

Nepal Tourism Board

E-Newsletter

April 22, 2005

Tourists to get VAT refunded

According to a Financial Ordinance-2061 provision, which the government has recently decided to implement, Value Added Tax (VAT) paid by tourists on goods worth more than Rs 15,000 would be refunded at the time of their departure. The decision will come into effect from May 1. Any international tourist, who has not been employed in Nepal for the past six months and has not stayed for more than 183 days in Nepal, can claim VAT refund on his purchases. The VAT refund applies only to goods being taken out of Nepal within 60 days of the date of purchase. For the time being the provision will benefit tourists leaving through the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has directed the Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB) to open a branch at the TIA lounge to provide refund services to tourists, according to a bank source. The RBB unit will refund the amount in foreign currency to the tourists. The Ministry of Finance has directed the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) to provide application forms VAT Refund for Tourists at department stores with immediate effect.

Indian journalists' FAM Tour in Nepal

Nepal Tourism Board has been organizing a series of Familiarization trips of various walks of Media personnel from around the major tourism markets holding tourism prospects. The objective behind organizing such trips are to bolster the news emanating from the ground reality more than the pseudo coverage carried out by various communication agencies without relying on the facts as a basis. At a time when initiating campaign programs in prominent print and electronic media is becoming out of reach for the under developed countries despite possessing natural and cultural endowments potential, Fam trips are proving cost effective way of destination promotion. Till date, NTB has already hosted the Fam trips to more than 300 journalists of highest repute and chunk of them have cooperated NTB by highlighting Nepal's tourism potential to disproportionate magnitude.

In order to perpetuate the notion of organising FAM tour for greater mileage, this time too, NTB has invited 17 Indian journalists from Mumbai and Delhi from April 15-22, 2005, in order to re-orient them about our destination potential and existing situation update. During the course of their stay in Nepal and visit of various major tourism destinations, they have garnered their own first hand information about the tourism potential and the existing safety and security situations. Most of them have realized the overall security situation of Nepal is conducive enough to run any type of tourism activities within the major tourism destinations.

Indian journalists visited Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Nagarkot, Pokhara and Chitwan. Nepal Tourism Board in joint collaboration with Royal Nepal Airlines, Cosmic Air, Nepal Recreation Centre, Pashupati Area Development Trust has recently launched Fantastic Family Offer- 'Buy 3 & Get 1 ticket Free' in India. It is believed that this FAM tour will give impetus to this offer making Nepal a favourite tourist destination for Indians.

The visiting journalists also interacted with the officials of Nepal Tourism Board, Royal Nepal Airlines, Cosmic Air, Nepal Recreation Centre, Pashupathi Area Development Trust on April 22 sharing their experience. During the interaction, they said that they found Nepal different than what was portrayed in the media. They further said they didn't find any kind of problem in course of their visit. They raised a few questions regarding luggage check at domestic airport and simplification of identity for Indian tourists coming to Nepal by air. CEO of Nepal Tourism Board Mr. Tek Bahadur Dangi, Mr. Yogendra Sakya, Former Board Member, Nepal Tourism Board and Mr. R. D. Tuttle of Nepal Recreation and Lawrence Lew, General Manager, Cosmic Air addressed the interaction programmes and provided answer to the questions raised by Indian journalists.

The journalists from Mumbai are Mr. Sanjeev Sabade- Maharashtra Times, Mr. Suhas Potnis-Gavakari, Mr. Anand Katti-Freelance Travel Writer, Mrs. Madhura Katti-Freelance Travel Writer, Mr. Devanshu Desai- Chitralekha, Mr. Shailendra Kesari- Safari Plus, Mr. Gautam Purohit- Gujarat Samachar and Ms. Sylvia Fernandes- TRAC. Similarly, the journalists from Delhi are Mr. Amit Roy-Hindustan Times, Mr. Manoj Mathur-Rajasthan Patrika, Mr. Varinder Bhatia-The Indian Express, Mr. Sat Pal Baghi-Punjab Keshari, Mr. Vishal Duggal- Sahara Times, Mr. Raminder Sinha-Dainik Bhaskar, Mr. Vishnu Datt Sharma- Dainik Jagran and Mr. Tarun Chakarvarti-Greh Laxmi.

These FAM tours were supported by Hotel Yak & Yeti, Fishtail Lodge, Club Himalaya, Island Jungle Resort, Hotel Annapurna, Buddha Air, Cosmic Air, Nepal Recreation Centre and Shangri-La Hotel.

In the past, NTB invited journalists from Sun Zhan Tao and LinQiong from Voyage Magazine, Zhang Xiang Hong from Beijing Youth Daily, Gu Xian Junn from Sports and Leisure, Xu Li from Wedding Magazine from China. Similarly, Nayamogan Munian, Selvamalar, Artmathanloingam, Parvathi Wajindram, Roziama Idris, Fadzil Yahya Aziz and Suresh Murugiah from Astra TV were also invited.

From India earlier NTB had invited R. Chandranth, Special Correspondent of The Hindu, P.S. Phadnis, Chief of Bureau, Deccan

Herald Vasanth Nadiger, News Editor, Vijayanand, Mr. Kiran Prakash M.S., Chief Sub-editor, the New Indian Express and Ms. Divyalakshmi Nambiar, Sub-Editor, Voyagers World. Similarly, Ms. Liu Wying Sze and Mr. Fung Kin Wai from Eastweek Magazine, Hong Kong were invited for FAM tours recently.

A journalist from Thailand is arriving on April 22, 2005 from Bangkok at the invitation of NTB. Similarly, Nepal Tourism Board is bringing a FAM trip of five journalists from Bangladesh from April 26. Another FAM trip of electronic media of India is coming to Nepal in May first week.

Physically challenged Australians to climb Mount Everest

A 35 year old blind Australian, Mr. Gerrard Gosens is attempting to climb Mount Everest. He has spent two years preparing to climb the ultimate challenge, Mount Everest. Earlier American Erik Weihenmayer has successfully reached the top of the world to become the first ever blind person to Summit Everest on May 25, 2001. Mr. Gosens is physically fit and he was placed 7th in the Paralympics marathon in 2000. Another Australian a 35 year old, Mr. Paul Hockey, a one-armed mountaineer plans to play "catch" with a boomerang on the summit of Mount Everest.

World Heritage Day celebrated

A function was organised at Nepal Tourism Board to mark World Heritage Day on April 18. The program was jointly organised by Nepal Heritage Society, Nepal Tourism Board, Hotel Association Nepal, CERID TU and Folk Music Instrument Museum. Vice Chancellor of Royal Nepal Academy, Dr Basudev Tripathi, said though international support for heritage conservation is welcomed, it is the Nepal government and its citizens who are responsible for preserving their cultural heritage. Chairman of Nepal Heritage Society, Bishwakanta Mainali, stressed on the need of government commitment and civic society's support to keep the country's cultural heritage alive. Representative from the Department of Archaeology, Rajesh Bhakta Mathema, urged all stakeholders to work together to stop the monuments from further deterioration.

Nepal most exotic destination

His love for the Himalayas has not lessened after losing all his fingers to frost bite.

Jung Hun Park, 35, had all his fingers removed after they were damaged by frost on the slopes of Mt. Cholache. Park went through this trauma when trying to rescue his fellow mountaineer after they slipped down the slopes. They had stayed atop Cholache without any sleeping bags or other equipment in early January, this year.

The accident was costly for him as he was left with fractures in his body.

Notwithstanding the somber moments in his life, Park's affinity for the mountains is unique. Park has to his credit a rare feat of climbing seven of the world's eight thousanders.

"Nepal is the most exotic and exciting destination that I have ever visited," said Park.

Park prefers to climb tall mountains through routes that are both risky and arduous.

He scaled Mt. Sagarmatha (Everest), the world's tallest mountain, in 1994. This was followed by another success on Mt. Annapurna (8,091 meter), which he climbed from the Southwest face. Scaling Annapurna through this route is considered to be difficult.

As reported in The Rising Nepal, Park has so far climbed Mt. Annapurna, Mt. Everest, Cho Oyu, Shisa Pangma (two times), Nanga Parbat, K2, and Gashabrum, which are all above 8,000 meters. Park also boasts of having climbed many other mountains below 8,000 metres. "Although I have lost my fingers, I still have unwavering resolve to continue with my mission," he said. Park visited Nepal for the first time at the age of 19 to climb 8,201 meter high Cho Oyu and had made his dream come true.

Park said that he was here this time to see if he could find the mountaineering equipment, camera and other gadgets, which he had lost during the accident at Cho oyu.

The Toyota Kathmandu Marathon on October 22 this year

The winners of the first Toyota Kathmandu Marathon received their prizes on April 21, 2005. Chief guest Prabha Basnet, the Member Secretary of Social Welfare Council and Surendra Bade Shrestha, the president of Katmandu Marathon Society gave away the awards to the winners and plaques to the sponsors, supporters and donors.

On the occasion, Scheer Memorial Hospital's Chief Executive Officer Roy Kline, Toyota's KB Rajbhandari, Race Director Madhu Shamsheer Rana and Nepal Tourism Board's Manager Hikmat Singh Ayer were also present. According to the organizers, 830 runners representing 20 countries participated in the historic event while 15 foreigners and 32 Nepalis won the prizes. The event also raised Rs 1,111,444.41 from the profit and donated prize money for free medical care. Winners donated US \$ 5,006 for the charity from the total prize money of US \$ 12,104.

The Toyota Kathmandu Marathon 2006 is scheduled for October 22, 2006. The event has been promoted by Nepal Tourism Board

Tourist's comment on Nepal at NTB Website

Nepal Tourism Board has recently uploaded the tourist's comment on the present situation of Nepal in its website:

www.welcomenepal.com. To watch the live comment, please click <http://www.welcomenepal.com/videos.asp#>

Feature of the week

SINGUN NGYA (Temal Jatra)

By Tilak Lama (Lopchan)

Introduction:

Amidst the chanting of hymns of holy Mantras by the priest Lamas and offering butter lamps, foods, drinks, fruits etc punctuated with systematic musical melody in memory of ones' ancestors are some of the most important rituals for Tamang. They are one of the biggest indigenous people of Mongoloid stock who are Buddhists. A strong belief is that the rituals performed in this way are meant for the peace of mind and attaining religious merit. Such rituals take place especially on full moon days in monasteries, Stupas and other Buddhist holy places.

One of the important such rituals performed with big fanfare is Singun Ngya that takes place in Boudha (Jyalung Khasyore) and Swayambhu (Phapa Singun) the world heritage sites in Kathmandu. Needless to mention that both Boudha and Swayambhu are very important and special holy sites for the Tamangs. On the full moon day of Chaitra month every year, falling on the 24th April (Baisakh 11) this year, the special rituals performed by hundreds of Tamang Lamas take place in Swayambhu and on the preceding day in Boudha in the same manner. The ritual with big fan fare attending by thousands of devotees is also termed as festival. This festival is also called "Temal Jatra" by Tamangs of other region. Temal within the Tamang ethnic group is regarded as the center of rich Tamang culture and tradition. The place is the hilly region between Sunkoshi and Roshi rivers lying south east of Kavre district. Temal was a separate Tamang Kingdom until the formation of modern Nepal. The people from Temal call the festival "Singun Ngya" or "Chaita Ngya" even "Boudha Jatra". Swayambhu among them is better known as "Singun" or "Simbu".

Historical Background:

Due to lack of proper records and data, it has not yet been ascertained exactly since when the festival started. However, Temal festival is believed to be taking place since the ancient time as the historical proves show that the Tamangs are the indigenous people of the Kathmandu valley better known as "Yambu" among them. They were displaced later and now are living in the peripheral hills of the valley and the majority concentrating in hilly and mountainous districts in the mid region. According to the Buddhist historical story, the festival can also be related to the sowing of lotus seed on the full moon day of Chaitra by Bipashyi Buddha and later origin of the holy flame and Swayambu on the very lotus. This way the Singun Ngya has a religious significance in terms of Buddhism and the origin of Kathmandu valley, too. Another folktale has it: the last king of Temal Renzin Dorje had organized a grand ceremony on the auspicious occasion of completion of the Boudha Stupa construction and the people from the area continued the traditional ceremony as Boudha or Temal Jatra and Singun Ngya. Apparently the festival seemed to derive its name "Temal" from the Tamang kingdom of Temal which has the credit of initiating the festival. It is not only coincidence that among the Tamang pilgrims of the festival, overwhelming majority is still from the Temal region.

The Festival:

The pilgrims of all ages take part in the ritual and they come from far away mountainous villages despite a long strenuous walk. This festival is very important for them to perform ritual in the memory of their past ancestors specially fathers, mothers other loved ones. Hundreds of priest Lamas perform the rituals separately for different groups of pilgrims. The memory of their loved ones become so strong and afresh at the rituals that many are seen with heavy heart and wet eyes taking a part in the ritual. The ritual is performed by reciting holy books and offering butter lamps, foods, fruits, money, drinks etc. The ritual is called 'Ngowa'. It is widely believed that the rituals performed in Swayambhu help pilgrims to pay tribute to their late mother and similarly the rituals in Boudha to late father. So, people who have their living mother and father are not expected to perform rituals in the respective Stupas on these particular days. Nevertheless, the rituals are also meant for peaceful rest of soul of all their ancestors.

On the preceding day of the full moon day of Chaitra month, thousands of Tamang devotees gather around Boudha Stupa with a great enthusiasm. The whole crowd flows clockwise circumventing the main Stupa and continuous rituals in different small groups take place around the Stupa and also in numerous near by monasteries. At the completion of the rituals, the foods, drinks etc. are served to the Lamas, relatives and friends. Offerings in cash and kinds are made to Lamas and also to relatives of opposite clans specially youngsters in the belief that the offerings made here will reach one's ancestors ultimately. So, some are quite generous in such offerings. The giant Boudha Stupa is illuminated whole night with hundreds of thousands of butter lamps. Young festival attendants in the merry making mood also sing songs back & forth in typical Tamang Dohori style. The songs are usually about life, love, history etc. The same process continues next day that falls always on the full moon day in Swayambu, too. On the whole front slopes of Swayambu under the trees and in the surrounding Gompas, hundreds of small groups of devotees gather for the rituals led by priest Lamas and their relatives.

Upcoming Events

Temal Jatra (Singun Ngya)

Tamang Festival

Places to See:

Boudha Stupa on April 23, 2005

Swoyambhu on April 24, 2005

Contact No: 4417623

Magic Pencil

Artworks by Britain's best children illustrators

Date: Till May 6, 2005

Venue: British Council, Lainchor

Tel: 4410798

Toyota womens Motor rally

Women in driving seat

Date: April 23, 2005

Tel: 4478301

A Peaceful Nepal

Photo exhibition cum sale

Date: Till April 30, 2005

Venue: Godavari Alumni Association

Celebrating Line

An exhibition of selected drawings by 14 artists

Date: Till April 26

Venue: Kathmandu University, Department of Art and Design, Bhaktapur

Contact: 6617005/ 4218048/ 4438979

Face of Buddha

Portraits of Burmese clerics

Date: Till May 10, 2005

Venue: Via Via Café & Restaurant

Tel: 4700184

Thalara Framed, Glimpses of Western Nepal

An exhibition of Photographs by Devendra S Rana

Date: Till April 30, 2005

Time: 1100-1800 hrs

Venue: Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Revisited

Tel: 4218048/ 4438979

Media Center

Nepal Tourism Board

Tourist Service Center

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