

Nepal Tourism Performance

As part of its ongoing commitment towards tourism development, and high priority accorded to it, the government of Nepal inaugurated Visit Lumbini Year (VLY) 2012, launched Tourism Vision 2020 and simultaneously announced closure of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY 2011) Campaign on January 14, 2012 at Lumbini. The programme was inaugurated by Rt. Hon'ble President of Nepal, Dr. Ram Baran Yadav. After the successful completion of Nepal Tourism Year 2011, Nepal is celebrating yet another event- VLY 2012. The reason behind celebrating VLY is to unite the world to work towards creating a peaceful society through Buddha's peace message; and to make the birthplace of Buddha a centre of global attraction.

The campaign, Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY 2011), was a synthesis of past experiences of the government and future aspiration of the private sector. It also marks the beginning of new mission in the new context and envisages a way to an overall development of the tourism industry of Nepal.

The successful completion of campaign, NTY 2011 has given clearly two messages to the world: one, Nepal has come to peaceful and stable situation after a decade long political conflict; and another, tourism has been unanimously earmarked as a vehicle of economic transformation in the nation. Tourism proved to be major binding factor between all major political parties who were united for the sake of tourism and hence made public commitment that there will not be any strike or obstacle throughout the campaign year.

The event also marks the release of Tourism Vision 2020. Since Tourism sector in Nepal has emerged over the past fifty years as a key instrument for economic growth, development and job creation hence Tourism Vision 2020 has set out its goal to increase annual international tourist arrivals to Nepal to two million by 2020 and augment economic opportunities and increase employment in tourism sector to one million. It is intended to serve as an easy-reference guide to tourism development. Also, the document identifies 18 districts in each ecological belt and development regions to be developed as epicenter (hubs). Along with the line the tourism policy and planning is directed at poverty reduction and conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Key planning initiatives include development of nature-culture-adventure-based ecotourism products in and adjacent to major to major protected areas such as Everest National Park and development of culture and Buddhist pilgrimage tourism products at key sites. Improved tourism infrastructure, simplified immigration arrangements, improved connectivity and higher product quality standards are key planning initiatives in support of the overall tourism policy.

Recently Nepal has launched the 1,700 km Great Himalayan Trail (GHT). The trail begins near Kanchenjunga on the eastern border and heads west navigating the domains of eight of the world's 8000m peaks, from the beautiful but lesser-known Makalu to the famous Everest. It is not the easiest nor most direct route across Nepal, rather a route through the Greater Himalaya. The Nepal section ends in Humla on the Tibetan border.

The route offers an incredible diversity in terms of landscapes, flora and fauna, people and culture: from snow leopards to red pandas; from sub-tropical jungle to fragile high-altitude eco-systems; from the famous Sherpas, to the ancient Buddhist culture found still in Dolpa. The Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation along with Nepal Tourism Board is working closely with the stakeholders and trying to spread benefits of tourism to all. World famous mountaineer Apa Sherpa who scaled Mt Everest 21st times and his team recently completed this trail primarily to highlight the impacts of climate change in the Himalayas and to promote The Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) as the best tourism trail in the world. National Geographic Adventure Magazine's Jame's Vlahos observes, "Nepal's mountains are minimally developed, but they offer a wealth of trade and pilgrimage routes. The GHT elegantly connects these existing paths without blazing a single new trail."

Tourist arrivals grew by 22.1% in 2011 as compared to 2010 registering 735, 932 with positive growth reported in all regions. This is 133,065 more than in same period (Jan-Dec) of 2010. The figure also mark the highest number of tourist arrivals by air in the history of Nepal reaching 544,985.

Overall between January to December, with 60,115 additional visits, SAARC secured a share of 33.6%, Asia Other than SAARC (22.9%) Europe (22.2%), Oceania (2.9%) and Americas (7.2%). On month-by-month basis, October was the strongest of all with total 99,304 visitors, ahead of November (83,430) August (71,338) March (67,530), September (61,109) and December (60,053).

The year 2012 has shown positive trend as well. The upward trend which is already seen in January 2012 continues in the third month of the year 2012 showing clearly the rising travel demand towards the destination. Nepal has enjoyed a sustained positive growth in the international visitor arrivals since June 2009. The figures reveal that visitor arrivals in the month of March 2012, compared to the same month last year, have increased by 37.2% to 63,799. In January-March period of 2012, international tourist arrivals to Nepal have risen by 27 % to 148,546.