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CANYONING IN NEPAL

November 9th, 2006 marked the occasion when His Excellency, Mr. Michel JOLIVET, Ambassador of France of the French Embassy in Nepal, officially awarded a diploma of Instructor in the sport of Canyoning to two nepali mountain guides, Messrs. Kabindra LAMA and Rajesh LAMA (Tamang).



This ceremony was attended by representatives from the Nepal Tourism Board, the Nepal Mountaineering Association, TANN, NMIA and The Alliance Française.

This diploma was attributed by Mr. Franck JOURDAN, President of the French School specializing in Canyoning, Ecole Française de Descente de Canyons. Another diploma called "Attestation de Formation aux Premiers Secours" - for training in First Aid assistance - was also attributed by Professor LARENG, President of the French aid agency, "Federation Française de la Protection Civile", with the honorary mention of French Instructor, Mr. Rene Maurel.

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Descente du Canyon de Syange

Kabindra and Rajesh Lama are presently the only nepali guides to have received this coveted diploma in canyoning and therefore the only fully qualified guides in Nepal who can provide safe training as well as total SECURITY to newcomers in this field. While canyoning is new to Nepal, the sport has been practiced in France for twenty years.

In the aftermath of two field trips by Mr. Maurice DUCHENE - Advisor to Rescue and Caving Instructor of the "Federation Francaise de Speleologie" to Marsyangdi Valley and Langtang, in 2002 and 2003 respectively, two Franco-Nepali canyoning expeditions were organized in Nepal in 2004 and 2005. led by two Instructors, Rodolphe STURM and Lionnel RIAS. Kabindra and Rajesh LAMA participated in both expeditions and together with three other young nepali guides, took a ten day training course.

From May to June 2006, they took an intense training course in France. There they had swimming classes and trained in canyon climbing. They were shown what to do in case of emergencies and how to administer first aid, when required. This enabled them to pass the Instructor-level exam, under the close supervision of, and with the expertise, of Mr. Laurent POUBLAN.

Their stay in France was financed by:

- The French Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal
- The Instructors who had originated the first two canyoning trips to Nepal
- The French "Ecole Francaise de Descente de Canyons" and the "Commission des Relations et Expeditions Internationales" i.e. the "Federation Francaise de Speleologie"
- Members of the French Association "HIMALPYRAMIS" or "Himalaya-Alpes-Pyrenees-Amitie" which helps sponsor the education and/or the professional training of nepali children. (Mauduchene@aol.com, whose address is 4 rue du Caillet, 31390 Cabornne, FRANCE)

Canyoning is not a difficult sport for the uninitiated or inexperienced tourist, but having a specialist DIPLOMAED guides in Canyoning is an absolute necessity to insure SECURITY and SAFETY of those who practice it. Likewise, this specialist-guide will provide the quality specialized gear that is specific to this sport.

Canyoning involves going down beautiful but sometimes steep waterfalls,

swimming in narrow gorges, jumping down as many as ten metres or more in deep waterways and if required, knowing what to do to help anyone who may be in difficulty under the waterfall or in the depths of water.

Being so different, canyoning cannot be assimilated to rafting or rock climbing. This sport comes closer to resembling the exploration of caves (i.e. speleology - caving) using in this case a vertical rope descent under sometimes through thick and heavy waterfalls (to depths of up to 140 metres as in the Marsyangdi canyons) This is where being an expert swimmer is a necessity.

Canyoning also requires of technical and specialized equipment and gear which are unlikely to be available in Nepal such as, for example, isothermic suits and special ascending/descending systems in stainless steel etc.

Kabindra and Rajesh LAMA, accomplished guides duly authorized by NMA and by the Canyoning authority of E.F.C. are associated with the FRENCH ADVENTURE TEAM (lamateam@wlink.com.np tel: 4364838 and 2093156 Url is: www.friendsadventure.com As of now, they are the only caving guides in Nepal competent to take clients canyoning. In the future, however, they will organize training sessions to teach canyoning to others with the assistance of their French Instructor-friends. "Friends Adventures Teams" will also adhere to the same norms in terms of security, safety and teaching methods, and join INTERNATIONAL CANYONEERING ASSOCIATION AND NETWORK, managed by Thierry SAUNIER. Presently, only ten canyons in Marsyangdi River and one in Boldepheddicche (Sun Kosi River) have been explored by with the aid of technical equipment. but there are many regions in Nepal where this new sport and activity could be introduced as it does attract a lot of interest from the public. In France, for example, more than one million persons have taken up this sport, specially in holiday camps and centres and in the offices of caving guides, mountaineering organizations and cave exploration centres!! Great and beautiful canyons are present in the Kali Kandaki are in Lantang, in Modi Khola, Sun Kosi, Kanchangunga etc. etc.

Mauric DUCHENE is sincere in offering his services to the Nepali Authorities to draw up a list of districts and other areas where this new form of tourism could be developed here in the years to come, the idea being that this activity could contribute in a meaningful way to the economic activity of the country, specially in the East and the West of Nepal.

A third franco-nepali exploration shall take place in January and February of 2007, led by Instructors Yann Ozou and Greg Marzio. Joining them will be Kabindra and Rajesh Lama, as well as two other young nepali youths, Janak Lama (Tamang) and Ratna Tamang, a new guide of the NMA. Several officials from the Ministry of Tourism of Nepal, as well as representatives from TANN, NMA, NMIA etc will also be invited to a full day's ceremony to introduce this new sport - called Canyoning. A complete photo exhibit, maps, videos and material used in Canyoning, were put on display, to the pleasure of all the participants who attended this evening ceremony graciously sponsored by the French Embassy in Kathmandu. It is planned that the photo exhibit will then be moved to the Alliance Francaise where it will be on display, open to the public until November end. Their address is: Tripureshwor - Ganeshman Singh Path in Kathmandu.