

Claire and Alex update # 2 October 21st 2026

We were woken to the deep sound of horns breaking through the roar of the river, the monastery was coming to life and so therefore were we!

In this part of Nepal, every town has a monastery and the culture is Tibetan; colourful prayer flags dancing in the wind, boys with long saffron robes hitched, running along the dusty streets on some errand or other and weaving between those set on more 'mundane' activities. There were mums with babies strapped to their backs, children playing in sand, shop keepers looking up hopefully from their wares at trekkers and passing pilgrims, the sound of cement mixers, the chatter and shouts of builders, the odd goat or cow, tethered or being herded.



We had taken the opportunity to escape our 'mundane' for a few days during the Doshain festival. Different mountains and a different landscape, a high altitude desert like wildness, with a very different culture all drew us to Lower Mustang, now only a days drive from Pokhara.

We trekked through villages seemingly untouched by modern ways. All is no concern here, instead it's the reach of climate change. Will these villages survive the diminishing snow fall that is

depleting their rivers and water supplies? Further downstream the threat is too much water and erosion, with communities on the riverbank risking being washed away. So too the road that winds beside the river in this valley, the world's deepest gorge. It's a daily struggle to keep the road open, particularly in the monsoon.



Strangely this place reminded us of Dorset with its fragile Jurassic coast. The landscape in front of us was also once a tropical sea bed, the rock soft and embedded with boulders, pebbles and fossils. A geologists delight, but no foundation for roads pounded by vehicles. For centuries, these paths only had to withstand mule trains and people walking. But that was before climate change and the progress of transformed infrastructure, the latter needed to bring people access to healthcare and other amenities and to support tourism, an important part of Nepal's economy.

Another equally surprising reminder of England's West Country was this region's prolific orchards. Lower Mustang is famous for apples! We were told that underground streams feed these trees, helped by irrigation from the river. Apple trade is a big part of the local economy and keeps hungry trekkers fed on apple pie! So we did our bit and returned with bags of apples.



The road to Mustang follows a centuries old trade route between Tibet and Nepal, but the high value trade is no longer in salt. We must have passed over a hundred brand new Chinese EVs, still wrapped in plastic, being driven along the treacherous road by young Nepalis, heading for dealerships in Pokhara and Kathmandu. Following the flood disaster in August this route is now the main trading route to and from the border.

We are now back in Pokhara and reflecting on all we saw and experienced. Alongside breathtaking beauty was sadness. Our Nepali guide contrasted the landscape today with how it looked in his childhood. Where there were glaciers there are now bare ravines, where there was snow now rocky hillsides, where there were constant streams now either dry river beds or destructive surging torrents.

Throughout history people have prayed 'laments' particularly in times of national profound loss. Loss of something precious that seems gone forever. These prayers aren't about nostalgia but about grief accompanied by sincere leaning on God for restoration, healing and renewal. We recently came across a prayer of lament written by Dr Val Inchley, who we came to know when we lived here in the nineties and who worked much of her life in Nepal. Although the words were written in 1999 they seem so apt for

Nepal today. So we leave you with these words which if you like, you can use as your own prayer for the country and people of Nepal.

Until our next update in a couple of weeks.
With our love
Claire and Alex

An excerpt from a prayer of lament for Nepal

*“O God most High;
Who crafted all the lofty mountains;
Carved out the lowly hollows.
Who opened up the valleys;
And reigned above the snowy peaks.*

Do you no longer love this land?

...

*O God in heaven; God above all gods
Come down and heal this land!*

*For, when you come down, we'll see
From the high mountains to the forest plains,
Tribes and Castes together grow.
From the eastern and the western rivers,
Streams of living water flow.*

*Then we will sing our praise
to God, the God Most High
Whose throne is on the heights.
To the God above all gods
Whose throne is in our hearts.*

Amen”

