

Namaste, I am Romy Schmit, 21, from Luxembourg and here is a testimony about my 2 months in Nepal, from March 19 to May 17. 2006.

March 19:

After a few weeks of preparation, I finally reached Kathmandu Airport, tired, but happy to be here.

When I stepped out of the airport building, I just felt overwhelmed by the heat (it's about 15 degrees Celsius warmer than at home) and because there were so many people, just men, shouting the names of different hotels and trying to take my luggage van out of my hands.

I felt very happy, when I saw Raj, someone working for "Kathmandu Peace Guest House", who was waiting for me, and who took me to this Guest House in Thamel.

There I met 2 other volunteers, Megan from New York and Cyrus from Bristol and also Rabyn and Bijen, from "HOPE AND HOME".

In the next few days, I stayed in the Guest House, had nepali lessons with Yuxeena and they took me to some important Hindu and Buddhist temples around Kathmandu.

And then, on my 4. day (March 22), I was "ready" to leave for my host family. They lived just 15 minutes away from the tourist centre Thamel, in a district called Chabahil.

The family welcomed me warmly and treated me as their own, from the very first day. During the next 7 weeks, I really felt at home. Archana and Shristie, their "children" helped me a lot learning the language and about the Nepali culture...

The language is not that difficult to learn, but it's hard to form your own sentences, because the word-order is "strange". So different to any other languages...

But, I think, I learned a lot in my 2 months, and at the end of my stay, I understood mostly what people said, when they spoke in a slowly way... :0)

March 27:

On this day, Christina another volunteer, from Singapore arrived in the host family, but she stayed there just for 2 weeks.

Together we started volunteering in an orphanage called: "Orphan Disable Destitute and Dalit Preservation Child Home" in Chuchchepati, Kathmandu.



At the beginning it was very hard to communicate with the children (3 to 12 years old), but after some time, we all found a way (a mixture of English and some Nepali) and had a good time.

The kids were really nice and talented in doing handicrafts, and so, we started painting or passed the day with playing games or teaching them something...

We normally got there at 11 AM, after having Dhal Bhat in the host family and stayed until 4 or 5 PM.

At that time, there were still school holidays, so the children spent the whole day at the orphanage. Sometimes, it was really hard to keep all of them busy, 49 kids running around, not knowing what to do with their time...

They live in an old house, without any decoration, and so Christina and I started painting some flowers, fishes and cartoons on the walls.

The children have to live in very poor and heartbreaking conditions, the 21 girls sleep in only 8 beds! They have no toys, and nearly no furniture.

April 1:

Saturday is the Nepalese day-out. So, Christina and I decided to leave Kathmandu for going to a small village "DHULIKHEL", 30km outside on 1650m. It's a place, famous for its fantastic views on the Himalaya Range, but (like most of the time...), the sky was not clear enough to see any mountains...

April 3:



On Monday evening, we had our volunteer-dinner, with 4 of 5 volunteers and the staff of Hope and Home.

We had a good time and laughed a lot!

April 6/7/8/9:

These were the first days of strikes, demonstrations and curfews, during these days, we had to stay at home, doing nothing and waiting...

For me this was a waste of time, because I did not come to Nepal to stay in the house during 9 days (altogether).

It was a very strange atmosphere in the streets, with policemen sitting on their trucks and a lot of people walking around, as cars or taxis were not allowed to drive.

And, which is unusual for Kathmandu, it was quiet, no sounds of the horns and the air was clearer!

The water is going to be rare. On some days, there was nearly no water in the tap, as it had not been raining for a few weeks...

And to make it perfect, the mosquitoes are eating me! I have been bitten about 40 times in only 3 nights! They seemed to like my "mosquito-repellent"! :0)

April 13/14:

As there was "Nepal's New Years Day 2063" on the 14th, the protestations stopped for a few days, so that Christina and I left for a change for "BHAKTAPUR", a small, quiet and peaceful city, lying 12 km outside of KTM, where we spend the new years eve.

It's called "City of Culture" and a very nice place with a special atmosphere. Every tourist has to pay 750 Rp, with which they keep the city clean and for restoring old buildings.

We had a good time, watched the celebrations in the streets and I met an acquaintance from Luxembourg>> It's a small world!!

April 15:

Back at the orphanage, I started teaching some drawing and painting to the children and I tried to teach them luxembourgish songs, which was really funny!

Sometimes, before I got back to my Host-family's house, I went to the cyber-café, or to a nearby supermarket "Bhat Bhateni", which was bigger, than I expected it to be in Nepal.

April 16:

Today is Easter, and I nearly forgot it, because here, nobody is talking about it... :0)

April 25:

“Back to normal”, that’s what Archana, my “host-sister” told me, when I got up in the morning. The King had finally agreed, to what the Nepalese demanded. >> No more curfews and demonstrations, as there had been more during the last week!

But I was not sure what to understand under “normal”...

In the next days, the situation seemed to get better and I started planning my trip to “Royal Chitwan National Park”.

Nepali people are very friendly, but what I did not like, was, when you go as a foreigner through the streets of Kathmandu (the same in any other place...), everybody is looking at you.

And especially, when you walk through Thamel, the tourist area, they will not stop asking you: “Hi, how are you?”, “Do you want to buy this?” and “Where are you from?”

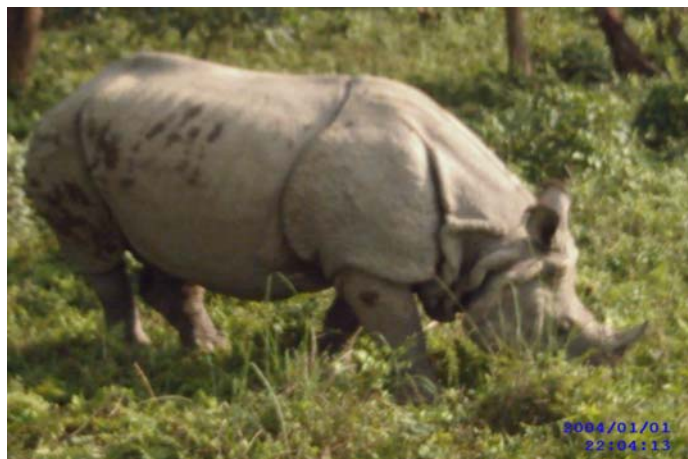
You may think, I am exaggerating, but it’s very annoying, if you cannot go 3 meters, without being asked...

April 28:

Today, a journalist came to the orphanage, he was going to write an article about it and then later, he also took an interview with me.

He told me, it would be published in the newspaper the next day, but, until today, 5 weeks later, it hadn’t appeared yet...

April 29-May 1:



I spent 3 days at the “Royal Chitwan National Park” in Sauraha, where I arrived after a nearly 6-hours-drive by bus from KTM.

It’s much hotter and so quiet, that I quickly forgot the noisy capital. I did the typical tourist program-activities, like visiting a Tharu village and an elephant breeding centre, I did jungle walk, canoe-trip, and the famous elephant ride through the jungle (where we saw some Rhinos, Deers and

Monkeys..), but unfortunately, our elephant took a cold, so that it had to sneeze every few minutes! On our legs!

I enjoyed it anyway! :0)

May 2-5:

These were my last 4 days working at the orphanage.

Time has gone by so quickly! When I started planning my volunteer service, I thought, that 2 months were long enough, for the first time doing this, just to see how it is.

But now, I realized that I just got accustomed to everything and already had to leave...

School had begun, so I went to the orphanage once in the morning and back in the afternoon.

On Friday afternoon, the children performed a “good-bye-show” for me, with singing, dancing and some games.

I will miss them and the time we spent together and will always remember their cheerful “Good morning, miss!”

May 6-14:



During my last week in Nepal, I went to POKHARA and from there, I made a short Trek of 5 days through the Annapurna-hills up to POON HILL.

I had a very friendly and helpful trekking guide, called Shiba.

Nepal is a beautiful country! The landscape, natural beauty and panorama were amazing, but the weather was not that good, it rained

a lot.

There were only a few tourists on our way, but lots of leeches!

Anyway, this was wonderful and I will surely do it again, when I come back! :0)

May 15-17:

On my last days in KTM, I bought some souvenirs and presents and went one more time to the orphanage to say “goodbye”.

I couldn't believe that everything was "over". And now, looking back, I realize that so much happened in such a short time!

In summary,

This was a memorable experience, which made deep impressions on my mind and I can highly suggest it!

I had a nice time, I learned a lot about Nepali culture and its friendly people. I enjoyed every moment of my stay, and I will miss my new friends, my host-family, the kids and staff from the orphanage and also the people from HOPE AND HOME, who made everything possible, and whose support helped me a lot!

Bye,

Romy Schmit from Luxembourg
June 2006