



The deeper I walked into these hills, the more I became aware of the possibility of tunnelling out of what was a surprisingly constricted lifestyle.

politics, or postcodes or business, or, most surprisingly in these modern times, by the social class we hail from. In essence, at a certain point of maturity, we seem to let those picket fences contain us, and end up embracing much smaller lives than we should or need to.

Stepping outside the confines of my daily life took me to an unforgettable country, and introduced me to a whole bunch of friends and acquaintances whose lives would otherwise have been unlikely to collide with mine.

As for Jason, he didn't get lost in the crowd, as I had so fervently wished. Instead, his presence haunted me every minute of the trip, as we bickered like long-lost siblings by the nightly campfire, over

everything from politics to beer. Watching us indulgently was an audience of new friends who understood much better than we did the mating ritual that had begun. Two weeks after we returned, we met up to look at holiday photos; one look at his belligerent grin, crumpled cord jacket and professorial glasses across the crowded bar in the Groucho Club, and my single days were over. The bombastic human-rights lawyer became boyfriend, then husband, and now father of our two children. In surprising ways, that small decision to take a hike had an enormous impact on every area of my life. It made me realise that it's only by venturing beyond your normal life that you create the possibility of significantly altering it. Sometimes, it takes

just one tiny step (or in my case, six days' hard trekking) to propel you into a whole new world. Next year, we're planning a reunion walk in Chile, to raise much-needed funds for the Children's Society's work in eradicating child poverty in the UK. Perhaps you'd like to join us... *A nine-night private journey through Nepal, including a stay in Kathmandu and Pokhara with a four-day guided trek through the foothills of the Annapurna mountains, costs from £1,295 a person B&B, including flights with Gulf Air via Bahrain, all meals during the trek, private transfers and excursions, with Cox & Kings (020 7873 5000; www.coxandkings.co.uk). To find out more about the Children's Society, ring 0845 300 1128, or visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk.*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JANE HODSON, GETTY IMAGES, CORBIS, CAMERAPRESS