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### Davis woman leads excursions through Nepal's wilderness, culture

Special to The Enterprise | February 08, 2008 15:38



Amanda Daflos and business partner John Oliva stand on a footbridge in Tirkhendunga, Nepal, just before their first night camping. The two lead excursions through Nepal. (Courtesy photo)

Davis resident Amanda Daflos, working with Deloitte Consulting in Sacramento, recently returned from Nepal where she led trekkers on a trip highlighting natural and cultural beauty.

After studying there in 1999, Nepal became one of Daflos' favorite places. To help the nation get much-needed tourist revenue, she co-founded Nepal Trek and Trail Run to share the wonders of the country with others.

Through this hike and run, she and co-founder John Oliva, both fluent in Nepalese, bring trekkers into the country and give them an athletic and cultural experience: a three-day tour of Katmandu; a seven-day trek through the Annapurna Mountains with 33 Nepali porters, kitchen staff and assistants; a 13-mile trail run for the runners; several cultural activities; and a visit to the Himalayan Cataract Project (<http://www.cureblindness.org>), which receives a portion of the trip's proceeds.

"There are many mountain climbing trips in Nepal, but most don't include cultural activities like drinking tea in an off-the-beaten-path tea shop," Daflos said. "People miss the chance to appreciate the depth of the culture. We do both."

Before the trekkers got there, Daflos and Oliva met with their Nepalese team to set things up.

Speaking Nepalese with Westerners was new and exciting for the Nepal natives, and having one of those Westerners be female and a leader left some wondering how to act. In some cases, it was the first time they had ever taken direction from a woman.

"They were really wonderful," Daflos said. "Although perhaps nervous about my role, they seemed to appreciate the chance to work with me. We emphasize teamwork and engage them in leadership activities in the evenings to break down barriers and strengthen our team's performance. John and I eat traditional Nepali dinner with the staff every night just for that reason, which is rather unusual."

When the trekkers arrived, some were a bit anxious, but it didn't take long for them to adapt to the Nepalese attitude of Ke Garne, which translates to "What to do?" and means, "Don't worry. It's all OK."

The calming started at one of their first lessons in Nepalese culture when they enjoyed a traditional meal and ate with traditional utensils - hands. As the Westerners tried to pick up rice with their fingers, they experienced the hospitality of the Nepalese and realized that their hosts, who had never had Western visitors before, were learning from them as well.

On the agenda for the women was a trip to buy Lungis, traditional Nepalese skirts. In a town that had seen very few Westerners, the trekkers picked from bolts of brightly colored material and watched as local women sewed it into skirts.

While hesitant at first, the Nepalese women relaxed after Daflos explained the tour in their native language. The new experience to them was exciting and profitable, as they collected about \$20 from each woman. And each trekker walked away with seven or eight custom-made skirts.

"I am so inspired every time I think of the Nepalese people who have so little, yet give so much," Daflos said. "On this trip, I saw a shooting star and realized that I never really knew what 'lucky' was until I got to know Nepal, a place where small things mean so much."

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