

Sustainable Paper Making in Nepal

Introduction

In Nepal's remote Himalayan forests lives a very special bush called the lokta. The lokta bush has, for hundreds of years, supplied bark for papermaking. Handmade paper from the lokta is in high demand in Nepal, where it is used for legal documents and is also very popular with tourists.

Unfortunately, very few paper-producing companies are interested in conservation or saving the lokta bush and as a result, they are becoming scarce. However, conservation is possible and some communities are leading the way.



Why is it Eco-friendly?

- Lokta paper is handmade and dried in the sun, so there are no CO₂ emissions in the air.
- The bush grows really quickly and if it is pruned properly every three or four years, it will grow again much stronger.
- Paper makers create coloured paper using natural dyes from other plants and flowers in the forest.
- The remaining stalk (which is not used to make paper) is given to the villagers, who burn it and use it as fuel for their stoves.



The stalk of the Lokta bush.

Meet Kailash Village

The Kailash village in Nepal shows what can be achieved with successful conservation and correct harvesting . With some support from outside agencies, the Kailash villagers joined together and set up the Malika Handmade Paper Enterprise. All 235 households raised 50% of the start-up costs, provided the labour to build the paper making facility and carried equipment from the nearest roads, which was a three day walk away!

The villagers were taught how to harvest responsibly, using old bark from the trees and to leave younger trees to grow and flourish.



Hand-made paper created by the villagers.



Drying the paper.

Look at the beautiful paper created by the lokta bush. Which one is your favourite?

