

Pokhara, Bandipur, and Gorkha (10/26/2007 to 11/3/2007)

I was happy to get back to Pokhara, rest, and eat, after 25 days of walking. My shoes were in tatters, my cloths stunk (even more than usual), and after all but sprinting down from the base camp in a mere one and a half days, my knees where sore ready for a break as well. So that was pretty much what I did for four days, hanging out with various people I had met along the trek, watching a couple DVDs on my laptop which I picked up for 50 cents a piece. No, I don't think anyone involved in the making of "The Bourne Ultimatum" or "The Departed," the two movies I bought, got a percentage of my dollar. I did manage to drag myself away from slothdom to head up to Sarangkot, a hill above Pokhara with a famed view of the Annapurnas, for the sunrise. I then reluctantly force myself move on, leaving Pokhara's tourist laden lakeside district for the small medieval Nepali town of Bandipur, perched atop a ridge, which had the weather been clear, would have had fantastic views of the Himalayas. Since I had returned from trekking, the weather was now much more hazy than it had been right after the monsoon, so that distant views of the Himalayas where pretty much pointless. But the town was nice enough, but without the views it didn't warrant a stay of longer than one night. From Bandipur I continued my slow route back to Kathmandu stopping in the pilgrim town of Gorkha. It is birthplace of the Shah who united modern day Nepal and whose heirs are only now, depending how the elections go, being forced out of power. On the top of a hill above the town there is a palace-temple-fort all rolled into one. On every Assami (9th day after the full moon) the steps up to the temple dedicated to Kali (the blood thirsty and wrathful manifestation of goddess Parvati, Siva's consort) are stained red with blood. It was on this day that I happened to visit. Goats and chickens by the hundreds where being taken up to the temple having there heads removed and winding up in the barbeque pits along the path below. Pictures were not permitted inside the temple, so fortunately for the vegetarians in the audience I don't have any images of the subsequently described slaughter. I could not see the actual heads being lopped off of the goats, as that was occurring in a chamber where only Hindus were allowed. However, I did watch as live goats were being lead in one door and dragged out another doorway, headless, spewing with blood, and still reflexively kicking. The chickens on the other hand were meeting there maker in an open courtyard, where a man, matter-a-fact-ly, took the chickens one after the other, beheading them, tossing the head in a basket, and giving the kicking headless chicken back to the devotee. The basket of chicken heads was quite a sight, with the recently decapitated one's beak still moving, but obviously no sound was coming out since the lungs with the rest of the body had already been separated from the head. The attempted last squawk came just a little too late.



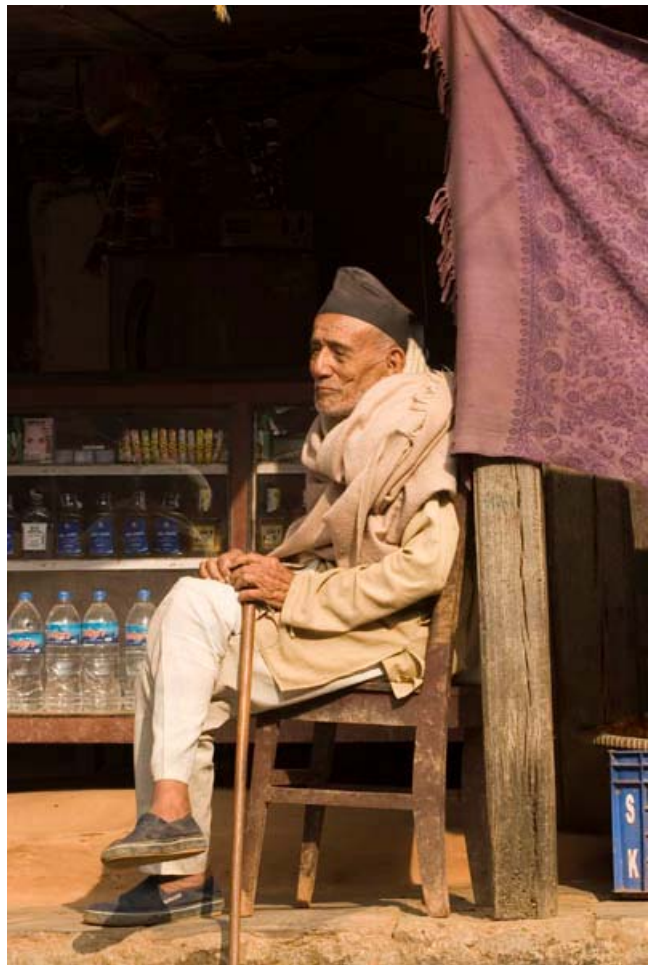
Fishtail Mountain from Pokhara.



Fishtail Mountain and view from Sarangkot, near Pokhara.



Little girl in Bandipur.



Old man in Bandipur.



Maoist graffiti in Bandipur. The Maoist have been fighting a civil war for years but in the last year they joined the government although while I was in Nepal they withdrew causing a delay in the elections to form a new constitution. In the past they had forced tourists on the Annapurna treks to “donate” back up by knives and guns to there cause. Seeing that it is still a good money making opportunity they were also on trail this year, but not back up with knives and guns, and they merely tried to intimidate tourists into donating based on there past reputation. Not a way to endear anyone to there causes, but as I said a good way to fund raise. I managed to avoid giving them anything which I was pretty happy about. When I saw a Maoist check point I stopped and waited for a big tour group and passed through with them. Apparently they were also trying to collect in Bandipur, according to another tourist I talked to, but when I arrived they weren't there.



Temple/Fort at Gorkha.



Devotees waiting to enter the temple with their goats, Gorkha.



Exiting the temple at Gorkha with headless goats.



Wood carving on an area of the complex where I could take pictures, Gorkha.



Many stalls along the path from the temple offer to remove the hair and barbeque up the sacrificed goats for easier transport and consumption.



Barbequing the goats, Gorkha.



Packing up the goat after it's been barbequed, Gorkha.



Wood carving and flowers, Gorkha.



**Street vendor selling oranges,
Gorkha.**



Kids waiting for their bus to leave, Gorkha.