

# Facing pandemic economic woes, Nepal reopens to adventurers

By Binaj Gurubacharya  
The Associated Press

**K**ATHMANDU, Nepal — Adventurers looking to scale Nepal's Himalayan peaks and trek its mountain trails can finally do so for the first time in more than half a year, as the country reopens to foreigners even as the coronavirus pandemic has left it short of hospital beds.

Foreign visitors are a major source of income for Nepal and the closure has impacted the estimated 800,000 people who work in the tourism industry.

For now the reopening will come with restrictions and mainly be limited to those seeking to climb or trek its famous peaks. Nepal is home to eight of the 14 highest mountains in the world, including the tallest, Mount Everest.

"We are not opening the country for all visitors and only mountaineers and trekkers who have taken a prior permit will be allowed to come to Nepal," said Rudra Singh Tamang, director general of Nepal's Department of Tourism. "We are opening to a sector of visitors who we know we can handle and manage."

Rather than a visa on arrival, visitors now need to get prior approval, give details of their itinerary, hire a local outfitting company, and have health insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment. They are required to take a coronavirus test before leaving their home country, stay for a week in quarantine at a hotel in Kathmandu, and then take another coronavirus test



before being allowed to go up the mountains.

Local guides, porters, cooks, and helpers who will be part of any mountaineering support team will be required to take coronavirus tests and prove they have been living in areas with no infections for the past two weeks.

"We are trying to revive the tourism industry that was badly hit by the pandemic, but we are not taking any chances or any risks," Tamang said. "We did a test run ... with a foreign expedition team and now have [a] good idea how to manage the adventure tourists."

Spring is the mountaineering season

when foreign climbers come to Nepal to attempt to scale the highest peaks, while the fall is popular for trekkers who come to hike the mountain trails. The spring mountaineering season was cancelled in March when the scale of the pandemic became clear and was followed by the country mostly closing its borders to outsiders.

Earlier in the fall season, a team of mountaineers from Bahrain was given special permission to scale Mount Lobuche and Mount Manaslu. They were made to follow all the new rules placed by the government and reported no problems.

The success of the expedition was cele-

**TOURISM REVIVAL.** A team of mountaineers from Bahrain, who were given special permission, scale Mount Lobuche in Nepal in October. The success of the expedition was celebrated by the mountaineering community in Nepal, as was the government decision to reopen to qualified mountaineers and trekkers. (Seven Summit Treks via AP, File)

brated by the mountaineering community in Nepal, as was the government decision to reopen to all qualified mountaineers and trekkers in October.

"We need to give [a] small ray of hope to the people in the adventure tourism industry that there is still a future somewhere to look forward to," Tamang said.

The pandemic hit as Nepal was preparing to double the number of tourist arrivals with a government campaign declaring 2020 as Visit Nepal year.

People in the mountains have been the hardest hit. They normally work these spring and fall seasons to make enough money to last them all year.

The prospect of trekkers and mountaineers returning to the mountain has been a welcome piece of news for those in the industry.

"We in the adventure tourism industry are very excited that the country is finally open, and we are beginning to get many calls and inquiries from foreign clients," said Ang Tshering of Asian Trekking in Kathmandu.

He said there is particular interest in the spring 2021 climbing season, especially for Mount Everest.

Continued on page 8

## Japan Nobel laureate Koshiba, who found neutrinos, dies at 94

By Mari Yamaguchi  
The Associated Press

**T**OKYO — Japanese astrophysicist Masatoshi Koshiba, a co-winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize in physics for confirming the existence of elementary particles called neutrinos, has died. He was 94 years old.

Koshiba, a distinguished professor at the University of Tokyo, died at a Tokyo hospital in November, the university announced. It didn't provide a cause of death.



**NEUTRINO FOUNDER.** Japanese astrophysicist Masatoshi Koshiba is seen in 2002 after co-winning the 2002 Nobel Prize in physics. (AP Photo/Junji Kurokawa, File)

Koshiba devised the construction of giant underground chambers to detect neutrinos, elusive particles that stream from the sun.

Neutrinos offer a unique view of the sun's inner workings because they are produced in its heart by the same process that causes the sun to shine.

He shared the prize with two other scientists — the late Raymond Davis Jr. of the University of Pennsylvania, who also worked on neutrino detectors, and the late Italian-born scientist Riccardo Giacconi, who was cited for x-ray telescopes that provide sharper images of the universe.

Koshiba worked at the Kamiokande neutrino detector, a huge facility built in the mountains in central Japan. He

Continued on page 8

We're here when you need us

When uncertainty clouds your way, you can count on Banner Bank. Our superheroes have helped people dream big and reach their goals for more than 130 years. So call us when you need a Portland-area banking hero. We're here to help.

Learn more at [bannerbank.com](http://bannerbank.com), or call us at: (800) 272-9933



Letting your face covering get wet may decrease its effectiveness and make it difficult to breathe.

Keep your mask dry by wearing a rain jacket with a hood, carrying an umbrella, or having another means to shield your face covering from the rain. You may also want to carry a spare, just in case.



For more information visit [healthoregon.org/coronavirus](http://healthoregon.org/coronavirus) or call 211

