

# At home in the Himalayas

**We recently caught up with Guy Cotter of expedition guides, Adventure Consultants, and asked about his involvement with the movie 'Everest' and the rebuilding of Nepal post-earthquake**

**Tell us about Adventure Consultants.**

We have been operating guided trips in Nepal since 1992 when the company was owned by Rob Hall and Gary Ball. I worked as third guide at that stage and later purchased the company after Rob passed away in 1996.

Nowadays we operate trekking trips to Everest base camp and the Khumbu area as well as other trekking regions in Nepal. We run expeditions to Mera Peak, Island Peak and a three-peaks trip that takes in summits around 6,000m. We make an ascent of Cho Oyu, the world's sixth-highest mountain and of course we run an expedition to Mt Everest every year.

Adventure Consultants also run around 35 expeditions a year across the globe: Nepal, Antarctica, Africa and South America, with our very experienced guiding staff.

**'Everest' deals with the events that led to the death of Hall and seven others. What sort of man was he?**

I did my first trip into the mountains with Rob Hall when I was 15 years old and he was 16 when we traversed a 240-km section of New Zealand's Southern Alps from Arthurs Pass to Mt Cook. Even then Rob was a natural leader who was very motivated and didn't let convention get in his way. He was very gentle yet his determination would drive him to not give up on projects, he was always determined to succeed while being extremely pragmatic about situations. He was generous to his friends and clients with his time and would do whatever he could to help people out so he was very highly respected by the Nepalese for his contribution there.

**You were heavily involved as a consultant on the movie, can you tell us about the experience?**

I met the producers in New Zealand in October 2012 then went to London for two weeks in December, only to make it home five months later! It was apparent they needed someone to help them with behind-the-scenes advice so I stayed on to do that as well as running the mountain safety side of







things while filming took place.

Taking 180 city people into the mountains has its challenges and as it is a role I have a lot of experience in, from previous film projects, it was a natural fit for me. We filmed up to 4,800m in Nepal then relocated to the Italian Alps to shoot a lot of the mountain sequences followed by two weeks in Rome at Cinecitta studios and later a month in the 007 Bond studio in London.

I spent a great deal of time with the actors helping them with their characters and all the technical skills that a climber needs to look authentic on camera. I have to say the actors on this project were extremely diligent and professional in the character development, taking on the persona of their character throughout the project in a chameleon-like way. I spent a huge amount of time with lead actor Jason Clarke who worked tirelessly to ensure all his scenes looked realistic as he really wanted to do justice to Rob Hall and I think he did that very well.

I was close to the director at all times so I could let him know if I saw anything that didn't quite fit or looked too staged. There were times when my advice wasn't taken on board for a

variety of reasons so there were times when there was divergence from the real events.

For example, I wanted them to portray the helicopter rescue accurately as it was actually me who initiated it even though I knew it had never been done before. I called on a well-connected friend, an expat called Lisa Choegyal, who had lived in Kathmandu for many years, to use all her contacts to make the rescue happen, which she managed to do against all odds. I found it a shame that she wasn't given acknowledgement for her efforts but the director thought that by showing Peach Weathers calling her congressman to arrange the helicopter rescue, it might bring the Beck and Peach Weathers characters together to initiate their reunion.

As always with making movies of real events, there was a lot more to the story than can be fit into two hours so it's understandable things get left out or changed.

#### **How is Nepal recovering from the pair of big earthquakes in 2015?**

The earthquakes were horrific for Nepal and it's people, who already suffer from inept governance

and a challenging environment in which to live. The lack of infrastructure for disasters like this means that much of the population must be self-reliant – there is no safety net in place like we would expect in first-world countries.

More than six months on, there has been a shift towards rebuilding their lives and more positivity however their politicians continue to disappoint and they could be much better off than they are at present.

At Adventure Consultants we have been involved in fundraising and also directly distributing funds for rebuilding in the Sherpa communities we work with. Some houses have been completed while the remainder will be finished next April/May.

There are only two areas within Nepal that are still impacted by the effects of the earthquake while the majority of trekking routes and services have been completely restored. We have been running expeditions to Nepal again these last three months and have had a fantastic time although we really feel for the Nepalese who are waiting for tourists to return now things are back to normal. **AA**