

**STUDENT FEEDBACK**  
**Himalayan Study Abroad (2017-2018)**  
**(December 19th - January 6th, 2018)**  
**Nepal Study Center**  
**Department of Economics**  
**University of New Mexico**

**PREPARATION BACK IN NEW MEXICO**

"The group had a little packing party before we depart on Sunday. All the supplies (air sensors, water testing kits, river stage monitors, safety materials, etc..) are packed away in everyone's bags. Here we come Nepal!"

"Before the Yogdan group heads out to Nepal this December, it's important that they practice all the environmental monitoring protocols. Enjoy a little video of a couple of students gathering a water quality sample from the Rio Grande to practice testing the water quality."

"This winter break a group of graduate and undergraduate students are going to embark on a mission to contribute toward a global collaborative project intended to build the sustainable development action lab at the Nepal Study Center at the University of New Mexico. The students worked all semester to analyze previously collected data on a community in Siddharthanagar Municipality, Western Nepal. This data was analyzed to look at various concerns related toward health and the environment. With an increase in urbanization factors such as water pollution, air pollution, and waste management continue to be a challenge that must be addressed. Thorough various partnerships between schools in Nepal and the Nepal Study Center, the NSC Action Lab hopes to establish a mechanism to collect real-time data that can then be used for analysis later down the road for future classes to analyze, therefore; creating a sustainable platform for positive data-driven change in Nepal. Sustainable partnerships are extremely important when pursuing a mission such as this one, therefore; that action lab hopes to set the stage for an eco-club that will teach teachers how to facilitate field trips down to the river so that students in Nepal can learn and use the sensors for their own research and learning.

"This blog is set up so that interested readers such as your self can learn about what we are doing by reading about our experiences, challenges, and successes along the way."

"Follow our blog, website, and social media page for up-to-date pictures and blog posts during our journey through Nepal."

**SOURCE: [Student Blog](#)**

**LANDING IN KATHMANDU: THE VALLEY OF GODS AND GODDESS**

This is just the beginning of a diverse forest that is ready to change the fate of an untold amount of people worldwide. Kathmandu is the first adventure, its rich cultural density, history,

diversity, and beautiful land is the perfect representation of what Nepal brings to the world as well as what the people of Nepal can bring to the global community."

"Our first day exploring Kathmandu begins with the surprise stop to visit some cute critters that enjoy the offerings at the Syambhu Nath (stupa). The day was filled with peaceful stupas, delightful ginger tea, and deep historic explanation on the city of Kathmandu."

"A troop of monkeys hang around the wishing well at the Swyambhu temple, admiring the tourists."

"Second stop, the Swoyambhunath Stupa, here we learned about the significance of the spiritual flags around the sacred stupa that provide spiritual protection."

"Nyatapoli Cafe and square, Bhaktapur was an amazing place to experience our first ginger tea (Dr. Bohara style:) and amazing chili chicken was a tasty treat."

"Day One consisted of running around Kathmandu, from temple to temple. Although never rushed, I really appreciated a few slower paced moments at the last stop we visited—the Swoyambhu Stupa. Not only did we stop in at an art school where we learned about traditional Tibetan mandalas, we also stop at a rooftop coffee joint after our walk around the stupa. It was interesting to see such a hip, retro shop directly across from such a traditional and religious site. The Himalayan Java Coffee shop offered us a quick break from our day as we sipped on good coffee and Nepalese milk tea."

"Cultural Dinner at the Bhojan Griha, Dillibazar. We had a delightful dinner sitting one by one and conversing about our day. This beautiful cultural dance brought smiles to each and everyone's faces."

"Without a doubt, Kathmandu is a place that the English language can barely describe, its immense beauty and power is beyond the words of language. The ancient and rich history seems to reside deep in the human mind. A benevolent culture that welcomes anyone, from anywhere, without judgement; willing to share its roots with any foreigner. The most amazing part, is that Kathmandu is simply a foreshadow to the beginning of a deeper and richer exploration/ experience of Nepal. It is almost hard to believe that you could match any experience that Kathmandu has to offer. But time will tell, that Kathmandu is simply the beginning to very big story of Nepal as a whole, and the future prospects of the country as it climbs to global relevance not only in cultural history, but future education, and a highly inspired and educated youth. The future looks bright for the city, and may the future bring us goodwill on our next stop."

## **MONITORING CITIZEN SCIENCE LAB SET-UP IN SIDDHARTHANAGAR**

"Today kicked off with tedious work painting the waste management bins beside the campus. Afterwards, students from UNM, PNMHI and the mayor of Siddharthanagar joined together in the Danda River Celebration. The day concluded with a beautiful, scenic view of the Danda River."

"What started off as a nerve-wracking and uncertain day filled with presenting our semester-long work turned out to be a day where each of us learned something new. In addition to getting over our stage fright, our group had the joy of listening to a couple of students from PNMHI present their own findings. I was very impressed with their work!"

"What a day to remember! On Christmas Day we started out visiting a natural lake in Lumbini. Then after went to the Maya Devi Temple, in Lumbini and got the blood flowing because we were running a little late (good thing we all had some sprinting energy in us). After an eye opening experience at the enlightened Buddha tree, we walked into a wonderful surprise presented to us by our amazing hosts! They went out of their way to make sure we felt extremely "at home" on Christmas. They did this by surprising us with delightful food, amazing drinks, and a famous national Nepalese Singer."

"Today, when we drove up to Pratiman -Neema Health Institute, we knew we had a busy day ahead of us. But, instead of going straight to work, we decided to have a little bit of fun. We broke up into groups and played games. They taught us some popular games, and I taught my group some games I used to play at recess in middle school. I learned a new game called Kabaddi, which is the national game of India. Following the playtime, I went to one of the chemistry labs to begin teaching how to test our ten water quality parameter, which included nitrate, phosphate, e. coli, and turbidity. The teaching was successful, but we are hoping to stay in touch for further questions via a blog and social media."

"We installed the Laser Egg and the weather station and along the way worked with the eco-club and mentors to properly learn how it functions and uploads data properly."

"This waste-landfill was without doubt the most polluted and toxic site that we saw throughout the trip. This site, located behind the medical school and next to the border with India, had tons of solid waste disperse around the area. Some of this waste was burning which released harmful and dangerous chemicals into the air. The waste ashes were then getting into the river. We were just there for around 15 minutes and I felt like I was going to throw up from all the chemicals I inhaled. I thought I was going to be fine once we left but it took me several days to get back to normal. If a few minutes made me that sick, I can't imagine the health of people living around the area."

"After a series of delayed and cancelled flights, I have finally arrived at the Pratiman-Neema Memorial Health Institute Campus in Bhairahawa! Though being apart from the group for a week meant missing some activities, I spent the time with the locals. From group meals to personal tours (even a special ride in the cockpit of an airplane!), I could not have asked for a more authentic, personal way to be introduced to Nepal."

"The group went out to take water samples and set up a pressure transducer along the Danda River to test the quality of the river and the river dynamics."

"Day Three was our first day at the Pratiman Neema Memorial Foundation. We were welcomed by a thankful and generous community of faculty and students with a massive amount of flowers and selfies. Our day consisted of introductions and guest lectures that outlined our mission for

the following eight days as we work together to improve the Danda River and the health and awareness of the community."

"This day we got to see firsthand the open space for creative thinking, learning, and projects to take place at the Center for Sustainability. This time around we will use this space to listen to lectures about agriculture, the foundation, the various schools and partnerships, and introductions from the eco-club participants. When planning a project, it is important to establish a solid plan before implementation. The local environmental coordinator guides us around the property and various water testing sights to establish a solid environmental monitoring plan."

"Dr. Bohara kickin' it with the boys. Can I have some mo' momo?"

"On Day Two, we made the drive from Kathmandu to Bhairahawa. Although it was a tough drive, we were able to stop at the Manakamana Temple. The view from the top was one that no picture could capture, but my camera could capture how good the locally harvested clementine were."

"On the second day we visited the monkey temple and drove around Kathmandu. It was shocking to see the amount of waste, noise and air pollution that existed in Kathmandu and how people decide to wear face masks. The river on the west side of Nepal, as seen on the picture, had tons of trash that not only contaminated the environment but kept all the birds away from the area."

"Our second day was filled with traveling in jeeps to our next destination. But with traveling a long distance in a vehicle comes wild adventure. Lunch is always important, therefore; we made a nice little stop to eat some more chili chicken and enjoy the river. As the boys skipped rocks, and the others took in the beauty of the flowing river water, we all looked up to our right only to imagine what was on the other side of the mountain just a tram ride away. Orange filled terraces, layering mountains with no end, soaring birds, and what awaits us at the top is a special white caped mountain view. Every corner turned, this magical place has something special awaiting."

"After our scale up the mountain, the group piled into the vehicles only to experience the most wild ride to our next destination. Let's just say it was like riding a roller coaster for about 5 hours. Every experience has its ups and its downs, but we made the best of it. During our long ride, we stopped in traffic and made sure to get out of the car and take in the amazing views. Clara, had some left over "mo mo" from lunch, so enjoying a snack and a view really made up for the long ride. We finally arrived to our destination. Sleepy eyes and wondering minds. Time to rest and get ready to start our mission for tomorrow. Citizen science lab set up! Here we come."

"One moment you exist in your own paradigm and discourse; comfortable perhaps, complacent even. The next moment, you discover the drive to see outside of your echo chamber, and dogmatic belief system. The "in-between" of those two narratives is the discovery of inspiration and hope. For many, education is the catalyst of hope, the dream to see a better world for yourself, and for the greater community as a whole. The Nepal study center, is one seed of many

that is the beginning of greater education, health, community sustainability, and a global collaboration that will help students, diplomats, teachers, mentors, working class, scholars, and all who belong to the community understand the symbiotic relationship of the socioeconomic and ecological chains that effect the human condition. Thanks to Dr. Bohara for planting the seed, because of this, many students, and other professionals alike are able to work for an identity outside of their self, and search for an identity that serves the greater purpose of global community and family. Because of this seed, many students will embark on the next chapter in the legacy and story of the Nepal Study Center, as well as the Lumbini Sustainable Center.

## **ECO-ADVENTURE LUMBINI CIRCLE HILL TOUR**

"As we headed back to Kathmandu for our final day before heading home, I realized just how much of Nepal we got to see. The hazy skies and insane traffic of the big cities really contrast the remote villages and mountainsides we got to experience. We saw schools of all types, people of all classes and lifestyles, locations of great variety, and indescribable experiences of all sorts. From hikes and caves, to shopping and eating, to elephants and crocodiles, to momo and nightclubs, we really saw the very best of Nepal."

"The Chitwan National Park is one of the most popular parks in Nepal. Here you can find more than 60 elephants which are all well fed, exercised, and taken care of. On this day, half our team decided to do the Elephant Safari ride which consisted of taking a trip through the Terai jungle region of Nepal. On this ride we were able to spot rhinoceros, deer, peacocks, and many different type of bird species.

"The ride was a little bit rough because Maruti, our elephant, was walking through the trees. I was really impressed when she recognized this and decided to hand me a stick for me to block the tree branches. Aside from recognizing my struggle, she also cleared the way by removing some pointy and dangerous branches. I was happy that we were able to support the Elephant Research facility at the Chitwan National Park by participating on the Elephant Safari ride. The ride was excellent, but it felt so much nicer to know that this national park provides shelter, food, love and protection to so many elephants."

"A visit in Chitwan, Nepal is a wildlife experience that beats any zoo you have or ever will visit. Not only did we have the privilege of viewing 'exotic' animals (rhinos, elephants, deer, monkeys, etc.) and their primitive behavior up close, but any and all artificial environments were taken out of the equation, which only amplified our experiences in a positive way. For me, this was the first time I have ever ridden an elephant and it is something that I would definitely recommend to others in the future!"

"Our group was invited to learn about the amazing things Palpa Lions Lacoul Eye Hospital is up to. This Hospital saves people's lives who can't afford eye surgery. We had the opportunity to learn about their mission from a very moving presentation by the doctor him elf."

"On this day we visited Hotel Srinagar, which is located on Tansen and faces the Himalayans mountain region. It was there where we had the best view of the Himalayans since our arrival to

Nepal. The wind was chilly, but not cold, and the air was extremely clean. Overall, everyone greatly enjoyed taking pictures of the marvelous Himalayans region."

"When astronauts float above the Earth, many say that, when looking down, they realize how small we really are in the grand scheme of things. Upon finishing the long hike up the mountain and looking down at Tamghas, I experienced the exact same feeling. Even though we only saw a micro-fraction of what the beautiful country of Nepal has to offer, it is easy to realize that there is still so much to do, no matter where you are in the world; from the city to the countryside, all of our lives' superficial 'catastrophes' (not getting enough Likes, your favorite team losing, asshole cutting in line, etc.) are nothing more than a blip in the ever-continuous chaotic flow of life on this Earth."

"I cannot possibly think of a better way to start the new year than with meditation and early morning yoga at the Arubindo Ashram. The feeling of the crisp morning air and the sun on my face as we sat on a plateau overlooking the mountains is both humbling and empowering. The massive landscape around us reminded me of what little place we take in the world. Yet, it also reminded me of the importance of the role we play in the world, and motivated me to keep working for a better environment and well-being for everyone."

"It is one thing to do a guided meditation found off of YouTube in the comforts of your home, but meditating under the guide of a Yogi Master while in the heights of the Himalayas is an experience that we will all cherish forever. I, along with many others in our group, will never forget the pure, Himalayan air that passed through our nostrils on every breath."

"Music, dancing and card games-- the universal language. As we gathered around the campfire at the Madhane clinic after dinner, we joined our hosts in a spontaneous dance party. From Nepali songs to US classic sing-alongs, it became clear that there is no language barrier when good music is involved. The same goes for a game of Uno, I learned, as a group of us joined in some friendly competition following the fire. Dancing, playing, and laughing can happen anywhere with anyone, even-- or especially-- at a local medical clinic tucked away in the mountains in Nepal."

"While our efforts to bring resources and education on feminine hygiene and menstruation are undoubtedly a huge step of progress for the girls at the school we visited, I can't help but think of all the progress that can still be made in this subject. After learning more about the cultural stigmas of female menstruation, I was both fired up and inspired to learn more about the changes possible. Education, resources, and a shift in outdated traditions are all necessary for a healthy lifestyle for women, especially in rural parts of Nepal."

"Organic farming at Madhane (clinic). The students observed, tasted, and understood how this medical clinic practiced its sustainable practices."

"Well of course we stopped for tea and gracefully took in the beautiful Himalayan view! After being in the city for a while and crammed in the cars, turning that windy corner and then, BAM! There emerges the amazing mountains as vast and mysterious as we had hoped."