

## Nepal Tourism Year 2011: A National Campaign



Nepal comprises only 0.1% of the land area in a global scale but is endowed with disproportionately rich diversity of flora and fauna; unrivaled scenic beauty; diverse culture; ethnic etiquettes. Nepal's diverse and magnificent environment along with the country's hospitable and pleasant people has made her one of the major tourist destinations in Asia.

Nepal Tourism Year 2011, a national campaign launched by Government of Nepal in partnership with private sector, tourism entrepreneurs and media houses aims to foster Nepal's tourism potentiality to new heights.

An adventurer's delight, Nepal offers a plethora of outdoor activities. Adventure tourism in Nepal dates back to the early attempts to ascend world's highest peak Mt. Everest more fifty years ago. Trekking and mountain climbing are the most popular sport among visitors. The majestic mountains still remain the prime attractions of Nepal, Mt. Everest being the major tourism attraction. Additionally rafting on white water mountain streams across the typical cross section of Nepal's geography is equally popular. So is jungle safari in the Terai to observe Nepal's rare varieties of wildlife and birds. Nepal also offers bungy jumping above the wild waters of River Bhoté Koshi and canyoning to explore the rugged and out-of-reach landscapes is another option at the site. Moreover, there are still numerous unexplored potentials in different corners of the country.

Tourism sector is one of the major sources of foreign exchange earner for the country and accounts for more than 3.5% of the total GDP. Tourism is one of the major sources of income to uplift the rural economy as it brings some amount of capital necessary for development. More than 60% of Nepal's population has income less than \$2 a day (international poverty line) and over 70% of the country's population depends on agriculture for livelihoods.

After the signing of peace accord between the Government of Nepal and the Maoist in 2006, the tourism sector is steadily gaining its momentum, which was adversely impacted due to the decade long insurgency that ended in 2006. The Nepal Tourism Board record shows the arrival of some 500,000 foreign visitors at the country's only international airport in 2010, 15 per cent more than in 2009. The number is expected to cross 650,000 when visitors traveling overland are included. The ascending trend of tourist arrival has provided some degree of relief to the Nepalese economy, which is still reeling under the impact of the insurgency.

Hence, envisaging Nepal's profuse tourism opportunity, Nepal Tourism Year 2011 aims to attract one million tourists in the country. The NTY 2011 has the objective of establishing Nepal as a choice of premier holiday destination. Nepal Tourism Year 2011 campaign focuses to strengthen its existing international market as well as to generate domestic tourism culture. In a bid to make this noble national campaign a grand success: the government has allotted sufficient fund to enhance infrastructures; such as expanding airport facilities, searching new trekking routes, promotional activities in the external / internal markets, preparing more human resources and making conducive environment for the investors. Maoist supremo Prachanda and CPN-UML president Jhalanath Khanal has also vowed to promote tourism as a national priority and refrain from launching any crippling strikes, agitation and protests during the year.

The Government firmly believes that sustainable peace can be achieved only after accomplishing the goal of economic prosperity and the tourism mega campaign, NTY 2011, is its gateway. Tourism sector in the past has helped create jobs for rural and urban population, which in turn contributed to stabilize and diversify the rural economy. Thus, the Government aspires to extensively promote tourism in Nepal to accelerate the process of economic growth. The improved tourism sector will primarily contribute to the economic growth by generating more employment opportunities in the country.

The Government of Nepal invites support from all national and international arenas, to make Nepal Tourism Year 2011 a victorious year.