Tundi was a terror, so when he died people rejoiced by dancing on his body with horses. So it has been believed that the clamor of horses' hooves on Ghode Jatra at Tundikhel keeps the demon's spirit at bay. It is believed that the faster the horses run, quicker will Tundi be dispelled. The swift running of the horses on this day is also considered to be a good omen for the Nepalese people.

Another event takes place on Ghode Jatra at Bal Kumari area in Patan where a horse is intoxicated with alcohol and an equally drunk person in a traditional Newari attire rides on it. People shout to frighten and enrage the animal until it runs wildly with the rider clinging to it. The most worshiped goddess on this day is Bhadrakali, also known by the Newari people as Lumarhi Devi.

## Feature of the week

### Kanchenjunga -a much awaited beauty for visitors

- **Toya Gautam**

It is the beginning of the spring season. Naturally, the sky is clear and azure. Only one or two clusters of clouds are floating here and there. Below them are the turquoise hills and the snow-white mountains. The Yeti Airlines plane carrying ten German tourists heads eastward from Kathmandu. All of a sudden Ekarat, a German tourist exclaims, "Oh, Everest". Ekarat, 65, looks forward to a memorable experience on the foot of the world's third highest mountain. They wish to reach Yalung which is perhaps the longest blue glacier in the world, spread below the Kanchenjunga mountain in the Kumbhakarna range.

May be it will not be possible for them to reach Yalung glacier at a high altitude area. But if they are lucky enough, they can capture images of the red panda, the snow leopard and spend some moments at the 400-years-old Diki Chhyoling Monastery in Olangchungola.

Peter, another elderly tourist with a skull cap focused his camera lens towards the chair-shaped Makalu mountain. He takes a picture with satisfaction and comfort of the world's fourth tallest peak.

The plane slowly begins to descend towards what appeared like an ochre-coloured stretch of land at Suketar. This is one of the most scenic airports of the east. Tourism planner Mingma Norbu Sherpa said, "I have never not seen such a beautiful airport".

A group of porters greeted the tourists as soon as they boarded out of the aircraft on the grassy lawns of the airport. Porters are found in abundance, trained by the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP). So far, there are 50 village youths in Taplejung District trained by TRPAP on ethics of tourism and environment. These porters earn some money by assisting the tourists and have, thus, rekindled the light of hope in their poverty-stricken families.

TRPAP, working in association with the District Development Committee (DDC) in six Village Development Committees (VDCs) along the Kanchenjunga trekking route has provided many skill-oriented trainings to the local people.

After receiving such trainings, some of the local people have taken to dairy farming and started selling milk, yoghurt and butter/ghee to tourists. Others are carrying out vegetable farming and supply green vegetables to the tourists visiting their area. Still some others have taken to poultry farming to supplement their family income. Some villagers have set up campsites for tourists in their farms. People living in the villages lying along the Kanchenjunga trekking route have gained great experience and expertise in operating tea shops, lodges and managing accommodation for tourists with the help of TRPAP.

The local people are well aware of the fact that poverty can be alleviated by carrying out income-generating activities through promotion of tourism and increased tourists arrival in their area. Beena Shrestha, a social mobilizer working for TRPAP Phawa Khola village, which falls along the Limbu Heritage Route, says "Now the children no longer pester the tired tourists, asking for money, pens or toffees." "Instead they go to school and through their respective ecoclubs at school, actively participate in cleaning up the trekking routes and managing the environment", agrees Phalgunanda Maden, another social mobilizer of TRPAP.

There is a different kind of pleasure for the tourist walking along the bank of the Tamor River, which is perhaps one of the swiftest rivers in the world.

In the experience of social mobilizers Bhim Maya Acharya and Sesh Raj Bhattarai, trekking along the Kanchenjunga trekking route has become easier now after the trail was paved with stone slabs and water taps were installed at different places along the route.

"The tourists get an exhilarating pleasure from the panoramic views (provided the weather is clear) after reaching the Kanchenjunga base camp situated at Dhunsa", says Lhakpa Sherpa, a sirdar or leader of Khumbila Trekking Kathmandu who is waiting for a group of Japanese tourists on a trekking expedition in the Kanchenjunga area. "This is the climax of the Kanchenjunga trek. The tourists also take pleasure when they see the gurgling streams and rivulets, terraced fields and beautiful hamlets along the way", he adds.

Taplejung is developing into a prime tourist destination and it is the native place of the Limbu people, who are renowned the world over as the brave Gurkhas. The Limbus are known to be honest, friendly and innocent people. Taplejung is also the best tourist destination for observing culture and social lifestyle of the Limbus. Only few tourists, who go on trekking along the Limbu Heritage Route and who find time to spend two or three nights there, get the pleasure of staying at the houses of the Limbus, drinking their favourite drink 'Tongba' and dancing the traditional 'Dhan Nach' with them.

The shrine of goddess Pathivara situated at an altitude of nearly 3,800 metres in Taplejung district is an important pilgrimage site for the Hindus. The shrine attracts a large number of Hindu devotees. It is believed that the goddess Pathivara fulfils one's wishes and the caravans of pilgrims making their way to this shrine is ever increasing.

It is very delightful at Pathibhara to observe the Giddhe Pahad (the vulture-shaped mountain), which as its name suggests, resembles a vulture with its wings spread out, the many mountain peaks of the Makalu, Kanchenjunga and the Kumbhakarna ranges, some parts of the Indian territory as well as the sweeping view of Taplejung, Paanchthar, Sankhuwasabha and Terhathum districts.

Similarly, it is equally enjoyable at Pathibhara to melt down the snow to quench one's thirst and take photos playing hide-and-seek amidst the fog which appears and disappears with the lofty Himalayan range in the background.

Taplejung is truly a unique destination full of such wilderness, virgin landscape and natural scenery. Exploiting this rich assortment of resources can help a great deal in alleviating poverty of the local people. An incomparable heaven to tourists, Taplejung, still awaits visitors.

**Rural Tourism Feature-21/TRPAP**

## *Upcoming Events*

### **Naya Barsha Rastriya Sanskritik Tatha Paryatan Mahotsav**

An initiation Nepal Rastriya Kalakar Sangh

Date: April 13-17, 2005

Venue: In different places of Kathmandu

### **Ghode Jatra**

The horse Racing Day

Date: April 8, 2005

Places to see: Tundikhel, Patan

### **Celebrating Line**

Exhibition of selected drawings

Date: Till April 13, 2005

Venue: Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited

Tel: 4411122

### **Magic Pencil**

Artworks by Britain's best children illustrators

Date: Till May 6, 2005

Venue: British Council, Lainchor

Tel: 4410798

### **Coloured Expressions- Figurative**

An exhibition of paintings by Chirag Bangdel

Date: Till April 4, 2005

Venue: The Art Shop, Durbar Marg Tel: 4470193

### **The Ovalism**

By Ratna K Shakya

Date: Till April 6, 2005

Venue: Buddha Art Gallery

### **Thalara Framed**

Black and white photographs by Devendra SJB Rana

Date: Till April 15, 2005

Venue: Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babar Mahal Revisited

### **French Film Festival**

Date: April 6-10, 2005

Venue: Russian Cultural Centre

Tel: 4241163, 4242832

## **Media Center**

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