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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD NEPAL



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An Experience at MSPN

Julie Deziel – Canada

MSPN



À tous et toutes les futurs-es missionnaires de Projects Abroad, c'est avec beaucoup de plaisir que je partage mon aventure népalaise :

Je serai dans le district de Lalitpur encore pour le prochain mois afin de réaliser un stage en éducation à la sexualité dans un centre accueillant des enfants vivant avec le VIH. Ainsi, ma mission entre dans le cadre de crédits universitaires. Beaucoup de plaisir!

Je suis étudiante au Baccalauréat sexologie à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM). Ce programme interdisciplinaire, unique en Amérique du nord, a la particularité de former les étudiants à la création de programmes d'éducation à la sexualité. Il s'agit de ma dernière année avant d'entreprendre

un projet de maîtrise en recherche-intervention sur l'exploration d'une nouvelle approche d'intervention des programmes à visée sexologique.

Au cours de mon parcours universitaire, j'ai développé une grande sensibilité pour la condition de groupes marginalisés, par exemple les personnes vivant avec le VIH. Le centre MSPN m'offre un environnement intéressant pour me découvrir en tant que future professionnelle. Entre 10 et 18 enfants y résident avec un parent ou un tuteur. Durant les prochaines semaines, j'appliquerai un court programme d'intervention pour favoriser le développement des enfants face aux difficultés associées à l'infection.

On ne reconnaît pas facilement les personnes vivant avec le VIH. Les mythes et jugements négatifs à leur égard les mène dans bien des cas à garder le silence. Le stigma entourant ces personnes est particulièrement fort au Népal. Pourtant, l'infection n'est qu'un aspect de leur vie ne les empêchant pas d'être une personne à part entière. Ces petites personnes sont très attachantes et un simple calin peut faire une grande différence.

Durant la matinée, les autres bénévoles et moi offrons des cours d'anglais et des activités ludiques aux jeunes. Ils m'appellent «didi», ce qui signifie «grande soeur». Ils aiment beaucoup apprendre car la scolarité n'est pas facilement

accessible en raison de la précarité économique. Une fois par semaine, nous organisons une activité de création de bracelets pour les mères et les enfants. Celle-ci fait fureur! Nous accrochons de la laine népalaise à un orteil pour tisser en groupe sous le soleil. C'est l'occasion d'échager et d'offrir un cadeau à quelqu'un que l'on aime.

En dehors de mon stage à MSPN, j'ai également eu la chance de mettre en pratique un atelier sur le thème de l'autonomisation ou «empowerment» dans un orphelinat pour jeunes filles. L'atelier a suscité beaucoup de rires et de réflexions positives. À travers des activités, nous avons mené des discussions sur les différences entre le rôle de l'homme et le rôle de la femme au Népal. Elles se sont ouverte à partager leurs rêves et ambitions en tant que futures femmes.

Il est facile de saisir l'opportunité de vivre spontanément des moments de partage et de plaisir avec un groupe de personne, peu

Nepal Fact #11

Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu is considered one of the most important Hindu temples dedicated to Shiva in the world. Every day, hundreds of cremations are performed at this site in accordance with Hindu practices.

importe le type de mission. Je continue de cumuler bons souvenirs.



Welcome, Clare!

This week, we have a new Volunteer Coordinator joining our staff here in Nepal. Clare will be responsible for doing inductions and feedbacks with volunteers, organizing social events, and dealing with general problems. Feel free to say hello!



Clare grew up in Sydney, Australia, and studied International Communication and Geography at university. She spent six months studying in Sweden, travelling all over Europe and parts of North Africa. She has spent the last few years working part time in administration and research in Sydney, and recently spent some time doing research in rural Borneo. She is very excited to join the Nepal team.

Holi in Nepal

*Ian Sandler – United States of America
Information Manager*



For one day a year, society suspends all laws. Masked vigilantes roam the streets, distributing their particular brand of justice with no regard for human life. The streets run red as the elderly pace in their homes, contemplating a safe time to venture outside. Some call this anarchy; others call it Holi.

The festival of Holi turns the Hindu world into a warzone; albeit a colorful one filled with zero casualties. Paint fills the air as children hurl water balloons and colored powder at those still clean. From the young to the old, rich to the poor, everyone is fair game on Holi, and complaining is strictly forbidden. It is said that the holiday commemorates the beginning of spring, and the throwing of paint and

abundance of colors should remind one to relax and enjoy life. If dodging a speeding water balloon while a ten year old slaps you in the face with blue paint is relaxing, consider me the chilliest man in Nepal.

On this particular Holi, Projects Abroad staff and volunteers headed to J & K House, a children's home in Kathmandu. A five minute journey to the van turned into a twenty minute tactical lesson in evasion. If I were a young Nepali armed to the teeth with powdered weaponry, my first target would probably be a confused looking group of 21 foreigners as well. At the home, the kids were eager to fill us in on the action we had been missing on our van ride. To be fair, if you give a ten year old some paint and a water gun any day of the year, similar results are bound to occur. There seldom is a moment more pure and full of joy than an 18 year old Danish volunteer being bombarded on all sides by a rainbow of watery missiles. Everyone was running to reload and grab fresh paint, to fill their next balloon with water, to take revenge on that six year old girl who just hit you in the face with a mouthful of green. It is safe to say good times were had by all.

What is most interesting about Holi is that there is no Puja, or religious prayer and offerings, during the holiday. While during Deshain or Tihar Hindus must pray multiple times a day and visit their local temples, Holi is celebrated for the honest task of enjoying life. In a country where every day can be a struggle, and poverty is rampant, it's refreshing to see everyone let loose. In the colored chaos of Holi, every denizen of Nepal can sit back, and enjoy the simple pleasures of a handful of paint.

Holi at J&K House!



Thanks to everyone who came, and we hope you had fun!

Places We Love: Last Resort

*Line Andersen – Denmark
Chitwan Medical Teaching Hospital*

The premise is simple: write about your experience at a Nepali location that you love, that stood out to you, that you'll travel back to while daydreaming at your school desk or office cubicle. The place can be your favorite cafe, your host family's home, or even a dusty road in the middle of Nepali nowhere.

The idea is to be able to see how your experiences in a place compared to someone else's, and to gain insight into the #PlacesWeLove you may have not yet explored. I hope many of you decide to share, and they can be emailed to me at iansandler@projects-abroad.org.



After seven weeks in Chitwan, I made the craziest choice ever. Before I tell you all about that, I just want to tell you about Chitwan, because even though it has become my everyday life, it is still quite different from what I'm used to. I share a home with a caring family, as well as a friend of mine. We live without hot water facilities nor Internet and we usually wait until late in the evening for power, but this has, surprisingly enough, not been a big problem for us. We have so much fun with the other volunteers that we don't need any of these things. Our days are filled with movie-nights, football training, walks, trips to wherever we want, with delicious food at lunchtimes. We don't need luxuries for that.

Now getting back to my crazy choice; my lovely friend and I – together with six other crazy volunteers –

chose to Bungee Jump and/or Canyon Tandem Swing at The Last Resort, this being the second highest place to jump from in Asia, with the height of 160 meters from a bridge. IT WAS ABSOLUTLY TERRIFYING! You stand there and look at your friends jump, one by one, until it's your turn. Then they come and get you, suit you up with a harness and ask how you're feeling. One guy with a camera came up and asked for my name, he then turned on the camera and asked, "So Line, what are you about to do?" I just looked at him and answered, "I'm about to die." He just laughed and said, "Today is not a good day to die" and then he said it was safe and that I wouldn't die, which was really nice of him. Anyway, after they prep you for the jump, they help you out on a small platform which is where you're going to jump from and this is the scary part. The only thing that went through my mind was 'don't look down, don't look down', so I looked straight ahead. The guy holding my harness then said "1, 2, 3, jump!" and gave me a little push and suddenly I was over the edge and flying straight towards the river. For 3 seconds I was free falling and I screamed at the top of my lungs, but then the elastic started pulling me back, a feeling of pure relieve rushed through me. I did it! We all did it! I

am so glad, because now my bucket list is one point smaller.

We confronted our fears and supported each other. It was the best choice I made since taking on this trip. I have made so many new friends here, friends I will never forget and friends who I will soon meet again. It has been incredible and I wouldn't trade this for anything.

I have done and seen things that I never would have if I hadn't travelled to Nepal, and even though it has been a challenge, I'm glad that I still have four weeks left to see as much of Nepal as possible, with the most amazing people in the world. Hallelujah!

Nepal Fact #12

There are currently only 10,000 Red Pandas located in the wild.

The vast majority live in the Eastern Himalayas, specifically in Nepal, in bamboo habitats deep in mountain forests.

Projects Abroad Nepal Photography Competition

Congratulations Hebe Westcott! Hebe, 19-years-old from London in the UK, volunteered at Clark Memorial School in Bungamati as part of our Teaching Project, as well as in Ghandruk as part of our Conservation Project. As a teaching volunteer, Hebe assisted in teaching English in new and creative ways to Nepali children at the school. As a conservation volunteer, Hebe had the chance to explore the Himalayas tracking rare mammals, such as Red Pandas and Himalayan Black Bears.



This shot was taken in Nargakot, a popular two-day trekking destination about an hour and a half from Kathmandu. On a clear day, immaculate views of the Langtang Mountain Range are visible, which prompted this sunrise shot. While the dedication to a 6am wake-up is truly inspiring, the sunrise framed by tattered cloth makes for a unique take on a beautiful view.

Congratulations again to Hebe! Please look for her shot in our special section of the monthly Nepal newsletter! Next month's submissions will be accepted until April 7th, so start shooting, and remember, the more creative, the better! Good luck!