

THE OFFICIAL **NEWSLETTER**

For Projects Abroad Nepal



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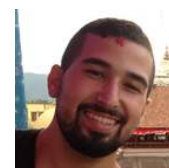
Celebrating the Holidays in Nepal

A Note from Michael Goodwin, Projects Abroad Nepal Communications Officer

As the cool mountain air rolls into Kathmandu, we finish the year's tourist season in Nepal. Holiday decorations around the city bring a glow that reminds us of Diwali, which only passed two months ago. As clouds cover the country's best views, trekkers thin out on Nepal's many trails. A slower pace in the city may mean less traffic, and commotion, but with the new year, a new beginning arrives in Nepal.



January and February herald the beginning of another, shorter tourist season, and many new faces will land in Nepal to hike, explore, and traverse this nation. The new year also means a fresh group of Projects Abroad volunteers arriving in Kathmandu, Chitwan, and Ghandruk. With this new beginning, Projects Abroad commences its 16th year of service in Nepal. 2015 will provide many new opportunities to assist in the development of this beautiful nation through projects in education, childcare, medicine, and environmental conservation. The holidays are a time to be thankful for the hard work done by our compassionate volunteers. A new year means a new chance for Projects Abroad volunteers to make a lasting impact through service.



Michael Goodwin
Projects Abroad Nepal

Kathmandu Comes Alive with SAARC

Genevieve Cox, Projects Abroad Nepal Teaching and Care Coordinator

One morning I stepped through the district of Thamel to find the ground sticky with freshly laid tarmac. I rushed through the acrid air, worrying for my shoes and thought nothing more of it. Later I saw my first functioning traffic lights of Kathmandu, followed by women crouched by the roadside painting the kerb. Suddenly, everywhere I looked, Kathmandu was being given a face-lift. Just a cosmetic mind you – paint can't hide the tangled electricity wires or crazy traffic.

Unbeknown to me, the reason people were feverishly re-painting road-signs and redirecting street dogs was that Nepal was preparing to host the 2014 SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit. Heads of State from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives all came together to discuss policies, the economy, partnerships and most importantly as a sign of solidarity across this region. Nepalis are always excited by a visit from the Indian Prime Minister due to the close relationship between the two nations and in fact, when Narendra Modi accepted his position, he invited all SAARC country representatives to his swearing-in ceremony. It was a crucial diplomatic move, demonstrating the significance of SAARC.

Of course, this convention had other implications for Kathmandu: to keep traffic to a minimum, alternating numbered plates were banned from the roads on alternate days, government offices were closed for two days and the schools had a mini holiday. Subsequently, Teaching volunteers could go to some of the children's homes Projects Abroad works with in Kathmandu. This unexpected holiday meant that volunteers had the freedom to plan their own activities, help with homework and play sports. All the children in these centres have either lost parents or have families who are unable to look after them. The SAARC summit gave our volunteers the chance to provide some additional support to these children.

The SAARC summit was a lovely time for our volunteers and the children we work with, it was a crucial political conference but it has also made my walks around Thamel a lot prettier!



Our Nepali Walk

Kristy Moulds, Australia, Age 20



A fellow volunteer and I stopped on our walk home from work to take a picture of some baby goats out the front of a house. The man that lived in the house ran out all excited and gestured for us to take more pictures of him posing with the goats. He then ran and got his wife and stood proudly with her in front of their home for more photos. They were so excited to see the pictures on the camera screen! After saying thank you and goodbye we left, and every morning on our way to work he greets us with a big smile and a Namaste!

Today we went to a store and got the photos printed out for them and had one framed for them. They were so excited and showing everyone the picture in the frame. It was a really beautiful moment!



Winter Special Volunteers Make Strides in Nepal

Clare Hobern, Projects Abroad Nepal Short Term Special and Groups Coordinator

December also saw the arrival of our Winter Short Term Special groups, of volunteers aged 16 -19. Our Care and Community group based in Kathmandu worked on projects ranging from renovating and painting a school in need, assisting in our reading club with local children's homes and working with local students in educational games and activities. Our Medical Group, in the town of Bharatpur in the Chitwan region, were able to observe rounds, surgeries and consultations in the main regional hospital, work with children with disabilities and present on a range of medical research topics.

All the while, volunteers were able to enjoy the treats Nepal has to offer through its rich culture and stunning landscapes, visiting the Buddhist stupas of Kathmandu and viewing elephants and rhinos in the jungles of Chitwan National Park.

Our enthusiastic volunteers were able to achieve a large amount in the short time they were with us here in Nepal, ranging from observing and researching new procedures, creating a beautiful mural on a local school and teaching children about the importance of dental hygiene and hand washing in our outreach activities. Thanks again to all our fantastic Short Term volunteers for their hard work and dedication!





We hope you enjoyed your Christmas holidays with family and friends! Our volunteers around the world celebrated Christmas far away from home, yet our Nepal staff made sure to keep homesickness at bay, organizing special treats and festive activities. Here are a few photos from our holiday party in Kathmandu, enjoyed by volunteers and staff alike.

Wishing everyone in the Projects Abroad family a happy and healthy 2015!

