

Helping reconstruction after the earthquakes in Nepal

From 18/04/2016 until 06/06/2016, we - Girge Glock and myself, Martin Broll - have travelled to Nepal.

After finishing secondary school, we wanted to see the world a little. It was thus a lucky coincidence that members of the Himalaya foundation in Boppard / Rhine have been present on the Landesgartenschau (State Garden Show) in Landau. We started talking and told them about our plans. We staid in contact and were invited to Boppard.

Now we finally knew that we wanted to visit Nepal. We have been referred to Tsering from Adler Adventure Trekking who is in close contact with Himalaya-Projekte e.V. We planned our trip and on 18/04/2016 we were ready to go.

Once arrived in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, we were welcomed very kindly and transferred to our hotel. The first few days were spent sightseeing in the capital, also in order to get used to the altitude. We were very surprised to find the climate to be very warm. We had packed winter clothes and now the temperatures were above 30°C.

During these first days already, we had a lot of impressions of the culture and the people who live here.



Many prayer flags have been hung on this temple. They not only look nice, but – as we were told – they are supposed to bring good luck.

In Kathmandu and later in many other places, we noticed the enormous damage done by the big earthquake one year before. Many buildings had collapsed: old religious sites as well as residential houses.

The first days passed quickly and we discovered something new all the time. On 24/04/2016, we flew to Lukla (2,400 m) in a small airplane.

Here, we met Tsering with whom we were already in contact from Germany. Together with him and our carrier Pemba we hiked through a fascinating and therefore highly frequented landscape to the Mount Everest Base Camp and back again.



- 1) Carrier bearing an enormous weight in order to assure the provision in the camp.
- 2) Old stupa which is to be circled clockwise in order to clean ones soul.
- 3) View of the national park, with rhododendron bushes and mountains.

During our trekking we tried to learn the language a little. Moreover, we learned an old Sherpa song „Resam firiri“.

From 03/05 until 12/05 we were back in Kathmandu.

On 12/05 in the early morning we left for Ripal. Our destination was located on hilly ground. In order to reach the village, we had to travel a rather adventurous road by car and the following day we continued our trip on foot.

The village is spread over some “hills” (approx. 2,400 m alt.) By now, I was able to call Nepal the county of a thousand mountains. The simple houses are widely spread over the terraced hills and connected via dirt tracks.

During the project, we were accommodated close to our working place. Together with Lakba from the Sherpa Home Stay in Kathmandu, his mother and others we were allowed to live as their guests.

The monastery which was damaged by the earthquake was situated close to the house. It is unbelievable how the earthquake shook up the whole country. Wherever we went, it had left its trails. Houses, temples, monasteries, monuments, stupas, walls, rocks were concerned, also caused by landslips and avalanches.



- 1) The damaged monastery and debris
- 2) The house we helped to rebuild. Now, it contains statues and religious scrolls.

We were very enthused by this village. No cars, no electricity, no running water and no tourists.

We were very warmly welcomed by the small village community and were invited for dinner several times. Although at first the spicy meals caused us to tear up, but it was always very delicious and after a while we got used to the spicyness.

We communicated quite well with the villagers who spoke almost no English using hands and feet.

Most of the things needed are self-made since the people do not have a lot of money to buy industrial products. For example, tree trunks are cut into boards and the clay mass put into the gaps is mixed by hand. The wheat growing on the terraced fields is grinded by a small water mill driven by mountain water. With great enthusiasm we indulged – more or less skillfully – the many daily labours which we had never done before.

As soon as the house for the statues was finished, it was inaugurated with a ceremonial party. Lamas, the Buddhist monks, sang mantras and prayed, afterwards there was a party for everybody with feast and dancing.



- 1) The finished house
- 2) Dancing villagers (despite the rain)

Up in the mountains, it is not easy to offer a good education to the children. Most families cannot afford the school fees and need the help of the children to do the housework. Moreover, the way to school must be considered. Many children have to walk a long way because the nearest school is located on another hill. Thus, some children walk 2 to 3 hours across country to reach their school.

For some days, we have accompanied Lakba while he distributed donations to families. This way, the people do not have to travel to Kathmandu in order to obtain these donations. This would have meant for them to travel for several days, spend money for accommodation and food while not being able to take care of the fields at home. These people were really grateful.

We also visited an elementary school closeby and were even allowed to teach a lesson. We tried to teach English. It was really fun but we are very lucky to have such a good educational level in Germany.

And we noticed another thing: It is really frightening how much more time we had without internet or other electronic devices.

On 01/06/2016, we had to say goodbye to all the things we came to like so much. We were accompanied to the next village (a day's march) with road access. The following day, we left for Kathmandu.



1) Trip to Kathmandu (at cloud height)

Never in my life have I consumed as much tea and rice as during these two months. And I cannot say that it did me any harm. Luckily, we did not need most of our first-aid kit.

In summary, our impression of the people we met was very positive. We have been treated very kindly and were often invited for dinner. Strangers approached us all the time and wanted to talk to us. We were often questioned about life in Germany and learned a lot about life in Nepal.

On the one hand, we got the impression that the people are generally very proud of their country, both because it is the birthplace of Buddha and because Nepal has the highest mountains of the world. On the other hand, many want to work abroad because they do not see a professional future for themselves in Nepal.

We were quite surprised to learn that Nepal has a caste system like India since we did not witness any discrimination or any such thing. Also in religious matters we found Nepal to be very liberal and

peaceful. Hinduism and Buddhism are the main religions and strongly influence people's lives. Compared to Germany, the people are more religious and live their faith. Many women wear religious necklaces and many men – monks – wear red/orange monk cowls. Also, the calendar is different than the one we use in the West. And for planned activities some days are better suited than others according to religion. This is why the newly built house for the statues has been inaugurated on a full moon since this day is supposed to bring good luck. However, in order to fully understand this rich culture we would have had to spend more time there.

Back to Kathmandu we enjoyed our last days. In the end it was rather weird to get on the plane without knowing when we would see any of the now so familiar again.



1) Golden Stupa in Kathmandu.

2) Sunrise above the clouds.

We hope that this report gives you a small impression of this far-away country. We would like to thank all those who have supported us, advised us and most of all we are grateful for the openness and hospitality of the people.

Girge & Martin