

lessly as our beautiful art work got swept up into giant trash bags. The festival may not have lasted long, but it was a wonderful experience, my best day in Costa Rica. I had truly come to know what Costa Ricans mean by "Pura Vida."

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**About the Author:**

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### **Saturday Diary: Far from Nepal, Pittsburgh Felt Like Home**

*Deepak Adhikari*  
Agence France Presse  
Kathmandu, Nepal

When I arrived in Pittsburgh in the end of March, I got a new address: 10 Allegheny Center, Apt. 115. Here, on the North Side of this bustling city, I sought to create a home away from home.

A framed picture of Pittsburgh at night adorned the most expansive white wall, but I wanted to make my Allegheny Center apartment Nepali, too. I hung posters from Nepal--of Kumari, a living goddess; of Swayambhu, a Buddhist temple in Kathmandu; of Nyatapola, a temple in the ancient city of Bhaktapur. I uploaded Nepali songs to my laptop and hummed them as I cooked Nepali food.

A neophyte chef, I've experimented these past few months, often mixing the wrong ingredients and condiments. Now that I've nearly mastered my native cuisine, it's time to leave!

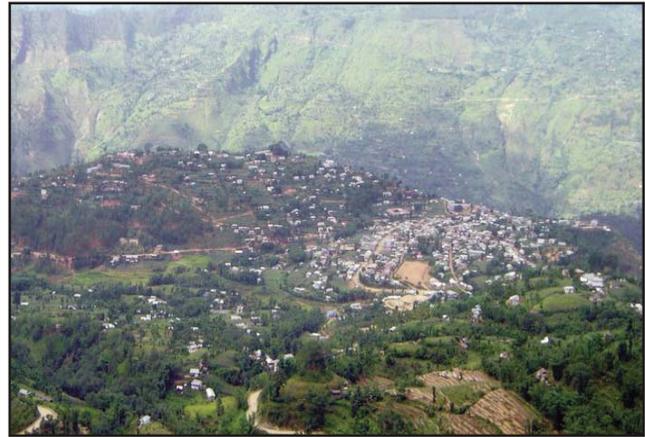
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Almost five months after setting foot in the United States for the first time, I have realized how significant these things are. The things that I took for granted in Nepal.

I must admit, though, I have fallen in love with Pittsburgh, which has a similar topography to my hometown of Phidim. Phidim, an idyllic hamlet in eastern Nepal, has two rivers. I spent many childhood days on the banks of those rivers.

Here in Pittsburgh, I walked over the Allegheny River every morning on my way Downtown to work at the Post-Gazette. The soaring yellow bridges

are a far cry from the rusty and rickety suspension bridges in Phidim, but a river is a river.



*Phidim Bazar of Nepal*

I am thankful to the strangers who showed me the way when I got lost. One gave me a ride when I was nearly stranded at the Greyhound station on my return from a trip to Harrisburg.

It is both challenging and rewarding to explore new places. You are acutely aware that you can run into trouble any time. But the rewards of overcoming trouble are sweet like a song.

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I have published a number of articles in the Post-Gazette, and I have come across an unusual reader (Bill, I hope you are reading this). He has been quite a critic of my write-ups: exhorting, condemning and at times suggesting story ideas. I call people like Bill "familiar strangers;" they pop up on the Internet, never revealing their true identities.

I've met all sorts of people in Pittsburgh. Coming from the country that hosts the highest mountain in the world, it turned out, was not always easy. You have to walk tall.

I'm often asked if I've climbed Mt. Everest. I offer a polite no.

I did grow up in the foothills of the Himalayas, and the glistening mountain played a backdrop for my childhood. But life was tough. It is not easy to appreciate beauty when you are rubbing shoulders with poverty and hardship, when you belong to the tumult and deprivation that is today's Nepal.

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A local physician and philanthropist mailed me, asking for some unusual assistance. He wanted me to help him gauge the credibility of a nonprofit group working for the street children in Nepal. In Nepal, many of the so-called nonprofit organizations, channeling foreign