

November 28th and 29th

Our final morning in Pokhara. We were up by 7 to finish our packing and get our act together for another move. Andrea went to get a pastry while I ate at the kitchen here.

I had some nice pens that I had been saving back along with small keychain lights that I gave to the kitchen and front desk boys who have been so nice and helpful. Each year I try and leave them with something, a few Rupees or a gift. For the two sisters who clean the hotel I gave necklaces and bracelets, their faces lit up. Kara provided these to them last year.

We paid our bill which came to \$50 each for eight nights plus a few breakfasts, one heck of a deal, again thanks to Dhiren and Ajaya. We took showers and sported clean clothes and were off to the Busy Bee for lunch before we would head out. I had an excellent Hummus platter and the pita was made into wings and the hummus the body of a bird....what a presentation. I also had an excellent ice tea (first ice in a month) that had fresh mint sprigs and lemon.

We had arranged a taxi earlier and he came at 2 pm and we were off to the airport. At the Yeti Airlines we were charged 200 NPR airport tax and luckily I was allowed my two bags w/o further charges. We waited an hour for our flight to board and were in the front of the line to get left side (mountain view) seats. It was a small plane, maybe 30 passengers with a few open seats. As we rose above the clouds the Himalayas were stretched left and right as far as you could see. There were English folks across the aisle that were leaning over to try and photograph so I gave up my seat as they had not see this sight before. They thanked me too many times. I also took a couple of Yeti Airlines barf bags for a few of my friends who would appreciate the uniqueness of such a gift.

A bus met us at the plane and deposited us at the domestic baggage terminal (outside) and our friend Raj from the Kathmandu Peace Guest House was waiting with the van. It was around 5 and the traffic was crazy (it always is) and we took several back-street routes to get to the Guest House, some of which I had never been on (of course there are thousands of them I have never been on).

Kathmandu was colder than Pokhara and we could feel the chill. I still had on sandals and the toes were getting nippy and we had to put on the fleece coats. The last thing I wanted to do was go into the craziness of Thamel so we ate veg fried rice at the guest house with a hot lemon drink, light and warming. I also asked for another blanket. The room had a double bed, smaller than the one in Pokhara so for one night it would be scrunched.

The night was cold, we were tired and were in bed by 8 pm and I was awake at 12:30 having slept soundly since then. Ok, here I am, can't read or it would wake

Andrea, try to still my thoughts and it helps a little but the fact is I'm awake most of the night, sometimes slipping into a sleep until 7 am.

After my morning cleaning and grooming (for those that know me this ain't much) I get on line to check my Air India flight for tomorrow. It appears to have been changed from 10 and until 11:35. I will check a few more times before tomorrow, as I stated in an earlier email, flights are canceled and changed frequently here.

We share time at breakfast to talk about our day's plans. I had decided that I could not leave Kathmandu without returning to Boudhanath, one of Buddhism's most sacred places and a World Heritage site also.

It is described as a great Stupa in the center of a natural Mandala, a store of sacred energy. It is one of the most important sites for Buddhist pilgrimage. It was a place for travelers on the trade route between Tibet and India to seek blessings for safe passage. It became even more important in the Buddhist community with the influx of Tibetan refugees in the early 60's when China invaded Tibet. Surrounding the great Stupa with its Buddha Eyes looking down upon you is a town of craftsmanship, businesses and monasteries. It is the principle center of Himalayan Buddhist worship and studies in the Kathmandu Valley. Here is the official website for more info and photos:

www.boudhanath.com

Each time I visit here the first thing is to circumvent the Stupa clockwise, spinning every prayer wheel found on its lower base which takes a good 25 minutes. The sacred number in Tibet is 108 (found on the prayer beads) but there are more prayer wheels than that with as there are little temples within the base also. Spinning prayers across the universe for those in need is worthy of the time. The scene is amazing as this is a Buddhist village and there are many Tibetans dressed in ethnic attire (not for the tourists) mixed in with the rest of us as are the orange robed monks who study in the two major monasteries here.

I came today to have time to myself, to just allow myself to be here without any purpose, to feel the energy, to be in a sacred space. I take few photos as it feels invasive today to do so even though the Tibetans, especially the older men and women are incredibly beautiful, colourful and unique in their attire; with turquoise coral, gold and silver jewellery; weathered and aged faces, many who made that dramatic escape from their occupied homeland.

As I am heading up the steps to the second level I encounter the three English folks from the plane ride. What a nice chance meeting. We chat for a bit and then go our ways but about 10 minutes later, the young man, Eric seeks me out and says that they felt as if I was an interesting person and if its not to forward they would like to have dinner with me if I would recommend a restaurant. What a wonderful offer. I get his sisters phone # and tell him I will call later this afternoon for arrangements. Geez...the pressure will be on to be interesting!

I head back to Thamel a little later to seek out a cyber site to print out my Indian Hotel confirmation. They have emailed me that they will have a pickup for me (a charge of course) and will transport me back to the airport. Good deal, which means I don't have to haggle with the Indian taxi drivers who are relentless in their pursuit of a fare.

When I get back to the room, Andrea comes a bit later. She has been to the Garden of Dreams (we went two years ago) and is showing me her photos, very beautiful. I can't remember the story of this place but it is very cool. This is the website: www.gardenofdreams.org.np She showers and completes packing and at 6pm is off to the airport. We say our goodbyes and safe travel wishes.

Andrea has mentioned several times that she may not return next year. There were some challenging times for her (outside of me) and she misses going to the Baltic Sea as she has in the past. If she doesn't return then one-third of our financial resources will be gone and I will have to step up the begging so be aware.

I called Eric and left a message about dinner and close to 7 I'm off to see if they show up at the restaurant. I have chosen the OR2K, the one that we had eaten at when we passed through Kathmandu at the first of the month. They are an all vegetarian restaurant, excellent food, check out the website: <http://www.or2k.org/about.php?pa=631>

Right at 7, Eric, his sister Natalie and their mother Mia appear on the street. Great to see them and glad they found the place; it's not easy in Kathmandu to find street addresses. We head upstairs and get seated immediately, it's full as a group behind us gets the last spaces.

Eric and his family have British accents, so I assumed they were English, turns out they are Israeli and have been living in England for some time. Eric is a business consultant and travels to assist corporations towards greater success. Natalie is a theatre producer in London and Mia is a manager of a software firm. The travel each year as a family and have been to the US, Thailand, Laos, South America and this year in Nepal were trekking a portion the Annapurna circuit. They have interesting lives!

I shared the passion that has brought me back to Nepal for seven years, tales of the treks through the central rural mountains, the needs of the schools, people who have become friends and the process of raising funds throughout the year.

We had a great meal and conversation; the most interesting I've had in Nepal, stimulating and diverse, touching on a little across the board. They are heading to India for three days and to the Taj Mahal in Agra, leaving Nepal tomorrow in a later flight than mine. By 9:30 we were all tired and well fed.

We bid our goodbyes and of course they were invited to West Virginia if they ever come that way again. Natalie also offered that if I was in London and needed a place to stay to give them a call. It was a most enjoyable evening and company.

I got back to the room and it was mine! Alone at last (no offense Andrea) and the bed was available to sprawl around in during the night. Whoopee! I was soon asleep, my last night in Nepal.

“What I dream of is an art of balance”. [Henri Matisse](#)

Peace

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