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NAMASTE!!

Hello All,

We welcome the inimitable Zoe Lawrence to the Projects Abroad staff this month. She'll be taking over as Care & Community Coordinator and already has lots of inspired ideas (and plenty of work).

The monsoon season has finally ended, which means two things: Dashain and trekking season! Dashain is the biggest festival in the Nepali calendar, lasting around 10 days but it isn't unusual for the country to take the whole month off for the festivities. For tourists, the end of the monsoon season signals the beginning of trekking season as the hills and mountains are lush from the rain and the clouds have parted for some spectacular views. Keep your eyes on the tall horizons and you might just get a glimpse of the Himalayas beyond the Kathmandu Valley.

As usual we have also included the next month's schedule of social events and trips, along with the top tips for Nepal and the wish lists for various placements in and around Kathmandu. This page is especially for future volunteers who would like some idea of how they can contribute further to their placement.

Finally, why not click over and have a look at Projects Abroad Nepal's Country Blog or Facebook and Twitter pages to read about the latest goings-on in Nepal!

Projects Abroad Nepal - The Official Group!

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.nepal/>

Country Blog: <http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/groups/3014/Nepal>

Twitter: http://twitter.com/#!/Proj_AbroadNP

See you round! ☺

Projects Abroad Team, Nepal

The last of the Two Week Specials



Projects Abroad Memories by Kate Shin

A month ago, “Nepal” conjured up nebulous maps of Asia and the vague notion it had something to do with the Himalayas. Today, after spending just two weeks there, I can explain, eloquently, why I would give anything to exchange my comfortable Californian suburban-teen life for a cramped Nepalese abode, all thanks to Projects Abroad.

At the beginning of summer, I was determined to somehow combine my love for travel and medicine into one package deal, so when I stumbled upon Projects Abroad, I pounced on the Two Week Special Medical program. I had no idea what I was getting into and I hadn’t really thought about the trip until I arrived at the airport

in Nepal. I was immediately assaulted by the humidity, and with sweat pouring off my face, I was ushered into a van after meeting my group’s awesome leader, Henry. As we passed green countryside with rivers littered with trash, neighbourhoods with buildings more crowded and colourful than New York City, and cows roaming the streets, I couldn’t help but wonder what I had gotten myself into. I swallowed my anxiety though when I met all the other volunteers at the hotel. As an anglophile and pretty much a “phile” of any place that is foreign, I was delighted to find that the group was filled with English, French, Canadian, Chinese, Polish, and Swiss people, among others. I found myself in the company of other similarly nervous teenagers, but we were all excited for what was to come.

We dove into the medicine right away, just a couple days after we arrived. Basically, we would get assigned a different department every day, and for most of the morning and afternoon we shadowed doctors or nurses in their activities. The constant rotation of departments exposed me to units like the ICU, Radiology, Orthopaedics, Paediatrics, OB/GYN, Operation, Psychiatry, and Surgery. My involvement with patients was limited, especially because of my age and language barriers, but I listened and did whatever I could.

Because Nepal is a third-world Asian country, medicine is used only as a last resort because of the cost and for cultural reasons (while doctors are revered as almost “god-like,” medicine is seen as an invasion of the body’s natural processes), and so I saw patients with major afflictions. I remember a beautiful Nepalese teenage girl, newly married, in the ICU because of a poison suicide attempt that failed to kill her, her heavily-lashed eyes following the doctors silently around the room. I remember the young woman from a nearby rural village in the Labour and Delivery department, her back bowed with pain and sweat pouring off her face, which later smoothed as she held her newborn son. I remember the surgeons who struggled to quiet a toddler boy in the ER, trying to stave off sympathy,

working as quickly as they could to minimize the time he had to spend on the operating table. Despite their different language and clothing, the people in the hospital all had their own unique physical problems and were desperate to be rid of them, and so through that universal desire to be free of pain, I was able to build that first empathetic connection to the Nepalese people. The kindness they showed me—the patient explanations from the doctors, the curious questions from the nurses, and the people’s tolerance for us, the foreigners, in the first place—helped me turn empathy into appreciation and attachment (the first Nepalese word I learned and used the most there was “dhanybhad,” which means “thank you.”) Although the medical system of Nepal is very different from America’s, my experience at the hospital only affirmed my aspiration to be a doctor. No matter the place, people need help, and being a doctor enables one to respond to their needs in the most fundamental physical way.

The program offered the best of both the educational and experiential worlds. During the day, I learned through observation and lectures held at the hospital’s library. We even participated in a community outreach event, where we taught young children how to brush their teeth. During the evenings and nights, I was able to explore Nepal. Throughout the two weeks we stayed in multiple places in the cities Chitwan, which was a bit more rural, and Kathmandu, which was urban and tourist-oriented. I was with an amazing group and we all got along swimmingly, and we found things to do together every night. There were organized activities, like elephant riding in the river and hiking through forests, and for the other days we were free to do what we wanted. If we were tired, we hung out in our hotel rooms or at the pool. If not, we went out to shop or visit the local restaurants since the cities were safe. (Side note: if you want to learn how to haggle, Nepal is where you need to be). Sometimes, when I feel particularly homesick for Nepal, I close my eyes and I imagine myself on the terrace of my favourite restaurant in Kathmandu, my group and I lounging around a table enjoying the night’s warm humid weather. It’s an intoxicating experience, to be in another country surrounded by people from all over the world with similar ambitions.

It’s hard to believe how much I changed because of a trip, but by the end of it, my resolve to become a doctor solidified, I fell in love with the Nepalese culture, I learned how to navigate through a foreign country, and I formed lifelong friendships—not bad for a couple of weeks. I honestly believe that programs such as Projects Abroad’s are invaluable because they offer all the benefits of travel, education, and volunteering. Because words are insufficient in articulating my gratitude, all I can simply say is ‘dhanybhad’ Nepal and Projects Abroad for two of the most incredible weeks of my life.



Introducing Zoe

Care & Teaching Coordinator

My name is Zoe and I'm a new staff member for Projects Abroad, Nepal. I grew up in rural mid Wales - a far cry from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu! I spent the first 22 years of my life in education and have spent the past two years living in Bristol, England, working as a Psychology Research Assistant at the University of Bath. When the research project came to an end I decided it was finally time to do something different...well you couldn't get much more different than Nepal so I set out on a new adventure.

I was a volunteer here on the Care programme over the summer. My first experience of Nepal was being hit with the heavy pre-monsoon heat of June, and a brilliantly terrifying van ride to the hotel from the airport. Through force of habit, as I jumped up into the van, I went to put on my seat belt at which point, Santos, the driver, laughed 'no point!' and we bounced off, weaving through taxis, children, dogs and cows round the dusty winding streets, into the heart of Kathmandu.

Three months went too fast. I loved my placement, made some amazing friends and fell in love with the children and the mountains and I didn't want to say goodbye! But then Projects Abroad said they needed someone to start working in September so I jumped at the opportunity. I went home for 2 weeks in September (the busiest 2 weeks of my life saying hi and bye to everyone I hadn't seen for the past 3 months and wouldn't see for a year) and came right back out!

Nepal is a weird and wonderful country and you can guarantee you will see more people and things on one motorcycle than you have ever, or will ever see.



I look forward to meeting you when you get here!

Zoe Lawrence

Volunteer Donations

Volunteering in itself is always a fantastic way to help people that are less fortunate than ourselves but this month there have been a few volunteers in particular who have contributed above and beyond what is expected of them... the whole team just want to give a special thanks to everyone! These contributions are very gratefully received and we just hope you realise the amazing difference you are making.

Bhaktapur CBR

A big warm thank you to our all-Danish team at BCBR Janne Molgaard, Rikke Pedersen and Maria Hollander for raising Rs. 28,000 to provide medicine for 17 children that suffer from epilepsy, as well as 2 pairs of trousers for 8 children. Thanks girls for all your hard work and great enthusiasm you showed during your time here!

MSPN

We would also like to thank Niamh Hunt for raising Rs. 244,816 and donating it to MSPN. The funds raised will go towards food and medicine for all the children at the center for HIV+ center. Thanks again Niamh for all your work and energy that you poured into this project!

Celebrating Dashain!

The holidays saw Nepal come to a halt basically; the streets were quiet and peaceful, smelling like curry and then blood, giant swings were erected in every neighborhood, and everybody walked around with the thickest blotches of rice-tika on their foreheads.

For 15 days, all the castes and creeds of Nepal celebrated the supreme goddess Durga and her victorious battle over the demon Mahisasur, as told in the Ramayana. The first 9 days signified the ferocious battle fought between the goddess and the demon, while the 10th day commemorated the slaying of the demon. The next 5 days were a celebration of the victory, reminding everyone that the universal truths of justice, virtue, and truth will always prevail over evil and injustice. Throughout Nepal, families gathered no matter how far they had to travel, sometimes even traveling between three major cities in one day. All households are cleansed and prepared in order for the goddess to bless them with good fortune.

We celebrated Tika Day at the J&K House. This day traditionally features the village elders handing out blessings, tika, and money to everyone. A long line was formed at the J&K House of the current kids that stay there, those that have moved on returned for the day, and of course the Projects Abroad volunteers and staff were present. There was a huge feast where we all over-ate.

Probably the most bizarre day occurred the day before Tika Day, as Nepalese everywhere blessed the tools that were given to them by the gods that have made our lives easier. While this has always included giving tikas to things such as hoes, shovels, and buffalos, now this includes cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and even TVs! The sight of a row of cars with the hood opened up and offerings of food rested on the engines, while bright red tikas adorned the fronts was definitely a comic sight to behold. Even Nepalese people themselves could afford a self-conscious smile as they put food out and draped their motorcycles in flowered necklaces.

And then there was also the slaughter-sacrifice day of animals. Goats, chickens, ducks, and buffalos were included in the mass-sacrifice. There was lots of blood on the streets (Kathmandu Durbar Square resembled a slaughter-house) and everyone was walking around with their animals to bring to the feast. I saw goats transported on motorcycles, in taxis, on the rooftops of buses, while ducks and chickens were carried around in people's hands. This practice is, however, on the wane as Nepali people are starting to lose their taste for this tradition.

As normal life begins to resume, as traffic gets back to normal, the giant swings beginning to stop being used every day, those that are there know they have experienced something purely endemic, something unrivalled anywhere else in the world. But we don't need to wait much longer though for another holiday, Tihar (the festival of lights) is only 2 weeks away.

World News

Earthquake in Nepal

In late September the Indian subcontinent witnessed a devastating earthquake that reached beyond India, into Nepal and the Himalayas. While India bared the full force of the quake, it was also felt by all of us here. We were a little bit shaken by the experience but thankfully everyone is safe and sound. Yet many communities here are still going through the rubble, the extent of the devastation more than just a vivid memory as the recovery is underway. All our hearts go to those families and communities.

Wish Lists

Projects Abroad Nepal's volunteers often want to bring items out here for their placements but find it hard to know what the different placements need. We've put together some 'wish lists' for some of the centres and schools to give new volunteers an idea of what is most needed...

DMD Centre (8 boys aged 10-18)

*Games
Bubbles/straws
Clothes
Toothbrushes
THEY LOVE SPIDERMAN!*

Physio Placements

*Therabands
Gym Balls
Exercise Sheets
'Tuffie' wipes*

Snowland Ranag School (160 kids aged 5-19)

*Notebooks/Crayons
Clothes
Shoes
Balls*

Surya Vinayak English Secondary School

Reading books

Anal Jyoti Boarding School

*Notebooks
Pencils/Sharpeners
Eraser
Materials for creative
activities*

Life Development Centre

(38 people aged 7-40)

*Clothes
Underwear
Socks
Pens, Crayons, Paints
Pillows
Toothbrushes
Soap*

Patan & Bhaktapur CBR

*Wedge Mats
Floor Mats
Bubble wrap
Blankets
Children's clothes
Games/toys/blocks
Folders/Filing
Medicine Balls
Nappies*

Medical Placements

*If you are
coming to Nepal
to do a medical
placement then
please
remember your
lab coat!!!*

Friendship/Happy or J & K Houses

*Reading books
Creative materials
Clothes
Shoes*

NRH/MSPN

*Creative Books
Reading material
Clothing
Shoes
Towels*

OR...if you would like to fundraise before you leave for Nepal then we can help you to buy things for your placement whilst you are out here!

What to do in Kathmandu??...

More information on these trips will be given nearer the time so remember to check emails and phones for updates!

November 4th – 6th
Pokhara trip

Friday November
4th
Volunteer dinner

November 18th –
19th
The Last Resort!

November 26th
Dirty weekend @
the Peace Academy

If you have a special interest in an activity then get in contact with the team and we can try to organise a group trip to take the pressure off you! And also Hotel excelsior is very happy to arrange trips or transport if you don't fancy what Projects Abroad have organised.