



# Himalayan News

The Newsletter of the Himalayan Explorers Club

Issue 11

Fall 1999

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*Himalayan News is the newsletter of the Himalayan Explorers Club, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Basic Memberships start at \$30 a year and are U.S. tax-deductible, as are donations to support our educational programs. For more information contact:*

*The Himalayan Explorers Club  
PO Box 3665  
Boulder, CO 80307  
Phone: (303) 998-0101  
Fax: (303) 998-1007  
info@hec.org  
http://www.hec.org*

*PO Box 9178  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
members@himexp.wlink.com.np  
977-1-259-275*

*House 14A, Street 63, F-8-4  
Islamabad, Pakistan  
himexp@trango.sdnpc.undp.org  
92-51-282-146*

## Krakauer Donates Book Royalties to HEC, Other Nonprofits

The Everest '96 Memorial Fund, established by author Jon Krakauer, has made donations of \$138,500 to charitable groups, including a grant of \$4,000 to the Himalayan Explorers Club.

The fund was established with Krakauer's share of the royalties from *Into Thin Air: The Illustrated Edition*, which was released in 1998. The fund was set up to honor the climbers that lost their lives on Mount Everest in May 1996, by providing humanitarian aid to the indigenous people of the Himalaya, supporting organizations working to preserve the natural environment, and assisting various other charities in the United States that support these humanitarian and environmental efforts.

Other recipients of the grants included the Access Fund (\$60,000), the American Himalayan Foundation (\$40,000), and the Central Asia Institute (\$20,000). The Kanchenjunga School project and Global Green Grants Fund also received grants.

The Access Fund is a national nonprofit group, located in Boulder, Colorado, dedicated to keeping climbing areas open and conserving the climbing environment.

“The Access Fund is grateful and thrilled to be working with Jon Krakauer,” said Sally Moser, executive director of the fund. “This generous gift helped us purchase climbing areas such as Castle Rock Ranch in Idaho, and also funded a 1999 Trails Initiative Project that


allowed us to construct trails in seven climbing areas throughout the U.S.”

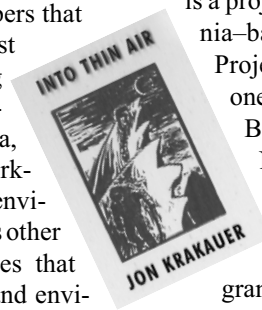
The San Francisco-based American Himalayan Foundation provides education, health care, and cultural and environmental preservation in the Himalayan region, which includes Tibet, Nepal, Ladakh, and Pakistan.

The Kanchenjunga Oral History Project is a project of the Sausalito, California-based Kanchenjunga School Project. The grant helped fund a one-month stay in the region for Boulder resident Hannah Nordhaus, who conducted interviews and transcribed and published the stories in school textbooks. The

grant was also used to finance the purchase and delivery of a refrigerator to the region. The refrigerator is used to store vaccines.

The Everest '96 Memorial Fund is administered by the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County. The Foundation was established in 1991 to encourage and strengthen philanthropy and to create opportunities for current and future generations.

The grant to the Himalayan Explorers Club will be used to update our *Nepal Volunteer Handbook* and place the *Handbook* on our Web page. The *Handbook* offers potential volunteers everything they need to know about volunteering in Nepal, including a personal skills assessment, background on the history of foreign assistance in Nepal, and information on over 50 volunteer leads. 



## Climber's Corner

# Remembering the Early Himalayan Explorers

By Gordon Janow

When George Mallory responded “Because it is there” to the question “Why climb Everest?” he conferred a sort of permanent approval on those who wished to risk their lives climbing. But one should really have asked Mallory and his predecessors, “How did you know it was there?” One possible answer to the question “Why climb Everest?” is “Because we found it.”

At the end of the eighteenth century, the world still did not know where the highest mountain lay. Historically, it was prime time for the “Great Game” and the struggle to conquer Central Asia. While the British developed their stronghold on the Indian subcontinent, Czarist Russia was intent on dominating the relatively uncharted landscapes of mountainous Asia. To control these areas, one had to overcome ruthless thieves and unfriendly kingdoms as well as cross the seemingly impassible and hostile ranges of the Pamirs, the Hindu Kush, the Karakorums, the Garwhals, and the Himalayas.

To map these areas around India, one traveled as a spy or pundit, often changing disguises as the communities warranted. These cartographers cum spies needed incredible strength and climbing skills to traverse the barren terrain; however, they also needed to be “renaissance” figures, capable of changing identify from Muslim cleric to Buddhist pilgrim and understanding local languages, cultures, and idiosyncrasies, such as the minute details of movement that are a delicate part of Asian cultures.

All these skills were but a prerequisite to the goal of the journey: to survey the regions with precision. For these explorer chameleons, it was not uncommon to hide surveying tools in everyday objects. (The most famous instance of this practice was hiding a surveyor’s kit and records inside a Tibetan prayer wheel. Another pundit logged thousands of miles by counting each individual step.) While noting what progress

could be made in a day or week and observing difficult crossings, natural defenses, and watering holes for pack animals, explorers traveled in expedition style (a common term for a style of mountain climbing in which a series of camps



Sir Francis Younghusband

are set). Expedition teams approached the surveying journey in the same way modern climbers think about a mountain. These explorers became legendary heroes who bridged the gap between older explorers and modern day climbers. They were, in fact, the first Himalayan climbers, as surveying the mountains was often cited as the “raison d’être” for an expedition’s approval and funding. The heroes became fabled characters in Kipling’s *Kim* and provided a century of literature for the Royal Geographical Society in Great Britain.

It is largely because of the efforts of these intrepid adventurers that we can so easily visit these remote and spectacular parts of the Himalayan region today.


### Some Noteworthy Milestones from the Everest Playground

- A team of Western mountaineers discovered the body of British explorer George Mallory, who died on Everest 75 years ago. Look for four new books on the subject: *The Lost Explorer: Finding Mallory on Everest* (Conrad Anker and David Roberts); *Last Climb* (David Breashears and Audrey Salkeld); *Lost on Everest* (Peter Firstbrook); and *Ghosts on Everest* (Jochen Hemmleb, Larry Johnson, and Eric Simonson).
- American mountain guide Pete Athans, of Boulder, Colo., scaled the mountain for the sixth time, the only Westerner to reach the summit so many times. Athans, who made his first climb in 1985, reached the summit on May 3, 1999.

- Mountaineer Lev Sarkisov of Tbilisi, Georgia, became the oldest climber to scale Everest, breaking the previous record of 60 years and 160 days by just one day.
- A 15-year-old Nepali schoolboy almost became the youngest person to make it to Everest’s 29,028-foot summit. Although Arvin Timilsina had to retreat a mere 330 feet from the summit, he still became the youngest ever to reach that height.
- Babu Chhiri spent 21 hours on the summit, where even the most experienced climbers cannot remain for more than a few minutes because of the lack of oxygen and the extreme cold.
- On the Tibetan side of the mountain, Appa Sherpa, 40, climbed Everest for the 10th time, tying the most-ever number of climbs.

### Other Climbing News

British climber Ginette Harrison, 41, died in an avalanche on Nepal’s 26,795-foot Dhaulagiri on October 24. Harrison, a physician and mountaineer, was killed with a Sherpa climbing partner. Harrison had recently moved to Massachusetts with her American husband, Gary Pfisterer, who was leading the 11-member climbing team. Harrison had been the second British woman to climb Mount Everest.

Three British mountaineers completed the first winter ski crossing of the Indian Zaskar Himalaya. The team experienced many cloudy days during the six week journey, but reported excellent skiing conditions. Starting from Lamayuru, the team skied over the Kanji La (5,150m), Pensi La (4,410m), Kang La (5,468m), and finally the Rohtang Pass to finish in Manali. 

*Gordon Janow works for Alpine Ascents International. His latest project is retracing the paths of some of the early Himalayan explorers such as William Moorcroft.*

## Off The Beaten Track Monsoon Trekking in Nepal

By Karen Cravitz

One doesn't normally think of the Annapurna Circuit as being "off the beaten path." In fact, in 1998 over half of the trekkers in Nepal—53,412 people—visited the region (see page 8). Because of the overwhelming popularity of this route among Western tourists, it is often referred to as the "Annapurna Circus" or the "Apple Pie Circuit."

However, over 90 percent of the trekkers in Nepal come during either the pre-monsoon (spring) or the post-monsoon (fall) seasons. During July and August, the height of the monsoon, there are periods when fewer than 100 people are trekking in the entire Annapurna region.



During the monsoon, when you rarely see more than one other group of tourists a day, even the Annapurna circuit becomes an "off-the-beaten track" route.

Having canceled our trip to Spiti, India, because of escalating tensions between Pakistan and India, my husband and I found ourselves in Kathmandu with a month to spare. We consulted with Jamie McGuinness, author of two books on trekking in Nepal. Jamie recommended that we trek in the "rain shadow" (northern side) of the Himalayas, which is protected from the full force of the monsoon by the mountains. For example monthly rainfall during the height of the monsoon averages around 800mm a month in Pokhara, just south of the mountains, but only 50mm a month in Jomsom, to the north.

### The Pros of Monsoon Trekking

From our first day, we were treated to both the pros and the cons of monsoon trekking in Nepal. The most significant "pro," of course, was the lack of other tourists. Our plane to Jomsom only had two other tourists, and we did not run into any other tourists for the first 36 hours we were in the Jomsom area. Most days we only passed one to two groups of trekkers, and many nights we were the only tourists staying in a village.

The dearth of tourists allowed us insights into Nepali culture that would be nearly impossible to experience during the Annapurna high season. For example, in Marpha we witnessed wedding preparations, including the slaughtering of goats, the assembling of flower garlands, and the arrival of guests from surrounding villages.

With no other tourists around, we also spent many evenings speaking with our guide, our porter, and the lodge owners. Gylchen, our guide, even gave us daily Nepali lessons, and our immersion into Nepali culture allowed us endless opportunities to practice our budding language skills.

### The Cons of Monsoon Trekking

The lack of segregation between tourists and locals, however, also made the trip more demanding. For example, in Muktinath the spacious, window lined dining room became an impromptu medical clinic with 40 coughing, sneezing, and (no exaggeration) vomiting locals crammed into it.

In addition, although many lodge owners enjoyed spending more time with us, others apparently viewed the off-season as a time to rest and relax, and treated our stay in their teahouses as an intrusion.

But the biggest drawback to trekking during the monsoon is the lack of views.

### The Pros and Cons of Monsoon Trekking

#### Pros

- ✓ Few people on the trail
- ✓ Teahouses are nearly empty
- ✓ Special attention from lodge owners
- ✓ More insight into traditional culture
- ✓ Observing rice farming
- ✓ Lower prices

#### Cons

- ✓ Far fewer mountain views
- ✓ Trails/roads more likely washed out
- ✓ The occasional leech
- ✓ Wet socks/prune feet/moldy toenails
- ✓ Intense heat at lower elevations

Although it does not rain every day during the monsoon, especially when trekking in the rain shadow, the mountains are often shrouded in clouds, obscuring views of the high Himalayan peaks.

As one HEC member put it, the clouds break enough to give you just a glimpse of one section of mountain, and as this "sucker hole" moves around you have to put all the pieces together in your head, like a jigsaw puzzle. A few mornings in Manang, however, were crystal clear for about an hour, and we had perfect views of Annapurna IV and Gangapurna.

But what about the leech-infested trails that the trekker must endure during the monsoon? Yes, there are definitely leeches when you drop below 11,000 feet. Leeches, however, tend to wait on trailside vegetation, and get on your legs and feet as you walk by. The main trails are wide enough that many of the people we met hadn't got any leeches. Some trekkers we met had gotten one or two leeches (which resemble small caterpillars), but had quickly disposed of them by sprinkling salt or chewing tobacco on them. Our defense against leeches, which proved effective, was to wear long pants and doubled up socks!

(Continued on page 7)

Ask the Author

## How Can One Stay With Families While Traveling in Nepal?

By Stephen Bezručka

Trekking in Nepal offers the visitor the potential to experience life in biblical or Chaucerian times, especially if one ventures off the trekker-traveled trails and chooses to stay in people's homes.

In North America and other travel destinations, bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) have become popular because they allow the visitor a more "homey" atmosphere and a chance to get to know the host family. Almost any home in Nepal is a potential B&B that offers the trekker a chance to experience the intimate details of Nepali life. In almost any village, small parties (up to four or five, including porters and guides) can ask to be fed and put up overnight in a home (even if tourist lodges exist there).

I have been doing this for thirty years. I find that Nepalis, even in popular trekking towns, are delighted to participate

in the tourist economy by offering food and lodging. Porters and guides also find these stays enjoyable, for they get an opportunity to experience other cultures in the mosaic that makes up Nepal. If you speak some Nepali, you will face little difficulty in arranging an overnight stay. If you don't speak any Nepali, try to use a few phrases or advise your guide or porter to inquire for you. This is as fun, adventurous, and memorable as it gets.

Once you or your guide has established that you will stay overnight with a family and you have arrived at the home, remove your shoes, bend forward so you don't hit your head, and enter. In the dim light, you will be offered a place to sit near the fire, usually on a mat of some kind. Take this place, smile, and wait for some food or drink to be prepared. Don't take the space closest to the fire in a Sherpa or BhoTiya home unless that

has been offered, for that is the place of honor. Talk about your travels. Relax. Some discussion may ensue about what you would like to eat. Ask that you eat the same food as the rest of the family. If you are with other trekkers, limit your group interactions and show interest in the people and place you are in. Play with the children, compliment the family, and tell them a little about yourself.

Food will appear presently and you will have an opportunity to eat simple, wholesome, tasty fare. Usually you will wash your hands outside first. Don't worry about getting sick from the food. You won't die if you have a loose movement; in fact, you've probably already had a few while being cautious. When satiated, bring out your photo album and share a few words about yourself and your country. If asked what your gear cost, tell them you don't remember, as it was purchased long ago.

(Continued on page 6)

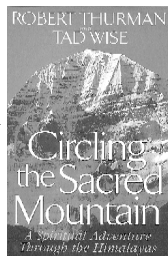
## Book Review

### *Circling the Sacred Mountain*

By Robert Thurman and Tad Wise

(Bantam Books, New York, 1999)

Reviewed by Stan Goldberg




*Circling the Sacred Mountain* is described by its authors as "A spiritual adventure through the Himalayas." The sacred mountain in question is Mt. Kailash in southwestern Tibet, considered by both Buddhists and Hindus as the earthly manifestation of Mt. Meru, the spiritual center of the universe. For a thousand years, believers from India and Tibet have been making a religious pilgrimage to Mt. Kailash, completing the 32-mile circumambulation, or *kora*, around the mountain. It is said that one trip around the mountain absolves the sins of a lifetime. In recent years, Westerners,

many looking for an adventure of the spirit, have joined in the quest.

Thurman certainly has the credentials to hold himself up as the Western expert on these matters. He is chair of the Columbia University Department of Religion, is director of the Center for Buddhist Studies, and is the first American to be ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist monk. Wise, a former student of Thurman's, is a man in search of identity and life's meaning.

Together these two take us on a journey to Mt. Kailash. Starting in Kathmandu, they take the long, arduous four-day drive to the holy mountain. The group, led by a Western trekking guide, then completed the four-day trekking *kora* around the mountain, crossing the 18,472 foot Drolma La in the process. The group continued to holy Lake Manasarovar, traveled to the border town of Taklalat, and took an interesting trek to Simikot in northwestern Nepal before getting a flight back to Kathmandu.

The narrative alternates between Wise and Thurman. Wise tells us of the difficulties, both metaphysical and physical, encountered in this arduous journey: the jeep rides, the trekking, the altitude sickness, etc. Thurman, on the other hand, offers dharma talks to guide the inner journey of the group and the reader. His emphasis is on the Superbliss deities and the Buddhist teachings of The Blade Wheel of Mind Reform and how they can provide a path for each of us to attain enlightenment in this lifetime.

This is very heavy stuff, too heavy in such large doses for this reader. *Circling the Sacred Mountain* is certainly not a primer for people interested in making the trip to Mt. Kailash, as the book is more of a lesson in Buddhism than an effective travelogue. Readers interested in planning a trip to Mt. Kailash should be sure to pick up the new *Lonely Planet Tibet* guidebook and Gary McCue's recently updated *Trekking in Tibet*. 

# Himalayan Explorers Club News

By Scott Dimetrosky

The HEC recently received some terrible news: Doug Thompson, a Life Member and valued supporter of the HEC, suffered a heart attack and died while climbing Mt. Madison in the New Hampshire White Mountains. Doug was planning to travel with his wife Cynthia to Nepal this January, staying in Nepal through April to teach in the Khumbu region with the HEC's Volunteer Nepal Himalaya Program. We are saddened by the loss of Doug, and our thoughts go out to his family during a difficult time.

### Free e-mail and Longer Clubhouse Hours in Nepal

The Nepal Clubhouse is now open seven days a week, from 10 A.M. to 6 P.M., during the fall and spring seasons! Ryan Damron and Gelbu Sherpa (now in his third year!) will be happy to assist HEC members.

And after months of debate over how many rupees a kilobyte really should cost, the HEC has decided that the kilobytes from our Clubhouse are free. Yes, HEC members now receive free e-mail when using our Nepal address (members@himexp.wlink.com.np). Web access is now only two rupees a minute, or about \$2/hour.

### What Happened to the Summer Himalayan News?

In case anyone was wondering, the summer 1999 *Himalayan News* was...well...umm...well, never quite made it to press. The director reports that his wife locked him out of his office after 8 P.M., refusing to let him stare at his computer monitor any longer. She claimed his "monitor tan" could lead to melanoma, despite his insistence that he would apply heavy amounts of spf 50 sunscreen.

In the meantime, circulation of our online newsletter, HimalayaNet, continues to soar. At last count we had over 2,300 subscribers. More amazing, people seem to digest every issue: one member, posting a question about the Annapurna region, received over 20 replies!

So, the HEC is considering scaling back *Himalayan News* and placing more emphasis on HimalayaNet, but we are looking for feedback from members before we do anything. Please let us know what you think! (So far, we've heard from one member who said he enjoys hardcopy issues because he can read them in the bathroom.)

### HEC Trip Reports Go Online With Greentravel.com

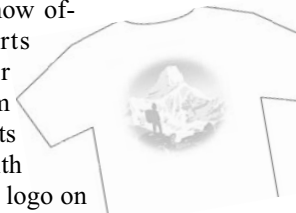
The HEC has recently signed an agreement with Greentravel.com to provide Himalayan content to its Web page. Finally, our growing library of trip reports will be available online! In addition, the HEC will provide a monthly "Ask the Expert" column, a "Himalayan Countdown" trip planner, and late-breaking news. Check out Greentravel at <http://www.greentravel.com>.

### Volunteer Nepal Himalaya Program Increase School Enrollment/Infrastructure

The HEC's Volunteer Nepal Himalaya Program continues to send English teachers to the Khumbu region. This fall, five participants are teaching in the villages of Monjo, Chuserma, and Chaurikharka. In response to the program, one of the schools—the Gomila Elementary School in Chuserma—has increased from 65 to 102 students, reportedly making it the largest primary school in the Solu Khumbu! Sara Gummere, one of our first participants, raised over \$2,000 from the sale of her photographs of the school. The money is currently being used to build new classrooms and desks for the students.

### HEC T-Shirts Available

The HEC is now offering T-shirts sporting our Ama Dablam logo. The shirts are white, with the blue/black logo on the front and back. The shirts are available in medium, large, and extra large for \$10.80 [\$12.00 for nonmembers]. Call (888)420-8822 to order.



### HEC.COM Has Investors Flocking

How can a small, fledgling nonprofit like the HEC catapult itself into a major multinational business? How about changing its name to HEC.COM? Maybe, like so many other companies, the "dot com" effect could have venture capitalists vying over who can get the biggest piece of the HEC pie. We'll be sure to show substantial losses each quarter as we gain market share in the up and coming Himalayan market. We'll also be careful to distinguish ourselves from our competitors by spending millions of dollars on advertising.

Well, maybe not. Our attorney informs us that, as a nonprofit, there are no equity positions available in the HEC. So, we're thankful for the following members that chose to support us above the basic level:

### Supporting Members

- Anne Clay, Quantico, MD
- Jack Croucher, Provincetown, MA
- Jim Davidson, Fort Collins, CO
- David Eubank, Chaing Ma, Thailand
- Leah Herman, San Francisco
- Steve Jones, Newport Beach, CA
- Bruce Junell, Belmont, CA
- Angela Lineback, Anchorage, AK
- Mark Michaels, Yorktown Hgts, NY
- Mackey O'Donnell, Laguna Hills, CA
- Katherine Rich, Wellesley, MA
- Nick Spetsieris, Astoria, NY
- Wayne Thompson, Cedar Glen, CA
- David Tresselt, Colorado Springs, CO
- A. Weber & F. Diemoz, Brookline, MA
- Mardi Williamson, St. Thomas, USVI
- Andrew Willgress, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Robert & Mellisa Willingham, Phoenix, MD

### Contributing Members

- Holly Durkin, Silverthorne, CO
- Tunc Findik, Ankara, Turkey
- Bob Greene, Denver, CO
- Barbara Lehman, New York, NY
- Jay Lobb, Sterling Heights, MI
- Monty Smith, Forest Grove, OR
- Harriet Thomas, Humboldt, Iowa

## Classified Section

### TREKKING PARTNERS

I'm planning on trekking to Everest Base Camp the first three weeks of April and am looking for someone to travel with. I'm hoping to hire a local guide and a porter. Please call me if you are interested in joining me. Dana Jones, (206)285-7164

I'm interested in a trip to Mt. Kailash next year and would also like to include Kathmandu and Lhasa. My schedule is open and would have 4 to 6 weeks for travel. I wanted to see if there are others interested in a similar trip for year 2000. Barry Wick, barrywick@earthlink.net

### GUIDES

Pakistan with Pakistanis: **Concordia Expeditions**, your premier connection to Pakistan, offers superior and affordable adventures to K2, Hunza, Snow Lake, Chitral, and the Karakoram Glaciers. Contact Concordia Expeditions, PO Box 4159, Buena Vista, CO 81211 (719)395-9191, info@concordiaexpeditions.com, http://www.concordiaexpeditions.com.

**Explore Himalaya:** We arrange individual/group holidays to all destinations in Nepal, India, and Tibet. High altitude treks & climbing, mountain biking, and white water rafting. Full/part services for mountaineering expeditions, cultural tours, and wildlife safaris. Contact Suman Pandey, PO Box 4902, Kathmandu, Nepal, Fax: 977-1-252 115, e-mail: adventur@mos.com.np

Join the **Himalayan Explorers Club and Pemba Sherpa** on the classic trek in the Everest region, including Kala Pattar and Everest Base camp, with an optional climb of Island Peak. Trips in March and October, 2000. Phone (888)420-8822 or e-mail info@hec.org

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### TRAVEL

**Adventurous Traveler Bookstore** offers the world's most complete selection of outdoor travel books and maps. Books, maps, and videos for the entire Himalayan region. Call (800)282-3963 or order on the web at http://www.adventurousTraveler.com. HEC members get a 10% discount!

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**Himalayan Treasures and Travel.** We have seats to Kathmandu all the time. Call us for the best price and best service. We book for many HEC members and give HEC discounts! Call (800)223-1813 or (510)222-5307, govindsh@himitrek.com, http://www.himalayantrekking.com.

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### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**Himalayan Study-Abroad Program.** Participants will study tourism development along the Everest route, then design community development projects for remote Rolwaling valley, according to individual interests and community needs. Info: www.bridges-prtd.com, Contact: sicroff@bridges-prtd.com

Teach in a Sherpa school near Mt. Everest with the HEC's **Volunteer Nepal Himalaya** program. Includes homestay with Sherpa family. Upcoming programs include, Feb-May 2000, and Sept-Dec 2000. For more information, please contact the HEC at info@hec.org or call (888)420-8822.


(Homestay, continued from page 4)

Eventually, make sleeping arrangements. Usually, you will sleep on the floor with the rest of the family or on benches along the walls. When it is time to leave in the morning, ask how much to pay. Sometimes this will be left up to you; if so, pay appropriately.

You may not want to stay in lodges much once you've had this experience, as it provides a great window on rural life in Nepal. I stay with a family whenever I can and began doing so long before I gained facility with the Nepali language.

Another advantage of this type of tourism for Nepal is that it puts money directly into the hands of ordinary people who may not have invested in the tourism economy or who work in low-paying porter jobs and don't share in any of the money you spend in Nepal.

Tourism tends to concentrate wealth in a few hands: those who own agencies at home and abroad and other investors in the travel industry. This concentration of wealth has an adverse effect on the health and wealth of the toured population, as a new hierarchy based on money succeeds the traditional hierarchy. This new socioeconomic ordering is more extreme than the traditional one. In rich countries we know that the most important factor affecting the health of a population is the gap between the rich and the poor. *By staying with ordinary people and sharing your tourist expenditures with them, you mitigate some of the deleterious health effects of tourism.*

Consider staying in local homes on your next trip to Nepal. I cannot support any other activity associated with trekking more strongly. Staying with a family in Nepal is as fun, adventurous, and memorable as it gets! 

*Stephen Bezruchka is author of "Trekking in Nepal". The HEC offers homestay opportunities in Kathmandu. Members can visit the Clubhouse and browse through a book containing information on families that participate in our homestay program.*

## Himalayan Notes and Travel Tips

*Editor's Note: These are highlights from our online newsletter, HimalayaNet. If you are not receiving HimalayaNet and would like to, please send your e-mail address to [info@hec.org](mailto:info@hec.org).*

### New Nepal Visa/Permit Policy

Entry visas for Nepal now cost US\$30 cash for 60 days (one passport photo is needed) and can be easily obtained at the airport when arriving in Nepal. Visa extensions are processed in person at the Department of Immigration in Kathmandu or Pokhara; They cost in Nepalese rupees the equivalent of US\$50 for 30 days.

You are allowed to stay up to 120 days on a tourist visa; for any extension of up to 150 days, you are required to show an airline ticket with an appropriate date on it.

Trekking permits are no longer required for any nonrestricted areas. Non-restricted areas include Everest, Annapurna, and Langtang-Helambu as well as Makalu, Ganesh Himal, Dhaulagiri, Dhorpatan-Churen, Rara Lake, Kaptada, and Simikot.

Trekking permits, which are obtainable only through a trekking agency, are still required for Kanchenjunga, Rolwaling, Manaslu, Upper Mustang, Upper Dolpo, Lower Dolpo, Simikot to Kailash, etc. Please contact us for the latest prices.

### Report from Ovais, Pakistan Clubhouse, Following Coup

I want to let everyone know that the situation here is completely normal. During and since the coup, there has not been any unusual army presence on the streets of Islamabad, and everywhere it is business as usual. Most people in Pakistan are relieved with the change, and even the Western governments and the United States have supported the change by not saying much more than their obligatory statements and actions in support of democracy.

This army leadership is considered liberal relative to the previous govern-

ments. Their actions have thus far been professional and positive. All citizen rights are still intact, including freedom of speech and press. The new leadership has also made a peace gesture to India by initiating a unilateral withdrawal of army forces from some borders of Pakistan.

You can get latest news about Pakistan from <http://www.dawn.com>, a respected English daily newspaper, from my new Pakistan Web site, <http://www.geocities.com/citpakistan>, or by e-mailing me directly at [ovais@isb.comsats.net.pk](mailto:ovais@isb.comsats.net.pk). Those who have visited Pakistan recently know that foreigners have never been in any danger here.

### Pakistan Opens New Areas

Pakistan has opened new areas to unrestricted trekking. These areas are the Chapursan Valley, the Misgar Valley (including the Kilik and Mintaka valleys), and the entire Shimshal region, including the Chapchingsol Pass. Previously, these areas were either restricted or closed. All are located in the upper Hunza Valley region known as Gojal and are easily accessible from the Karakoram Highway (KKH).

### New Guidebooks and Language Tapes Available

Arlene Blum, of Annapurna fame, has recently sent us her excellent series of language tapes, *Nepali for Trekkers and Travelers* [\$22.50, \$25 for nonmembers]. Also recently released are the updated versions of *Trekking in Tibet*, by Gary McCue [\$17.05, \$18.95 for nonmembers], the *Rough Guide to Nepal*, by David Reed [\$17.05, \$18.95 for nonmembers], *Lonely Planet: Tibet* [\$16.20, \$17.95 for nonmembers].

### Travel Insurance Tip

We've recently learned that one travel insurance company - Tripguard Plus - will cover trips to trekking peaks, even if ropes and ice-axes are used. For more information contact the HEC or call Tripguard at (800)423-3632. Prices are based on the total trip cost.

*(Monsoon, continued from page 3)*

### The Longest Fourth of July


If you do choose to go trekking in Nepal during the monsoon, expect some days of heavy rain. The rain can often come in stretches, as it did for us at the end of the trek.

We had hoped to be back in Kathmandu on July 4th to enjoy Baskin-Robbins ice cream and to dance to the band "Too Loose to Trek." Unfortunately, three days of downpours had washed out every road in Nepal, including the Kathmandu-Pokhara road.

Arriving in Besisehar we learned that our jeep (prearranged) was stuck three hours down the road. After a solid breakfast of ramen noodles, fried rice, and Sprite, we began the long, hot walk toward the jeep. The road was completely destroyed in over 20 parts, and at times we crossed knee-deep mud and thigh-deep rivers that required us to link arms so we weren't swept away! The sound of some hill-sides still sliding away didn't help calm our nerves as we crossed under loose mud and rock.

We finally reached the jeep and were certain that we'd soon be enjoying a mint-chip ice cream cone. However, our celebration was premature, as many more road blocks lay ahead. After a ten-minute drive in our jeep, we got stuck (the jeep is probably still stuck!), and soon we were walking again. For 13 hours we alternated between walking in the scorching heat and cramming into local buses with goats and birds, nervously looking down at fatal drop-offs as the bus accelerated across mudslides.

We reached the Kathmandu-Pokhara road at 6 P.M., just as the sun was setting; we were physically and emotionally exhausted. Our hope of mint-chip ice cream finally melted away when we learned that the main highway was closed due to several major mudslides.

Fortunately, the road to Pokhara had just been cleared, and we ended our adventure later that evening with cold beers, endless plates of vegetable curry, and dreams of mint-chip ice cream. 

# Mountain Quotes

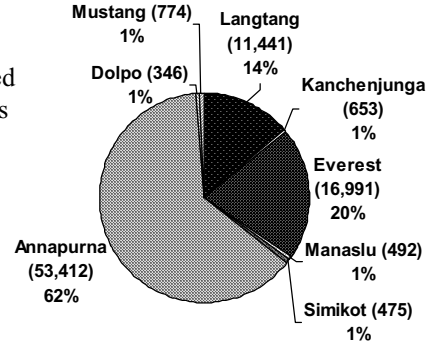
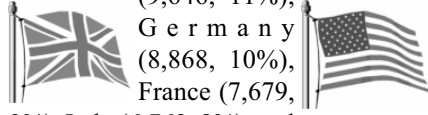
**“To me, climbing Everest was a relief. I was happy to get it out of the way so that I could focus on what I really loved: exploring places where other’s hadn’t gone, with small groups of friends and climbers.”**

Sir Chris Bonnington, speaking in Boulder, Colorado in October, 1999, recalling a response about what it would be like to climb after scaling Mt. Everest.

# “Factoids” From Nepal

**Top visited areas:** According to the Nepal Department of Immigration, there were a total of 84,584 trekking permits issued in 1998. Four out of five trekkers in Nepal visited either the Annapurna region (62%) or the Everest region (20%).

**Top countries sending trekkers:** United Kingdom (14,093, or 17%), United States (9,646, 11%), Germany (8,868, 10%), France (7,679, 9%), Italy (6,762, 8%), and Australia (6,188, 7%)



## Visit the Himalayas with the HEC!

Pemba Tsering Sherpa returns to his homeland to lead the classic Everest trek, including Kala Pattar(18,373 ft), Everest base camp, an optional climb up Island Peak (20,252 ft), and a night “off the beaten track” with Pemba’s family! Pemba will also be leading a “volunteer” trek to his village in December to build a bridge - call for details!

*Trip Dates:*

March 18-April 9, 2000 and October 14-November 5, 2000

Bridge Project: December 2000

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	<p>The Himalayan Explorers Club          PO Box 3665          Boulder, CO 80307          Address Correction Requested          (303) 998-0101          fax: (303) 998-1007          info@hec.org          http://www.hec.org</p> 