

Mountain Tourism and Its Impacts

In Nepal, mountain tourism means trekking and mountaineering tourism; the former being more popular. Rafting is gaining in popularity. The most popular areas in the mountain regions visited by trekkers are the Annapurna, Langtang, and Sagarmatha regions, which are protected areas (see map). Trekking tourism has experienced a healthy growth (Tables 1 and 2).

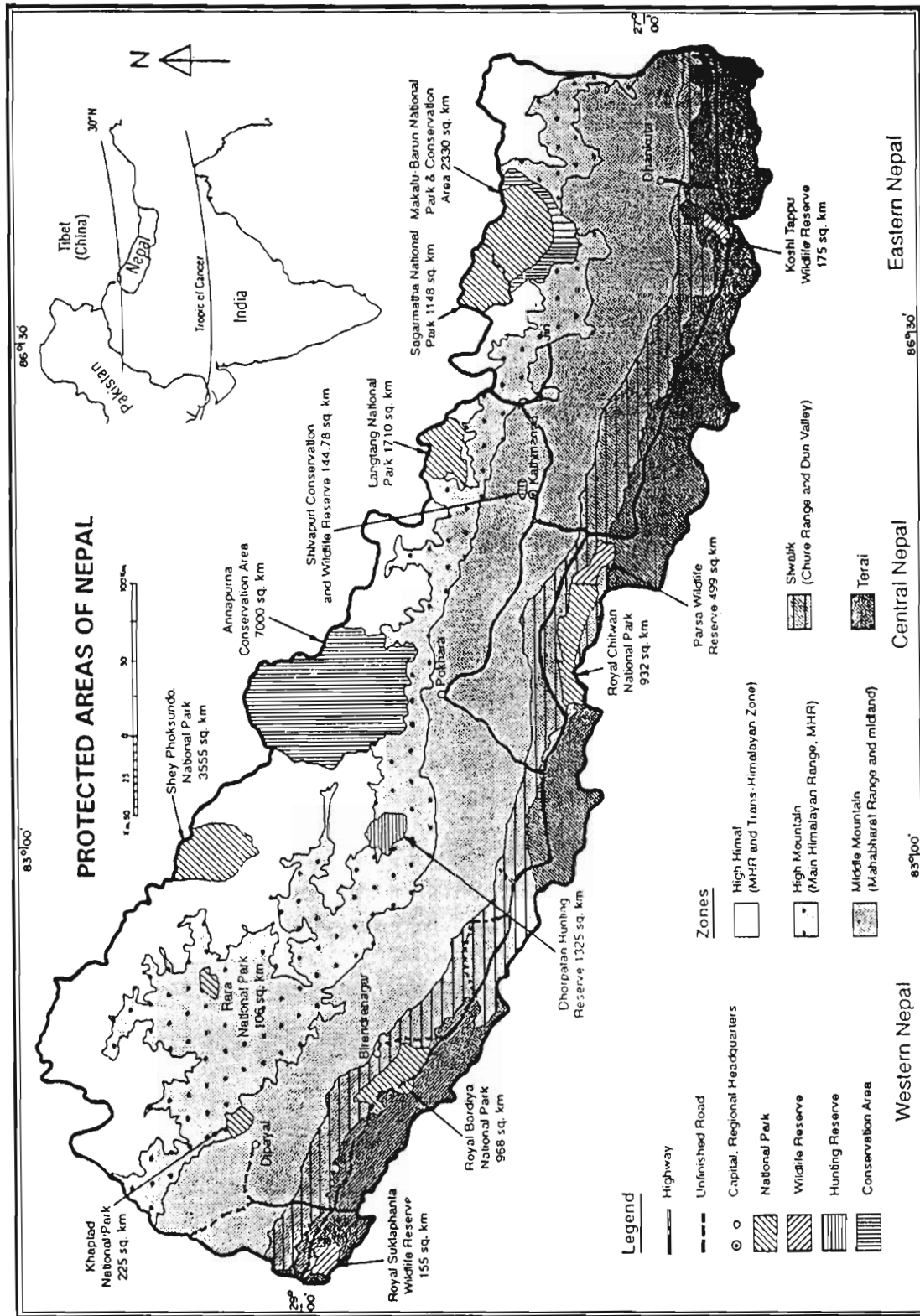


Table 1: Natural Resource Tourism: Numbers and Growth Rates (1987)

Type of Activity	Number of Tourists	Growth Rate per Annum
Mid-altitude trekking (up to 6,000masl)	47,275	11%
High-altitude mountaineering	796	1.1%
Rafting	3,612	320%
Wildlife tourism	25,844	rapid
Professional hunting	12	static
Religious tourism	30-60,000	?

Source: ERL 1989, Annex C Table 1.1.2(a).

Table 2: Mountain Tourism by Destination (1980-1992)

Year	SNP	LNP	ACAP	Others	Total	Share	Total Arrivals
1980	5836	4113	14332	3179	27460	22.47	122205
1981	5804	4488	17053	215	27560	24.46	112694
1982	6240	4535	19702	1855	32332	26.67	121247
1983	6732	4030	21119	417	32298	24.98	129303
1984	7724	4792	25422	3268	41206	34.94	117917
1985	8347	4610	18960	813	32730	25.75	127109
1986	9900	5250	33620	805	49575	29.49	168136
1987	8998	6107	30914	1256	47275	25.00	189116
1988	11366	8423	37902	3582	61273	31.60	193885
1989	11836	8563	36484	3975	60858	30.95	196661
1990	11314	7826	36361	6591	62092	31.82	195121
1991	11862	9603	39107	5198	65770	32.80	200489
1992	12325	9457	42553	7104	71439	31.36	227779

Source: Banskota and Sharma 1994

Trekking tourists consist of free independent trekkers (FITS) and group trekkers, who require trekking permits to visit certain areas in the country. FITS carry their own backpacks or hire a guide/porter to assist them; they eat and sleep in local lodges or "tea houses." Group trekkers join a custom and self-contained trek organised either by an adventure travel company based overseas, or a Kathmandu-based trekking agency (Lama 1991; Lama and Sherpa 1995). FITS are not permitted to visit newly opened areas, such as Kanchenjunga, Manaslu, Dolpa, etc, where only guided tourism (group trekkers) is permitted.

Mountaineering tourists can be classified into two categories, namely, those who climb peaks above 6,000m and those who climb peaks below 6,000m. Permits and fees are prerequisites for all mountaineering tourists regardless of their specific peaks. For peaks above 6,600m, permits are obtainable from the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. For peaks below 6,600m permits have to be acquired from the Nepal Mountaineering Association.

The bulk of mountain tourism in Nepal is conducted in protected areas (Tables 3 and 4). Many socioeconomic changes that have occurred among local people in protected areas are attributable to tourism. Although local people have made attempts to maximise opportunities made possible by the advent of tourism, the implications on local development as well as on conservation have not all been positive (Banskota and Sharma 1994; Byers and Banskota 1992). Tourism impacts can be categorised into different types and, often, both negative and positive impacts result from mountain tourism.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Trekkers by Region

Year	SNP	LNP	ACAP	Others	Total
1980	21.25	14.98	52.19	11.58	100
1981	21.06	16.28	61.88	0.78	100
1982	19.30	14.03	60.94	5.74	100
1983	20.84	12.48	65.39	1.29	100
1984	18.74	11.63	61.69	7.93	100
1985	25.50	14.08	57.93	2.48	100
1986	19.97	10.59	67.82	1.62	100
1987	19.03	12.92	65.39	2.66	100
1988	18.55	13.75	61.86	5.85	100
1989	19.45	14.07	59.95	6.53	100
1990	18.22	12.60	58.56	10.61	100
1991	18.04	14.60	59.46	7.90	100
1992	17.25	13.24	59.57	9.94	100

Source: Same as Table 2

Table 4: Protected Areas in Nepal

Name	Area (sq. km.)	Location
Hill and Mountain		
Rara National Park	106	High mountains
Shey Phoksundo National Park	3555	High <i>himal</i>
Annapurna Conservation Area ¹	7000	High mountain to high <i>himal</i>
Langtang National Park	1710	High mountain to high <i>himal</i>
Sagarmatha National Park	1148	High <i>himal</i>
Makalu-Barun National Park & Conservation Area	2330	High mountain to high <i>himal</i>
Shivapuri Watershed Protected Area	144	Mid mountains
Dhorepatan Hunting Reserve	1325	High mountain
Kaptad National Park	225	High mountain
Terai or Inner Terai		
Royal Sukla Fata Wildlife Protected Area	305	Terai
Royal Bardia National Park	968	Terai
Royal Chitwan National Park	932	Terai
Parsa Wildlife Protected Area	499	Terai
Kosi Tappu Wildlife Reserve	175	Terai

Source: Master Plan for the Forestry Sector Project (MPF 1988), main report.