

Accessible Nepal- an inclusive initiative

Presentation abstract

Accessible Tourism is a relatively new concept in Nepal. Though the effort of creating accessible and inclusive tourism has begun, it is still in its infancy. A major concern for Destination Nepal is the lack of awareness and absence of mandatory law in place to encourage Tourism operating sectors for coming up with accessible Tourism products. Given the number economic and social benefits to may be derived from inclusive tourism, it is a critical time for the tourism industry to understand and develop measures towards inclusivity in the gateway to the Himalayas.

Nepal was struck with a devastating earthquake on April 25th, 2015 which concurrently left more than 4,000 Nepalese with physical disabilities. Nepal is continuing to rebuild a lot of infrastructure and the process of rebuilding should be barrier free and use universal design measures. With universal design in place, this would allow access for minority groups such as people with disabilities and the elderly to the historic monuments in Kathmandu valley.

Four Seasons Travel (4ST) has been a key player in not only creating accessible tourism experiences in Nepal, but also promoting accessible tourism to other tourism operators. After the meeting with Dr. Scott Rains in California and inviting him to Nepal in May 2014, Nepalese tourism sector saw an accessible traveller and an expert imparting knowledge and experience. Scott did not just enjoy Nepal, he connected tourism business with Disabled People Organisations (DPO) and he later worked closely with 4ST on developing an accessible tourism strategy.

4ST was instrumental in taking the spirit of Accessible Tourism forward with the limited resources and knowledge. It organised an accessible trek to 3200 meters in Annapurna route which was field tested with a traveler with vision impairment from Italy in August 2015. Another accessible trekking experience, in partnership with Washington DC based International Development Institute (IDI), was coined as 'Wounded Heroes Trek to Nepal', where a group of veterans who are amputees went trekking in the Annapurna Region. The event made it to the list of UNWTO World Tourism Day celebrations in 2016. Such initiatives led by private sector in partnership with various organizations have worked to create a 'Destination Nepal for all'.

4ST is leading the initiative by example to engage and empower tourism operating sector, policy makers and DPOs in Nepal. It has also extended logistic supports to local events including ASIA TRY 2016, Accessible Tourism Talk programs and excursions for Nepali travellers with disabilities. With the help of Nepal Tourism Board

(NTB) and other key stakeholders including 'National Federation of Disabled – Nepal' and IDI, Nepal hosted first International Conference on Accessible Adventure (ICAA 2018) The conference also was instrumental in launching the first ever accessible trail near Sarankot on the 31st March 2018. This was inaugurated by Nepal's Tourism minister in the presence of significant number of locals and tourism associations.

There are still a lot of work to be done to make Nepal an accessible destination. Further, partnerships between the state, tourism service providers and DPOs need to be fostered to create job opportunities for people with disabilities. This can be exemplified through the social Entrepreneurship model with the help of accessible Tourism. 4ST and IDI are determined in creating accessible tourism products to attract International travellers with disabilities including slow-walkers and elderly travellers to Nepal.



By engaging the key stakeholders and empowering local PWDs through accessible tourism promotion in the Himalayan country, Nepal is changing lives leading by example.

Keywords—Accessible Tourism, Inclusive Tourism, Nepal, Nepal Earthquake, accessible adventure,

Reference : <https://www.nfdn.org.np/papers/accessible-tourism.html>

<http://icaanepal.com/>

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Biography : Pankaj is a Director of Four Season Travel & Tours. He comes with an experience of more than 2 decades in Tourism industry. He is also an adjunct faculty of Ace Institute of Management in Kathmandu. A passionate Toastmasters, he is the chartered President of Tourism Toastmasters Club in Kathmandu.

2nd speaker : SUMAN TIMSINA

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Biography : Mr. Timsina is an Executive Director, Business Development at Washington, DC based International Development Institute. His areas of interest have been innovation, entrepreneurship, mentoring, diaspora study, community development, education and health care. He has numerous policy papers on these issues.