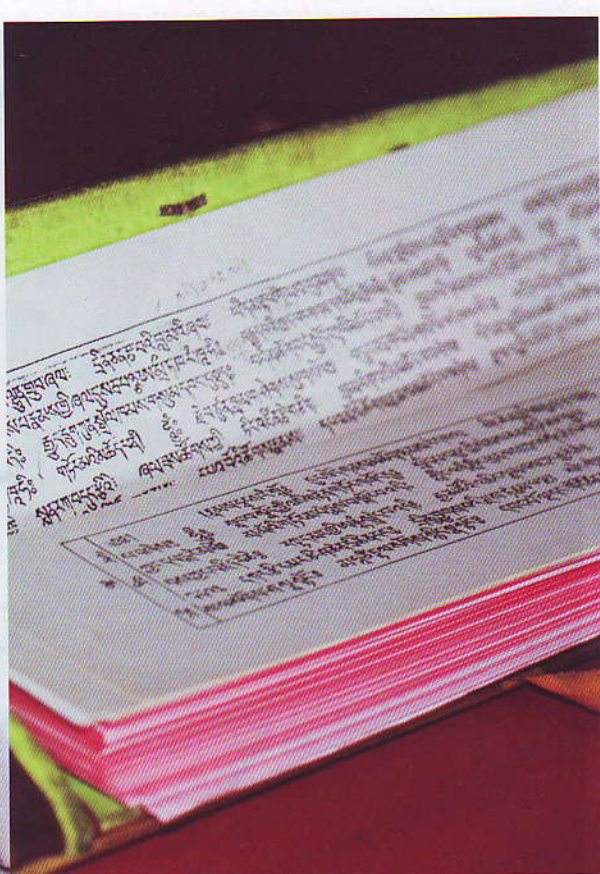
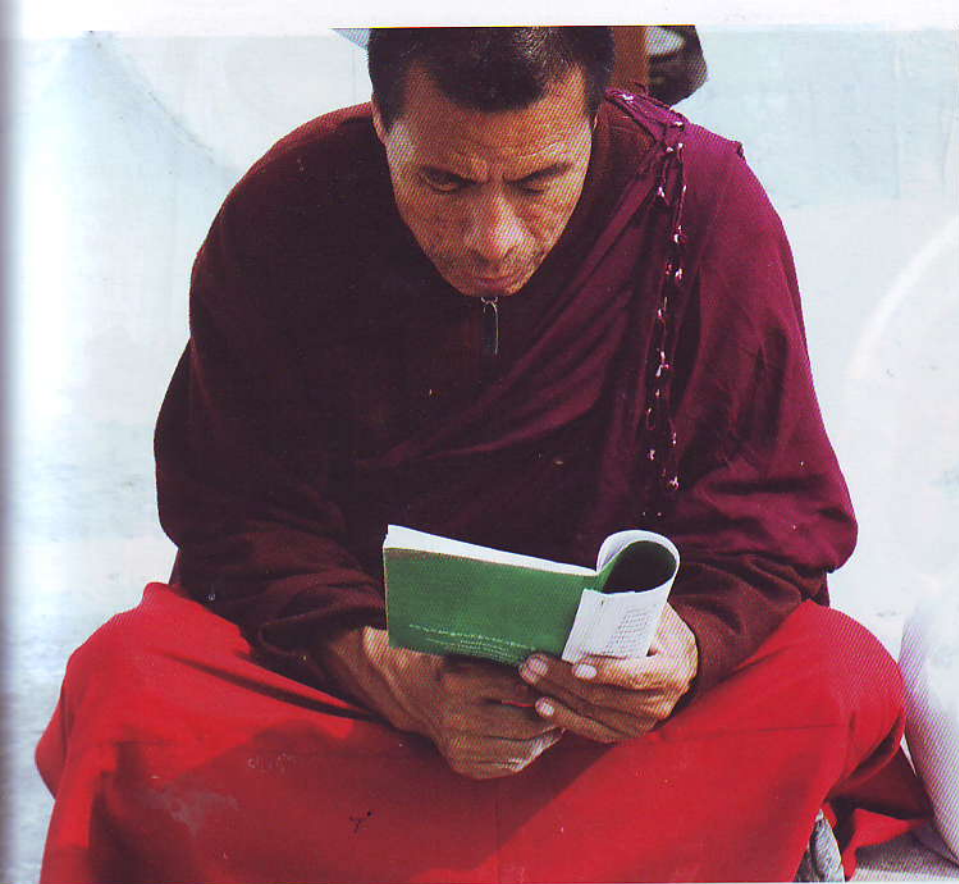




Most destinations here encourage one to go on a retreat to lose oneself in order to find it back and provoke a sense of spiritual contemplation...



Trekking through hotels around the city of Kathmandu gives a sense of what it offers. One would not imagine that it is an adventure in itself. After all one city hotel differs little from the next. Well, not here in Nepal!

Each of its hotels and resorts has their very own distinct personality and a story to tell, its own history and signature characteristics. Not one is like another and you could not find the same standardized experience anywhere.

Spa trekking across Kathmandu is an adventure too. Most spas here are still trying to find themselves. Hence, it would be grossly unfair to put them against the global benchmark. But really it boils down to the same one question. Who is the consumer? In other words could we replicate what Four Seasons offers in New York and bring it here without the risk of seeming incongruently out of place? This is in no means an attempt to cast aspersions on the local clientele's ability to appreciate finesse. It is purely pragmatism in marketing.

Similarly, spas here should not try to hit the

same par as those in more mature markets as they are not playing on the same course! Spas in Nepal have an entirely different role. They cater to the needs of travelers and sojourners, spiritual trekkers and adventurer seekers. Need instead of luxury takes precedence. And they would do much better than to compete, but instead create their own unique blend with modalities drawn from these rich heritage and traditions.

Playing the song on that note, one hotel is doing it right. This is our first stop in Nepal. Regarded as one of Nepal's finest, Dwarika's Hotel has a non-descript façade that is adorned with intricate woodcarving. Being seasonally coated with the fine dust of Kathmandu, it is so easy for one to miss. Nothing to look at from the outside; but beyond the dusty front, as one goes into the heart of this museum hotel, it is easy to see why it is described as a property that is "a living tribute to Nepal's architecture & cultural heritage".

Created by Dwarika Das Shrestha who

DOS AND DON'TS WHEN IN NEPAL

- The form of greeting in Nepal is "NAMASTE" and is performed by joining the palms together. It means my soul is honoured to meet yours.
- Before entering a Nepali home, temple, and stupa remember to remove your shoes.
- Never touch anything with your feet. This is offensive Nepali.
- Dress appropriately while travelling. Avoid dressing in skimpy outfits.
- Get permission before entering a Hindu temple. Many Hindu temples do not allow non-Hindus to enter.
- Leather articles are prohibited within the temple precinct.
- Walking around temples or stupas is traditionally done clockwise.
- Take photographs only after receiving permission for the object or person being photographed.
- Remember, many times, when a person shakes his head from left to right, he may mean "Yes".

*Adapted from
Nepal Tourism
Board.*



described that he had “this struggle in me, and in the year 1975, I decided to put my restoration work into the asylum of tourism in Nepal. Dwarika’s has become an asylum and hospital for the care of wounded masterpieces in wood, where they are restored to their original beauty, a school for training and practice of traditional arts and skills, a laboratory to research old techniques, and a living museum where people may enjoy and understand this heritage which is not only Nepali but, that of the human race.” The love and dedication in maintaining the architecture heritage is a daily ritual. A remarkable ratio of staff is on hand to maintain this establishment of that is a work of art in itself.

Once you step into its embrace, you know that its reputation is well deserved. From the dusty bustle outside, standing in the private garden courtyard one feels like being in an island, secluded in its own zone of tranquility. Intricate wood and terracotta work, 16th century windows, beautiful explosion of colourful flora, interiors decorated with traditional and exquisite deco. Handmade brick and every feature mark superb craftsmanship, woodwork that is original Malla are centuries-old. No two rooms are alike in their interior.

The legacy of Nepal still lives among the walls at Dwarika’s all thanks to the passion of its founder to preserve and restore a heritage that is in danger of being lost forever. He could have created a museum with the rescued exquisite artwork but instead he built a living beauty and gave it life. Now his dream lives on under the stewardship of his children.

Dwarika’s has also extended the same concept into the hills of Dhulikhel, creating another Shangri-La. Forty-five minutes away from Kathmandu, the Dwarika’s Himalayan Shangri-La Village Resort is the highest Village Resort in Dhulikel with breathtaking views of sunrise and sunsets over the Kavrepalanchok valley. This retreat is perfect to escape the dusty city below. Uncomplicated life a few days here would transform you, even for while.

But, Gokarna Forest on the lowlands has much to offer too. Once the private hunting grounds of Nepali royalty, a part of it has been leased to Le



OUT OF THE HIMALAYAS

Wild Earth, a Kathmandu-based product company founded from authentic indigenous Himalayas herbs brings yet another ancient healing offering to the world of spa. A company dedicated to the sustainability of the world’s greatest herbal treasure chest with over 6,000 identified medicinal botanicals, it is a heritage that needs protecting and acknowledging. Wild Earth is articulating the need for sustainable development and the wealth of healing wisdom of the communities that thrive here.

Its newest addition, the Jampeche Himalayan Spa Collection is a spin-off of the Gui Zhi (Tibetan Medical Canon). This creation of Carroll Dunham and the Wild Earth team is based on the 1500-year-old medical wisdom of Tibet and the High Himalayas.

Now these are gaining greater acceptance outside the confines of the region. Supporting the group is a 36-year-old Tibetan amchi (doctor) Shrerab Barma who is carrying the torch of his ancestors to ensure that the tradition lives on for yet another generation at least.

Its iconic ‘Jampeche’ meaning ‘gentle external treatment’ is calligraphed by the famous Tibetan artist Thundup. The symbolic ‘Nyda’ represents the union of sun (nyma) with the moon (dawa).

It sums up the concept of Jampeche – alchemically uniting the cooling male moon herbs with the heating female sun herbs for a holistic balance of wellness.

The Jampeche collection includes the likes of sun-infused herbal oils, sacred therapeutic red mud, Tethys Sea bath salts & scrubs, roasted barley rubs and Himalayan river-bed stones, each hand-crafted with auspicious symbol, and blessings drawn from sacred Buddhist texts.

It is 100% natural, authentic and handcrafted in small batches in the Himalayas by rural women. Wild Earth is committed to bringing social change to the community through a business and thus allows for conservation of the region’s rich healing heritage to take firmer root.

Spinning off to Wild Earth’s Himalayan Spa, the Jampeche introduce unique treatments such as its Yab Yum Massage, Tsampa Massage, Sacred River Stone Massage, Himalayan Slat Glow, and its signature Tibetan Red Mountain Mud Wrap. It is also complemented by its Himalayan inspired range of copper and bronze treatment spa accessories and equipment.

www.wildearthnepal.com



Kathmandu's Garden of Dreams, an oasis amidst the bustle, is located opposite the royal palace.

Meridien Kathmandu Gokarna Forest Golf Resort & Spa. Nestled among an ancient yet enchanting forest in the once Forbidden Valley of Kathmandu, this peaceful sanctuary is also home to birds, spotted deer, monkeys and all kinds of wildlife. It is a perfect city getaway especially for golfers and spa-lovers alike.

Designed by David Kidd of Gleneagles Golf Developments of Scotland, the 6,715 yard par 72 golf course spread across many shades of greens, and its Bent Grass is a favourite with many international and local patrons. The innovative merging of 'The Art of Living' likening golfing metaphors as the game of life itself in its practices and challenges comes the 'Spirit of Golf' Camp workshop. Drawing upon His Holiness Sri Ravishankar's wisdom and yogic breathing of mind-body control, this workshop has touched the life of countless golfers from around the world.

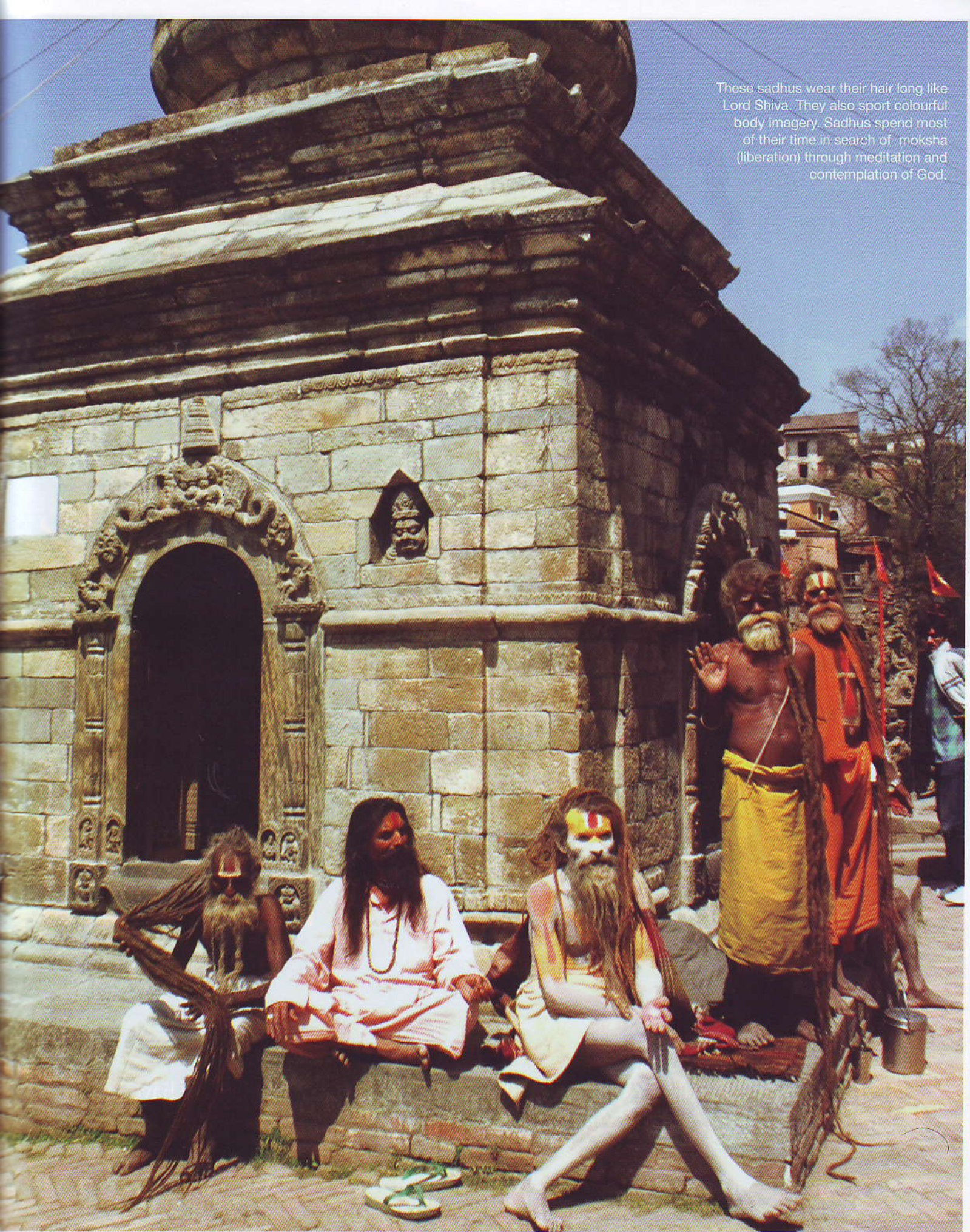
On the spa front, Gokarna's Harmony Spa combines therapeutic and natural treatments in its menu. Most popular off the menu would of course be their Golfer Massage! The new addition sounds promising with its Banana Wrap, Dead Sea Salt Mineral Treatment Rub, La Stone Massage, Hot Oil Massage, Body Packs with Spirulina...

Going back into Kathmandu, Shangri-La Hotel is a homegrown local establishment that has a vintage having played host to significant figures. In catching up to times, it is currently undergoing renovation and upgrading work to upgrade its status. Its strategic location provides it with the added advantage of being in the close proximity of main embassy districts, major administrative and offices of international non-governmental agencies. It is a popular choice for both business and diplomatic travellers. Shangri-La's gem has been its beautiful oasis garden. Equipped with a rolling green lawn, adjoining swimming pool it's perfect for garden social activities.

Adjacent to the main hotel building, the Healing Hands, Body & Soul Spa provides all its guests' spa offerings. It provides a handy fix after an all-day activity or trekking through town visiting monasteries and temples. Try out their specialties for a taste of the local spa flavor - Traditional Himalayan Massage, Trekkers Recovery Massage and Yak Milk & Honey Body Wrap...

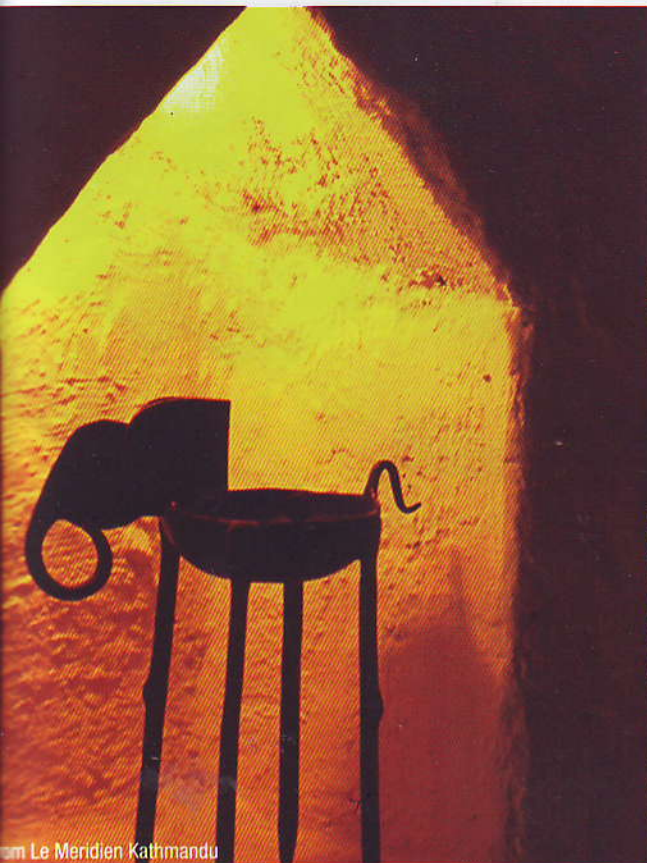
Nearby, the Radisson Hotel Kathmandu is a no-nonsense business hotel that offers all the business convenient facilities. Having a privileged location, it attracts more than its fair share of business travellers. An exclusive Radisson Club Rooms & Suites with its plus added facilities for Plaza Club guests coupled with one of the city's top Clark Hatch Center. The downside is that the hotel does not have its own spa as yet. For any spa urges, guests normally have the option of going across the road to the Healing Hands, Body & Soul Spa.

These sadhus wear their hair long like Lord Shiva. They also sport colourful body imagery. Sadhus spend most of their time in search of moksha (liberation) through meditation and contemplation of God.





In many places life still goes on in the way that bears flashes of what may have inspired Kipling.



Le Meridien Kathmandu



Image from Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

Modeled after traditional Newari architecture of the Nepalese, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu stands out as a prime city-resort. According to general Manager, Gadi Hassan, Hyatt has pumped in USD65 making Hyatt the single most expensive investment in Nepal,

Hyatt's concept of embracing its host land's spirituality is seen in the stacked pagoda of its roof. Half a kilometers away is the most famous and holiest of Tibetan shrines outside of Tibet – Boudhanath Stupa. From the hotel one gets to see the awe-inspiring stupa decked with fluttering prayer flags of many colours.

As one enters the lobby, the first feature that arrests the attention has to be dedicatedly landscaped Temple Court with its nine living 'Chaityas'. These are replicas of iconic shrines found all over the country depicting architectural models built between the 11th and 18th centuries. This work of Neil Gutschow, a conservation architect and

researcher supported by the workmanship of indigenous artisans is kept 'alive' with evening prayers accompanied by ceremonial lighting of butter lamps as offerings to the Gods believed to be living within them. Evening performances by local Nepali musicians playing traditional music adds depth to this unique work of art.

In paying tribute to the 'temple of the body', guests could journey to Club Oasis, Hyatt's urban spa & fitness centre. A must-try is their Singing Bowls Meditation Therapy – an ancient Tibetan meditation. Give the Himalayan Hot Stone Massage a try as well. This uses volcanic stones with the ancient spiritual inscriptions. They are said to unleash ancient energy to create harmonious flow.

For an awe-inspiring experience, take a 'Day Trip By Helicopter To The Everest Region'. This would be the more leisurely way to pay homage to the magnificent Mount Everest. The journey takes off and land at the helipad

of this hotel. Mountain flights are the fastest route to encounter and come face to face with the highest mountain in the world. The experience is sure to take you to the top of the world, literally and/or otherwise!

To the hills! To the hills!

On a clear day, the hill station resorts of Dhulikhel and Nagarkot, both about an hour's drive from Kathmandu, are best to catch spectacular views of the Himalayan ranges from Annapurna (northwest) to Gauri Shanker (northeast) and enchanting Mt. Everest will draw you to fix your gaze on her.

Enjoy fresh, cool and crisp air while you enrich your appreciation with traditional culture of the Newars and just sink into the rhythm of unhurried and tranquil life of village folk here. These places are definite favourites with nature lovers and those seriously entertaining the romantics in their heart. Pollution free and with an environment that offers nature at its finest, these hill stations are not to be

missed. Stay a while longer and you may have trouble pulling yourself away from there.

Perched atop Windy Hills, Club Himalaya Nagarkot is known as "comfort above the clouds". Sunrise and sunsets moments are a must here especially when you can get a 360 degrees view of the Himalayas from Mount Everest to Annapurna and beyond. Going here without a camera is inexcusable! This charming rustic mountain tavern is "for high altitude adventurers, a venue to acclimatize; for philosophers, a place to listen to the sounds of silence; for honeymooners, a setting to romance..."

For spa comforts, The Himalayan Healers Sanctuary offers local delicacy the likes of Newari Mother's, & Infant Massage, Trekker's Massage, Nepali and Tibet Massage.

Dhulikhel Mountain Resort is another rustic stop-over with matching views. Also an hour from Kathmandu, this traditional red brick resort of roof of thatched wheat stalks offers s charming lifestyle of mountain folk. Be here to drink in the meditative simplicity of its surroundings. The gardens are delightful riot of colours. Its spa is still basic in its offerings but they have plans to build a more dedicated one in the near future. All in all, this quaint hill-station is a beautiful stop-over en route Tibet. **sa**



WELLNESS CONNECTION - OFF THE TOURIST TRACK!

AYURVEDA IN NEPAL. Ayurveda Health Home is a Nepal-German joint venture between Dr. R. R. Koirala MD, Badri Koirala and Marlies Foerster. It is one of the pioneer organizations of Ayurveda Panca Karma in Nepal. Together with their entire team of skilled doctors and therapists, they aim to enhance the healing potential source of an individual through the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda. They believe in the healthy balance through the four dimensions of physical, sensorial, mental and spiritual state.

www.ayurveda.com.np

HEALING TIBETAN. School of Four Medical Science of Early Tradition, a non-profitable institution where the fundamental medical tradition of Four Medical Science or Bumshi is practiced and taught. With the era of modernization, the existence of this medical science is at risk of being lost. In uniting and sustaining this practice, two great masters of Yungdrung bon H.H. Menri Trizin Rinpoche and H.E Yongdzin Rinpoche's authorization Dr. Tsultrim Sangye established its first school in

Dhorpatan, Norziling Camp in Western Nepal in 1988. In 2006 under the management of Bonpo Foundation they expanded to Kathmandu. Their main aim is to provide education to anyone in this early medical tradition and also as a free medical clinic to the poor locals from nearby and afar. With no independent building of their own and support, any charitable donations are most welcome to sustain this ancient healing practice.

sorigschool@gmail.com

WELLNESS HOSPITAL. A newly introduced integrated hospital that merge medical science with naturopathic opens a new dimension of healthcare. This Institute of Natural Medicine & Research Center boasts a registered medical team that is knowledgeable in both medical disciplines. A variety of services and specialties range from the Wellness Paralysis Dept., Pregnancy Care Programme, Wellness Lifestyle Clinic, Wellness Health Club, Yoga Club, Back Pain Clinic, Weight Control Clinic and Nepal's first Colon Hydrotherapy.

www.winmarc.com.np

FLYYETI.COM BRINGS HOLISTIC NEPAL CLOSER

Nepal is now much more easily accessible by air with the launch of Flyyeti.com, Nepal's low-cost carrier. Flyyeti.com makes non-stop flights from Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Doha and

Kuala Lumpur via Kathmandu, the carrier's global hub. Sooner than you expect it, more Middle-eastern and Asia cities will be connected to Kathmandu. Working closely with AirArabia,

Flyyeti.com offers the cheapest direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Kathmandu and back.

Flyyeti.com makes your travels to Nepal much more convenient,

affordable and all the more sensible! Flyyeti.com sponsored the flight for SpaAsia's media trip to Kathmandu in March 2008.

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HOLI

Seen in Kathmandu Durbar Square, this pole decorated with a kaleidoscope of colourful swatches announces the coming of Holi, the Hindu festival of colours. The fresh twig on top of the pole symbolizes spring – newness of life. Holi is celebrated by the Hindus to usher in the first full moon of spring. On this day, everyone forgets norms and indulges in merrymaking – people from children to adults throw coloured powder and water at each other and strangers alike. It is usually celebrated in March.

