



## Peak experience

### Mountainous efforts are a breeze in retrospect

As far as I'm concerned life is most enjoyable in retrospect. A case in point – overseas holidays which always seem much better viewed from the perspective of home, after the event.

Sometimes, when I'm travelling, I find it all a bit much but when I get home I look back and think it was fabulous, even when it wasn't.

When my wife and I went trekking in the Nepal Himalayas 20 years ago, it was gruelling to say the least. I couldn't say I really trekked though. Trudge is a better way to describe it and as I trudged I was constantly asking our porter (who ended up carrying both our packs): "How much further?"

"Only another day or two," he'd say and I'd slump to the ground, moaning. It was bloody hard going and at one point

I had visions of a Tyrolean nature... me striding along with a staff in my hand and a feather in my cap



I stopped altogether. "I simply cannot go on," I declared. So it was suggested we rest for the day at Langtang Hotel, an obscure hamlet way north of Kathmandu. Tibet was just a short trudge up the valley.

After a day off spent sipping tea and spotting yaks, followed by a good night's sleep in a rat-infested hovel run by a toothless gnome, we went on.

It was all my wife's fault. She'd been trekking in Nepal before and had suggested I might like it.

"What does it involve?" I had asked.

"Oh you just walk through the countryside from hotel to hotel," she replied. I thought that sounded rather nice and I had visions of a Tyrolean nature, charming guest houses with alpine views – me striding along with a staff in hand and a feather in my cap.



Unfortunately a Nepalese mountain hotel is nothing more than a medieval shack with no electricity or running water and often you're just in a room with the family that runs it.

We arrived at one place where they advertised that hot showers were available.

When I asked to be shown to the shower receptacle they led me to a small stable, moved out the goats, let me in and gave me a bucket half full of lukewarm water.

"That's a shower?" I asked.

"Yes, that is shower," I was told. It was useless to argue. That same establishment had a toilet overhanging

a small precipice and I pitied the poor folk walking below.

How I suffered. Looking back though, and with the passage of years, the journey is now the stuff of personal legend and, in my memory, I am striding through the Himalayas like Sir Edmund Hillary. Like I said, things always seem so much better in retrospect. There's that old saying ... at least you have your memories and I reckon that the memories are actually the best part.

You can, after all, alter memories, embellish them and what might have been a trial can, later on, with the passage of time, seem rather wonderful.

Life's funny like that.

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