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REAL ESTATE

In early January 2022, I left for Kathmandu, Nepal. I wanted to volunteer some of my time, and it seemed like an opportune moment between the end of my internship after my master's degree and the commencement of a permanent position at Oxenwood Real Estate. I found an exceptional charity through the guidance of GVI, one of the most well respected and prominent international volunteering organisations in the world, called SASANE. It is a survivor-led charity that fights against human trafficking, child marriage, women violence, and oppression, so that no female is exploited for forced slavery, sex trade or early marriage. As Nepal is one of the poorest countries in Asia in terms of GDP per capita, human trafficking has been able to grow and harm a large portion of the population.

Working with these women was hard, yet one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. They have lived through the most inhumane of experiences but still manage to keep smiling and find new motivations to continue living, such as learning English or studying for a degree. They were filled with gratitude at our presence as volunteers, which made us feel so welcome and made us treasure the experience even more. The women all have their own stories and how they were able to escape belongs to them, yet they have enough strength to continue trying to make it stop for as many other women as possible. Their statistics are encouraging, and several survivors have even become paralegals to defend other victims and sustain this necessary battle.

Aside from those remarkable human encounters, I was able to meet one of my long-time dreams, Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world, with its culminating summit of 8,848m. I decided to go the Everest Base Camp (EBC) because of the unbelievable aspect of it. Trekking to reach the base camp was filled with the most spectacular mountain views and several beautiful villages, populated by lovely Nepalese people whose hearts have no limit and welcome you as one of their own. Unfortunately, the day before reaching EBC, I had a health issue, which forced me to turn around and go back down after eight days of hiking in a fresh -25 degrees environment and an altitude of 4,800m. Although I did not achieve my goal of the EBC, I have no bitterness or feeling of defeat thanks to the approach of the Nepalese people towards the mountain. They treat it as their gods and, if the weather or your body does not support your trek all the way to the end, it is the goddess of the mountain protecting you. It was



quite a humbling experience and it made me realise simply how lucky I was to simply be there and see the things I got to see.

I am extremely grateful I was able to volunteer in Nepal and take in such a rich culture and a strong population filled with giving hearts and extraordinary resilience. It is a country truly worth visiting for its mountains, scenery, but, mostly, its people. My thanks to Oxenwood Real Estate for helping me achieve my goal of getting there by trusting me with the time I needed. If you would like to help support the work of SASANE fighting to empower women, please follow this link: <https://sasane.org.np/>.

