

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2006

IN TRANSIT } MICHELLE HIGGINS

Vacations, With a Relief Mission Included

As travelers develop ties to their favorite destinations and look for ways to give back to the communities they have visited, a new field called travel philanthropy is starting to develop.

Humanitarian adventure travel companies that organize trips to remote, developing regions and deliver aid as part of the journey are beginning to emerge. Relief Riders International, a two-year-old company founded by Alexander Souri, takes clients on 15-day horseback riding adventures through rural Rajasthan, India (above right), to deliver supplies like antibiotics, educational materials for local schools and goats for families. Relief Riders is working with the Red Cross to develop an H.I.V./AIDS information campaign in India and last month helped treat 87 patients in the desert with eye surgery. The cost is \$5,400 a person, based on double occupancy, not including airfare; on the Web: www.reliefridersinternational.com.

Rural Education and Development, or READ, established by Antonia Neubauer, the president of the Myths and Mountains travel company, has helped communities



in Nepal build 39 libraries throughout the country since 1992. This year, the company is working on expanding the project to other developing regions in Vietnam, Nicaragua and India. In October, Ms. Neubauer plans to lead a 14-day trip to Nepal for travelers interested in visiting the libraries and learning more about the program. The trip costs \$2,965, based on double occupancy, and voluntary \$750 tax-deductible donation to READ; www.readnepal.org; 800-670-6984.

For a list of other companies that offer travel philanthropy opportunities go to www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/op_tp_donate.html.