

Andy Crisconi - One World Trekking

From: Karen Valenti [karen@mountainexplorers.org]

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INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN NEWS Mountain Net: Spring Issue

compiled by **Gabi Mocatta (gabimocatta@gmail.com)**

May 2010

The International Mountain Explorers Connection (IMEC) is a small organization with one big aim: to fight for the rights and welfare of porters in the trekking areas of Nepal and Kilimanjaro.

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Welcome to our spring issue!

NEPAL AND THE HIMALAYAS

1) KEEP (Kathmandu Environmental Education Project) PORTERS CLOTHING BANK UPDATE by DB GURUNG

In implementing the Porter Clothing Bank (PCB), KEEP intends to better equip porters for alpine terrain and so prevent the unnecessary illnesses and fatalities

which occur among porters in Nepal each year. Moreover, the PCB aims to educate tourists, trekking agencies and porters alike about the acceptable standard of porter treatment and the need to improve porter access to appropriate clothing and equipment.

KEEP bought 100 sets of new clothes and accessories - pants, jackets, trekking boots, sunglasses - to set up the clothing bank in August of 2009. Since then, PCB has received several donations from groups such as The International Mountain Explorers Connection, Mountain Fund and Himalayan Mountain Guides. Also, 201 sets of clothing have been lent to various trekking agencies and individual trekkers for their porters since September 2009.

Recently, the office of the Porters' Clothing Bank has been moved to the same building where the KEEP office is located. This will enable better organization of the clothes and equipment and facilitate coordination between the KEEP and PCB as well.

And, over the last several months, the PCB has been lending individual trekkers and trekking agencies full sets of clothing and equipment for their porters at a small refundable deposit. This project has proved to be highly successful in improving the treatment and working conditions for porters around Nepal.



2) UN CLIMATE SCIENTISTS REVIEW NEPAL HIMALAYAS CLAIM

The UN's international panel of climate scientists have begun reviewing the disputed claim that Himalayan glaciers could melt entirely by 2035.

The review follows a recent New Scientist article which revealed that the source of the claim - reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - was not from scientific literature, but from an interview with a scientist conducted in 1999.

In February the Indian environmental minister, Jairam Ramesh, told reporters that the claim was unfounded. "They are indeed receding and the rate is cause for great concern... [but the claim is] not based on an iota of scientific evidence," he said.

Also, the Indian government criticized the IPCC's claim in November, when it published its own discussion paper by geologist Vijay Kumar Raina. While the paper states that some glaciers in the Himalayas are retreating, it also supposes that "this is nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing to suggest, as some have said,

that they will disappear."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/jan/19/un-climate-scientists-himalayan-glaciers>



3) FROM WARZONE TO SPORTS TOURISM! - AN AFGHAN DREAM

When Nadjib Sirat laces up his climbing boots to become the first Afghan to scale the world's highest mountain, he will be driven by passion, not by the politics of his blighted homeland.

The 30-year-old believes that by becoming "the world's highest Afghan," he can draw attention to what his country has to offer besides war, poverty, misery and terror.

"There are fabulous summits and skiing destinations that are comparable to Tibet, Kashmir and Nepal because some parts of the country are very mountainous, with very high mountains and snow above 2,000 metres," he said. "But no one knows this about Afghanistan because of the situation," he said, referring to the Islamist insurgents battling Afghan troops backed by more than 100,000 soldiers from US and NATO allies.

Sirat aims to promote Afghans as more than warriors, and to expose the breathtaking natural beauty of his country by scaling some of the world's highest peaks.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hw-21Nlc1kCY3ryx9dCUIoyGNLkw>



TANZANIA AND MT. KILIMANJARO

4) LOCAL REALITY SERIES HITS "PEAK"

South Africa's new local reality show, The BAR-ONE Manhunt, recently documented contestants climbing, Mount Kilimanjaro. At 5890m, "Kili" is the tallest free-standing mountain in the world and Africa's highest peak.

Broadcast on SABC3, The BAR-ONE Manhunt sees 14 South African men between the ages of 23 and 38 test their strength, stamina and determination for the grand prize. The series is an extension of the "It's easy to spot a BAR-ONE man" campaign, and the winner will be crowned the next BAR-ONE Man.

The contestants faced the Umbwe Trail, the most difficult of all the routes up to the summit.

"It was probably the hardest thing I've done in my life," said contestant Kabelo Thathe.

Getting to the summit of Kilimanjaro, an inactive strato-volcano in northeastern Tanzania with three distinct craters, is no small feat, even for experienced mountaineers.

Veteran Kilimanjaro guide Sean Disney, describes scaling the peak as physically strenuous, mentally challenging and demanding. "It's quite a unique mountain in that it goes through five zones as you climb, with temperatures going from 30°C-plus to -15°C." Climbers begin in cultivated land and then proceed through forest, savannah, Afro-Alpine desert, moonscape and, finally, the ice-cap zone.

"It's a good challenge getting up there; you have to be fit," continues Disney. "Most people spend at least five to seven days on the mountain, five days to get up and two to get down again. Going up is much slower because you have to acclimatize as you go. Over that period you're walking about 70km, up and down. Most people walk between 10 and 15km a day on average."

On the mountain, climbers are faced with a wide range of physical and mental obstacles. These include altitude sickness - which affects nearly everyone climbing Kilimanjaro, fighting the intense cold, being in an environment to which one is not accustomed, and lack of sleep, as well as the time it takes to get down the mountain again.

Another challenge is rising around midnight and climbing in the dark, especially for the final assault on the summit. "Most people will tell you it's to see the sunrise from the summit, but it's also so that you have daylight hours for a rescue, in case of an accident," says Disney.

Contestant Quinten Coetzer comments: "Summiting was a life-changing experience. It was pretty difficult. Physically it wasn't hard, but mentally it was." Fellow contestant Stephen Segal adds: "It's the most amazing experience I've ever had."

<http://www.screenafrica.com/news/television/399903.htm>



5) KILIMANJARO PORTERS ASSISTANCE PROJECT (KPAP) UPDATE KAREN VALENTI

KPAP has been awarded a small grant from the Tanzania Foundation for Civil Society to assist in implementing a new class on Porter Rights. Most porters are unaware of their right to climb under proper working conditions, particularly in the village areas surrounding the gates to Kilimanjaro. These porters are frequently the most exploited as they often accept work for minimal payment. A class on Porter Rights can raise the porters' awareness regarding their rights to a fair wage, weight of load, appropriate shelter and food, and how to take the necessary steps to improve their working conditions and have their voice heard. KPAP has targeted 13,000 porters in the Kilimanjaro region to receive this crucial education. Special thanks also goes out to Aberkrombie & Kent Philanthropy for their support of this endeavor.

IMEC's Partner for Responsible Travel Program is designed to highlight those climbing companies adhering to IMEC's Guidelines for Proper Porter Treatment. The Partner Program in Kilimanjaro continues to gain attention largely due to our efforts at raising public awareness regarding appropriate working conditions for porters on Kilimanjaro. In addition to the 20 approved Local Partner companies another 15 local outfitters are requesting KPAP's monitoring activities to assist with developing good systems for the provision of fair treatment to the crew. KPAP's Methods for Monitoring of a Company's Performance include:

- Porter Questionnaires
- Porter Interviews
- Participation in Company's briefing
- Observation of Company's tipping procedure
- Examination of Company's salary distribution methods
- Feedback provided by KPAP porter rep working as part of crew on a climb
- Post-Climb Survey reports obtained from climbers

For a current list of IMEC's Partner for Responsible Travel Companies please visit Current Partners on www.mountainexplorers.org. Please consider climbing with an IMEC Partner if fair treatment practices are important.

PERU AND MACHU PICCHU

6) PERU AIMS TO SPEED UP MACHU PICCHU RAIL REPAIRS AS GDP SUFFERS

Peru's government will help repair the privately owned rail line that takes tourists to the Machu Picchu ruins in a bid to limit economic losses that could reach \$800 million.

The government is providing manpower to help rehabilitate the flood-damaged tracks, which may not be operating normally for seven to eight weeks, Deputy Transport Minister Hjalmar Marangunich said. Ferrocarril Transandino SA, a unit of Orient Express Hotels Ltd., manages the rail line to Machu Picchu.

The decrease in tourism could cost Peru's economy as much as \$800 million, equivalent to 0.63 percent of gross domestic product, according to Jose Marsano, a researcher at the Lima-based Tourism Observatory of Peru. The government is looking at ways to use more helicopters to ferry tourists to the site until the rail line reopens, Marangunich said in an interview.

"Machu Picchu is central to the regional economy so we have made the railway repairs a priority," Marangunich said from Lima.

The Inca hiking trail, about 7,700 feet above sea level, closed after torrential rains triggered landslides this winter. It serves as the second major access point to the ruins.

About 4,000 tourists were evacuated by helicopter from Machu Picchu this winter after the longest period of heavy rain in 20 years in Peru's southern Andes triggered landslides. An Argentine tourist and her Peruvian guide were killed Jan. 26 after a landslide on the Inca trail.

About 858,000 tourists a year visit the 15-century Inca ruins, according to the Tourism Observatory.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-02-04/peru-aims-to-speed-up-machu-picchu-rail-repairs-as-gdp-suffers.html>

THANK YOU TO DONORS

IMEC is especially indebted to the many donors who have supported our work. We now have financial backing until October 2010. Thank you for helping us continue to develop a responsible approach within the tourist industry, and for making a difference in the lives of thousands of porters.

We would especially like to thank:

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<http://www.nepalnews.com>

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/upf.htm>

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report>

/2003/nepal-insurgency_dec03.pdf

<http://www.satp.org>

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<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/eafrica.htm>

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(2) Put your E-mail address at the bottom of your posting.

(3) Send responses to postings directly to the author at the address listed.

(4) If you receive responses to your posting, please send the moderator. (info@mountainexplorers.org) a summary if the topic is of general interest so it can be sent out to all subscribers in the next issue.

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The International Mountain Explorers Connection (IMEC) is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to promote responsible and sustainable connections between travelers and the people of developing mountain regions of the world. IMEC provides and coordinates education, assistance, and cross-cultural experiences for members, volunteers, trekkers, and local communities.

Members can receive e-mail (in Nepal) and postal mail, store luggage, participate in a homestay, and browse through trip reports at our Clubhouses in Kathmandu, Nepal, and Moshi, Tanzania. Members also receive our hardcopy newsletter, Kangri News. Corporate memberships are also available.

For more information about IMEC please contact us at:

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PO Box 3665
Boulder, CO 80307
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<http://www.mountainexplorers.org>

On behalf of the porters of Nepal and Kilimanjaro, thank you for your ongoing support of our vital project and for helping to make a difference in the lives of these porters.

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