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'WOMEN ON A MISSION' TREK TO

THE SACRED TSUM VALLEY OF NEPAL FOR A CAUSE

Independent All-female Team to Trek to the Tsum Valley of Nepal,
On a Mission to End Violence Against Women

"In wars, trust is lost. Betrayal leads to silence. Rape victims do not talk. Women disappear just when their families and their societies need them most - because you can't rebuild a strong economy without strong women."

Zainab Salbi – Founder of Women for Women International

Singapore, October 2014 - An independent, self-funded, all-female team of 9 women from Singapore will embark on a 13 day trek, from November 15 to 27, 2014, across the sacred Tsum Valley of Nepal in the Himalayas, in an effort to raise awareness and funds for women survivors of war, victims of human trafficking and rape.

Under the banner of **Women on a Mission** - a non-profit entity, based in Singapore, which combines challenging expeditionary travel with the support of humanitarian causes - this team of dedicated women has chosen the hidden, sacred Valley of Happiness, in the mountainous region of Tsum, Nepal, as its next destination to highlight the need to end violence against women.

Following close on the heels of their successful campaigns to Everest Base Camp in Nepal in 2012, and to Jordan's Wadi Rum Desert in 2013, which raised a combined total amount of **S\$250,000** for women victims of violence, this next Women on a Mission trek will take the team to one of the most spiritual, pilgrimage regions of the Himalayas.

First described in the eighth century, by Guru Rinpoche, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, the Tsum Valley has breath-taking sceneries, with Ganesh and Boudha Himal mountain ranges towering from the north.





Tsum comes from the Tibetan word “Tsombo”, which means vivid, and the entire valley is referred to as a 'beyul', or secret land. Beyuls are believed to be very powerful places, assisting the worthy on their road to enlightenment. The unique culture of the Tsum Valley has remained largely unchanged for centuries and was only opened to trekkers in 2007, thus very few foreigners have set foot in this magical and untouched region of Nepal.



In addition to the spiritual richness of this expedition, the team’s itinerary will be arduous and challenging. It will require them to push their physical and mental limits while climbing to increasingly higher altitudes. Their journey will begin in Soti Khola following the old trade route to Tibet, visiting sacred caves, secluded villages and monasteries. They will trek through pine forests and steep mountainous trails, passing walls of hand-carved Buddhist Prayer stones along the way. The trip will include a three-day stay in a century-old nunnery in Gumba Lungdang, and the team will experience first hand what Tsum monastic community-life is like. By practicing meditation, sharing their meals and daily chores with the nuns, they will be truly immersed in the fabric of this sacred land.

The journey will include an average of seven to eight hours of hard hiking per day carrying heavy packs on a multitude of terrains, and will culminate with the scaling of the **Ngula Dhojhyang Pass**, perched on the Nepalese-Tibetan border at 5,093 metres- where the team will plant the flag of Women for Women International and carry messages of hope for peace in the world.

The Trek to the Tsum Valley is part of a larger effort to raise awareness and funds for key charitable organizations that Women on a Mission support and work closely with. The team's objective is to raise a total of **\$100,000 SGD** to support the following two charitable organisations:





AWARE, the Association of Women for Action and Research is Singapore's leading gender equality advocacy group. Women on a Mission has partnered with AWARE on the We Can! End All Violence Against Women global campaign, which hopes to mobilise 1000 Change Makers and community organisations to spread awareness and action for a violence-free Singapore. The campaign highlights the less visible forms of violence against women and provides individuals and organisations with tools for violence prevention and intervention.

Women for Women International (WfWI) – an independent humanitarian organisation, which provides women survivors of war, civil strife and other conflicts with tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency. WfWI operates in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan. The organisation was founded in 1993, by **Zainab Salbi**, an Iraqi American who is herself a survivor of the Iran/Iraq War and So far, over 20 years WfWI has helped over 400,000 women survivors of war and created a change in the lives of over 2 million community members as a result.

The team will also make it a priority to spend time to visit and develop a relationship with **Women Lead Nepal**, the first and only leadership development organisation in Nepal specifically focused on empowering adolescent girls to become leaders. They provide women in Nepal with the skills, support and opportunities to become change-makers in their schools, communities, country and the world.

The expedition team of this 'Women on a Mission' Trek to the Sacred Tsum Valley of Nepal is composed of 9 intrepid women with diverse nationalities and backgrounds. While they are all incredibly well accomplished in their careers, they are equally passionate about supporting charitable causes and helping the less privileged. Here is a brief introduction of the three Founding Partners of Women on a Mission:

Valerie Boffy is a French Adventurer and Philanthropist, currently based in Singapore. She is an ex-French National Junior Team Gymnast and Volleyball Player, who has also had a very successful international business career working her way from regional to worldwide executive director for luxury brands such as Estee Lauder, Bally and Cartier. She summited Mount Everest (8,848 m - 29,029 ft) in May 19th 2012, and is only the 6th French woman to have ever accomplished this feat.

Christine Amour-Levar is a Singapore PR of French, Swiss and Filipino descent. She is a Marketing Consultant, Entrepreneur and Writer whose diverse, international career has taken her across four continents for McCann-Erickson, Nike and Philippe Starck. Following this, she set up and operated her own Brazilian fashion boutique concept in Singapore, and is the author of [The Smart Girl's Handbook to Being Mummylicious](#) published in 2012.





Karine Moge is a French Photographer currently based in Hong Kong. After many years as an international Investment Banker, she pursued her passion for photography and started putting it to use to support charitable causes. Karine's work has been exhibited and published in London, Paris and Singapore www.karinemoge.com

Ultimately, Women on a Mission's objective is to inspire women to want to leave their comfort zone, their families and homes for a certain period of time, while pushing their limits in an effort to rally support for a worthy cause. At the core of their culture is a passion for adventure and a deep respect and love of nature. They seek to travel and explore the world, and as a result make new discoveries, flourish as individuals, and most important, contribute to society, while championing the cause of women around the world.

For more information please visit Women on a Mission's website:
<http://www.womenmission.com>

To donate to AWARE, please click on this link:
http://www.aware.org.sg/women_mission/

To donate to WfWI please click on this JUST GIVING link:
<https://www.justgiving.com/trek-to-tsum-valley>

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To follow the team's journey, LIKE their Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/WOAMSingapore>





Tsum Valley Trekking Team Bios

1. Corinna Lim is a Singapore national who is the Executive Director of AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research) Singapore's leading gender equality advocacy group, where she oversees the Support Services department (Helpline, Counselling, Legal Counselling and Sexual Assault Care Centre), the AWARE Training Institute and Corporate Services. Her experience includes 10 years in practice and partnership in Allen & Gledhill, Khattar Wong & Partners and Koh Ong & Partners. She was for five years CEO of Bizibody Technology, a dot com start-up, which transformed into an IT company providing IT solutions for the legal industry.

2. Marjolein van Paridon (Maia) is a Dutch-Filipina who currently calls Singapore home. Originally an anthropologist working in women's health and human rights, she recently moved back to Singapore after finishing her MBA from London Business School.

She has eight years of experience as a business consultant specialising in emerging markets. Her career has spanned six continents and recent projects have taken her to Afghanistan, Russia, and China.

Maia believes greatly in making an impact through business. She is passionate about physical challenges and women empowerment. She is a former competitive full-contact rugby player, triathlete, and swimmer.

3. Selina McCole is a British National originally from N. Ireland, who works for a leading global investment bank in Singapore. She has previously lived and worked in London, Japan, Austria and Germany. Passionate about women's causes, she co-chairs her firm's regional Women's Network and is actively involved in supporting the advancement of women through education. Selina has run numerous half marathons as well as seven full marathons, and has a black belt in Judo.

4. Christine Amour-Levar is a Singapore PR of French, Swiss and Filipino descent. She is a Marketing Consultant, Entrepreneur and Writer whose diverse, international career has taken her across four continents for McCann-Erickson, Nike and Philippe Starck. Following this, she set up and operated her own Brazilian fashion boutique concept in Singapore, and is the author of [The Smart Girl's Handbook to Being Mummylicious](#) published in 2012.

5. Valerie Boffy is a French Adventurer and Philanthropist, currently based in Singapore. She is an ex-French National Junior Team Gymnast and Volleyball Player, who has also had a very successful international business career working her way from regional to worldwide executive director for luxury brands such as Estee Lauder, Bally and Cartier. She summited Mount Everest (8,848 m - 29,029 ft) in May 19th 2012, and is only the 6th French woman to have ever accomplished this feat.

6. Catherine Zaccaria is a Swiss national; resident of Singapore specialized in childhood and adolescent education. She has devoted many years of her life, to counselling special needs children and adolescents





with social integration difficulties and deep psychological issues, due to abuse and mistreatment. Catherine is a passionate adventure traveller, who does what she can to support less privileged women.

7. Alexandra Pijuan-Tinker is a Filipina-American Marketing Specialist, who recently relocated to Singapore with her family. Growing up in the Philippines, Alexandra was a competitive volleyball player, and is now an avid tennis player. During her career, she worked for numerous luxury brands and coordinated the nation-wide marketing campaign of Ray Ban in the Philippines. Today, she remains passionate about empowering women through sports and was recently working for a non-profit sporting organisation in Singapore.

8. Vittoria Zipoli Caiani is an Italian Executive Coach and Cross-Cultural Specialist. She is an avid runner and is currently training for the Great Eastern Half Marathon. In the past, Vittoria worked with the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) empowering autistic children with hippo therapy, and through her passion for running, she has raised funds for various charities around the world. In March 2014, Vittoria along with a group of 22 other committed women, raised \$100,000 SGD and actually, physically built 20 houses in Cambodia for Tabitha, a non-profit organisation that helps the poorest people through programmes that focus on personal and financial development.

9. Patricia Jones is a Brazilian national who has recently relocated to Singapore from Geneva. She is an experienced fashion retail entrepreneur, who founded and operated her own business in the UK and in Switzerland. Patricia has also worked in event planning, hospitality and has been involved in the organisation of various fundraising events.

