



Namaste!

Happy Nepali New Year 2066. We follow our own calendar system - the Bikram Era or Bikram Sambat - which is accredited to King Bikramaditya. Marked as an official holiday April 14 or Baisakh 1 is the first day of the New Year 2066.

Kathmandu has been facing unpredictable weather the past few months. There has been sun, rain, wind, hail and everything else in between. The political climate has not been any different - however there does seem to be an undertone of positivity and the never-dying hope amongst the Nepalis for better days. While day-to-day activities continue, there have been sparks of fun and frolic.



The worldwide financial doom and gloom aside, the flow of visitors has increased along with restaurants and pubs that have opened up in parts of Kathmandu. Wi Fi is the biggest development taking over most restaurants and with the power cuts it seems like an opportunity to explore new joints around the valley.

A couple of noteworthy events took place as well, including 2 Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory related events – Chevrolet Miles Music Festival and Women In Concert.

Passage is happy to announce the introduction of ‘Special’ programs. This is our effort to create a Group program on a particular topic or theme. This time we are focusing on an eco-themed semester. Nepal is one of the most ecologically diverse countries in the world, with ecosystems ranging from the tropical plains of the Terai to the sub-arctic peaks of the Himalayas.

The Fall Semester will educate and familiarize the participants in the work done by responsible organizations in Nepal in relation to environment and ecology preservation as well as serve as a common ground where ideas can be exchanged, which will in turn be beneficial to all parties involved.

We would like to welcome onboard our most recent partner – photo.circle. In a short span of time photo.circle’s work has been appreciated and is growing in popularity. Today it has become an organization that is held with respect in the photography/photo-journalism field. We are now offering Independent Study Projects with photo.circle.

We hope to continue sharing and updating you on what is going on in Passage and Nepal through our newsletters. Enjoy!

Best wishes,

( - Passage Team )



- Heritage walks
- Hikes
- Activities: Session at a WCN Nature Club, ECCA Plant a Tree program
- Photo presentation in coordination with photo.circle.
- Discussion on radio: WCN program and Motley Mix podcast

Interested students can contact Tsering at [info@passageinternational.com](mailto:info@passageinternational.com) for more details.

## SPECIAL PASSAGE PROGRAM

Nepal is home to some of Asia's last wild elephants, tigers, and rhinoceroses, as well as the elusive and endangered snow leopards. In addition, Nepal is an ornithologist's heaven, with hundreds of species of birds migrating to Nepal from as far away as Siberia. Lastly, the botanical diversity of Nepal is outstanding. Unfortunately, much of Nepal's biodiversity has been severely threatened in the last fifty years. Scientists are scrambling to preserve the unique ecosystems that are currently on the brink of destruction.

In the wake of consciousness around the world Passage International is putting together an eco-themed semester. Passage International will coordinate with partners ECCA and WCN to create an 8-week program involving students in ongoing projects at the Environment Resource Center and Youth Environmental Program in respective organizations.

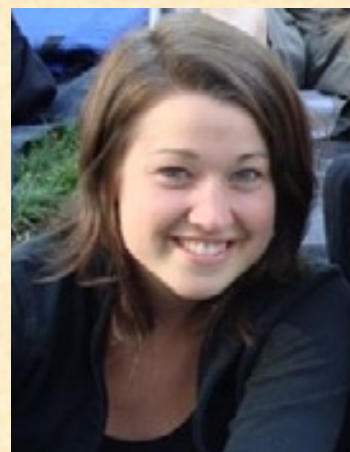
Students will work with our associates to study botany, ecological preservation, eco-tourism, and reforestation.

The 8-week program will include:

- Homestay
- Language class
- Independent Study Projects related to activities taking place at the Environment Resource Center and Youth Environmental Program (YEP).
- Visit Taudaha Watershed
- Lectures on Environment, Energy, Climate Change, Conservation

## HOW THE ALUMNI CAN GET INVOLVED WITH PASSAGE PROGRAMS

"In fall of 2007, I traveled to Nepal through the organization, Passage International—Passage Project at the time. I was feeling sluggish in my relationship with academia, and I wanted to experience something that would shake me to my core and awaken my senses again. I wanted to break down my neatly constructed intellectual paradigm by intimately engaging with a world entirely different from what I knew here. I feel this can be done in a number of ways, of course, and truly, who has not felt this imminent desire at least once or twice in their lives. But the reason I want to support Passage, specifically, is I wholeheartedly stand behind what they are doing, and from my experience with them believe you attain a much deeper understanding of your surroundings through their approach and what they offer.



As they state on their website, "experiential learning is twofold: on the one hand, it fosters a grounded understanding of the "other," while on the other, it encourages an honest view of the self." I can say for myself that this manifested, and thus, I wanted to help them continue to attain their vision."

—Megan Webster, *Personal Passage 2007*

Passage has always believed in a win win situation.

When students visit Nepal they leave with a certain understanding of the cultural diversity but also take back with them the longing to return. Passage is willing to facilitate that desire.

Megan is working towards putting together a Group program with 4 -5 students from Appalachian State University and earns a free trip to Nepal in the process. Besides participating in all the components of the program, Megan will also act as an assistant coordinator and Passage will bear the airfare.

## NEW PARTNERS – Photo.circle



Photo.circle is a unique platform that highlights the power of visual storytelling. It is a physical space for professional as well as amateur photographers to share work and interact with other storytellers and a larger community of media professionals. It is a network of photographers that hosts presentations, discussions, workshops, multimedia and film screenings and exhibitions.

Photo.circle creates an opportunity for photographers to directly communicate with their audience and engage in critique. It also provides time and space to share technical know how on the craft of making pictures and the skills of navigating the larger industry that makes use of these pictures for various communication purposes.

## INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT - Photography

We are introducing Photography as an Independent Study Project with one of our partners - photo.circle.

Students will get an opportunity to:

1. Archive photos of renowned Nepali photographers



- Sorting through negative boxes, going through slides and prints, cleaning and organizing them, writing captions.
- Spending time with the photographer, find opportunities to exhibit, publish and so on.
- Additional research based on the photographs they are archiving, write papers/essays, if and when required.
- photo.circle is willing to include the students' contributions into a national photo archive that they hope to set up in the years to come.

### 2. Photojournalism

- Interning at local publications or independently on photo projects with local mentors/partners.
- Publish the work during the internship period.

### 3. Participate in activities

- Participate in photo.circle projects like exhibitions, presentations etc.
- Participate in a photo.circle photo festival in September. Students can help in raising funds, promotions, copy-editing, and general secretarial work.

Interested applicants wishing to take part and get involved in this festival or receive more details can contact Tsering at [info@passageinternational.com](mailto:info@passageinternational.com)

## EVENTS IN KATHMANDU

Caption: French Jazz Band Ozma performing with KJC Director Mariano Abello

*Photo courtesy: KJC*



## Miles Music Festival Uniting People With Music

The Miles Music Festival (former Nepal Jazz Jatra) is a music festival committed to promoting a 'wide ranging and diverse musical talents of the Nepali people'. With the understanding that musicians benefit from interaction and exchanges the Miles Music Festival encourages both local and international acts to share the same stage thus providing an opportunity for one to learn from the other.

The 8-day festival saw Ozma, a French Jazz band perform in 2 venues. The other events included Women in Concert plus some free concerts. It also offered workshops and master classes from several musicians featured in the Miles Music Festival, held at the Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory. The festival culminated with a Fusion Finale where the audience savored Nepali folk, jazz to Hindustani music.

### Women in Concert

*Photo courtesy: Kashish D. Shrestha*



"The Nepali women artists were very good -- they actually rocked the house. But the roof was raised when one woman sang Shania Twain's "I Feel Like A Woman." Aieeee! It was awesome clapping and singing with a room full of wild and excited Nepalīs (not to mention the three American college girls - "Oh my gawd, I LOVE this song!") to a country song that is the modern equivalent to Helen Reddy's "I am Woman (Here Me Roar)." The evening's song list spanned the gamut - from "Footloose" (yes, really) to Janis Joplin (really again) to Lionel Richie to Sheryl Crow and, of course, songs from Bollywood, which were mostly Indian covers of American songs. It was like the best cover band you have ever heard and the drummer really was cute."

- <http://www.travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/anniemac/nepal2007/1191689100/tpod.html>

Blogger 'Anniemac', in 2007, says it all. With a break in 2008 the Women in Concert was back with a bang and promised to be as entertaining, introduce new talent and gather for a cause. This year the organisers tied up with the Chevrolet Miles Music Festival. Women from varied professional backgrounds took to the stage - all passionate about music.

*Photo courtesy: Kashish D. Shrestha*



Since its journey began in 2003 the Women in Concert has come a long way. Six years later the event stood strong with a line up of 18 singers/musicians. Most of the singers belted out a variety of cover versions (with the exception of a few original compositions) that included everything from rock, pop, classical, R&B to Bollywood.

A lady with eclectic tastes and skills, Vidhea Shrestha was the emcee for the event. It was refreshing to see a bunch of young women take to the stage with confidence, ease and above all talent. They sure can sing. The Women in Concert began as a way of promoting female musicians and vocalists. Surely the trend continues and watching a bunch of young talent it was proof that the budding female musicians and artists are a force to reckon with. Let's hope most, if not all, will grow to become professionals in the future.

Part of the income collected through ticket sales was raised to support Orchid Garden Nepal (OGN).

Related links:

[http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news\\_details&news\\_id=2935](http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=2935)  
[www.motleymix.nepal123.com](http://www.motleymix.nepal123.com)



During Bisket Jatra a tall wooden ceremonial pole called 'yosin' is erected in one of the main squares. This festival commemorates the great battle of Mahabharata with the wooden pole symbolizing victory. After two days, images of the god Bhairab and his female counterpart Bhadra are enshrined in two large greatly decorated chariots and pulled through crowds of cheering on-lookers. When the chariot reaches the city center, a tug-of-war between the inhabitants of the two neighborhoods takes place. The winners of a tug-of-war are considered blessed with good fortune for the coming year. This festival goes on for nine days.

## - Bisket Jatra

Nepalis follow their own calendar system known as the Bikram Era or Bikram Sambat, which is accredited to King Bikramaditya. He started the solar calendar some two thousand years ago. This festival is celebrated in the first day of the first month of the New Year and is observed as an official holiday. On this day, devotees take a dip in the holy Bagmati River at Pashupatinath temple. Pilgrims also visit other religious spots. In Bhaktapur, which is 15 Kilometers east of Kathmandu, the New Year celebrations takes place with an added importance as the "Bisket Jatra or Festival of Bisket".

New Year is celebrated with added aroma in Sankhu, some 20 km east of Kathmandu. Both Hindus and Buddhist worship the Bajra Jogini goddess. During New Year, the deity's image is put on palanquin and carried around town with a huge colorful procession.

*(Information collected from <http://www.infonepal.com.np/festivals.htm>)*

