

TIPS AND TIDBITS

A fact sheet about your

WALKING INDIA ADVENTURE

ADVENTURE TIPS – THINGS TO DO NOW!

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

- **Passport**
 - * **India requires your passport to be valid at least 6 months beyond the end of your stay.**
- **Visa**
 - * **A tourist VISA is required to enter India. Information about how to apply for a VISA was emailed or phoned to travelers earlier this summer. By now, you should have received your VISA or at least started the VISA application process. Please contact us immediately if you are experiencing any difficulty.**
- **How to get passports**
 - * Passports can be obtained at your town's main post office. It often takes at least six weeks to process the application, so don't delay!
 - * If you need extra pages for your passport, the State Department now charges for this service. Allow plenty of time to mail your passport to the State Department to have pages added to your passport.
 - * **IMPORTANT:** Make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport and birth certificate and store them in a separate place in your luggage from your passport. These copies become invaluable in the replacement process should you lose your passport!

AIR TRAVEL

- **Air travel should already be purchased!**
 - * If you don't have your air tickets, it is a good idea to take care of this important detail soon! Please see the Adventure Advice memo sent to you earlier for details on how to book your international flights. Debbi Custer is a travel agent we work

TIPS & TIDBITS - AT A GLANCE

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closely with who is familiar with the logistics of this Adventure. You can contact Debbi by:

- ◇ Phone: (888) 276-0925 -OR- (503) 231-9507
- ◇ Email: debbi@wtpdx.com

- **Notify us please**

- * If you have not already done so, please send us a copy of your itinerary by mail, fax, or email (if you booked through Debbi Custer, this has already been done for you by Debbi). We need this information to make sure someone with a happy, smiling face is there to meet you when you arrive on the other end.

- **Jet lag advice**

- * Please refer to the Air Travel Tips listed on page 9. In addition, on the day of travel,

NOTE: Some information is generally true for most of our Adventures. Text in bold represents information that is specific to this Adventure only.

- ◇ Get up and walk around the plane when you can;
 - ◇ Do isometric exercises (flex and relax your muscles) occasionally;
 - ◇ Consider wearing compression socks during long flights to minimize leg and ankle swelling (www.juzousa.com);
 - ◇ Eat as little as possible while in transit and eat high carbohydrate foods if you must eat;
 - ◇ Adjust your sleep schedule to the local time as soon as possible (we'll help you with that); and
 - ◇ Check with your doctor, but consider using sleep/jet lag aids (melatonin, Tylenol PM, etc) to help you adjust to the new local time.
- * We particularly recommend the first three bullet points. Over the years, several travelers have experienced circulation problems during the tour after long flights.

ADVENTURE TIPS – THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU GO!

HEALTH HABITS

• Immunizations

- * We are not qualified to give medical advice, but we do suggest that you consult a medical professional for advice on immunizations recommended for travel in India. In general, travel health clinics are more reliable sources of information in this matter than general practitioners or the Center for Disease Control. You can find travel health clinics in the yellow pages or online. Two examples are: www.ushealthworks.com and www.passporthealthusa.com.
- * Remember to take your Adventure brochure with you so you can show the medical staff where we are traveling. **Other than Delhi, Agra, and Mumbai (optional extension), all of our time is spent in the state of Rajasthan.**
- * **We are not aware of any mandatory vaccinations required for travel in India, though your medical professional will**

likely advise you to take malaria medication.

- * General immunizations also normally recommended for travel in developing countries like India also include the following:
 - ◇ Hepatitis A
 - ◇ Hepatitis B
 - ◇ Measles/mumps/rubella (MMR)
 - ◇ Typhoid
 - ◇ Tetanus & Diphtheria
- **General Health**
 - * **Start well!** Please do your best to start the trip well-rested and healthy, minus any unwelcome bugs. This is vital not only for you, the individual, but for the health of the group. Once a virus enters the group, it is much more difficult for fellow-travelers to maintain health. Few things are more frustrating for the traveler than spending valuable Adventure time coping with poor health, especially if you caught the “bug” from a fellow traveler who started the trip sick.
 - * **Cold Prevention:** One of the realities of group travel is that we share a lot of things — including germs. Several supplements and behaviors can make a significant difference in your ability to resist these bugs and preserve a healthy Adventure, including the following:
 - ◇ Use additional Vitamin C or other immune system boosters beginning a week before and during the tour to beef up your immune system.
 - ◇ Maintain the use of a good multi-vitamin both before and during the tour.
 - ◇ Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently (carrying a waterless hand cleaner is highly recommended).
 - ◇ If/when you cough, cover your mouth as completely as possible to avoid the spread of germs.
 - ◇ Avoid touching your face and rubbing your eyes.
 - ◇ Be sensitive to your health and particularly your need for rest. Guard against fatigue by monitoring your participation in tour activities and allowing yourself necessary “down time.”

- * **Traveler's diarrhea:** "Delhi belly" is the euphemism given to travelers' diarrhea (TD) in India, and it is the malady you will most likely encounter during our visit. There are many travel variables that stress your body and can lead to TD, including jetlag fatigue, excessive heat, simple travel fatigue, and anything that your body is not accustomed to. Most TD in India, however, stems from food and drink. Here are a few suggestions to deal with TD taken from personal experience and borrowed from other travel writers:
 - ◇ **Drinking water:** Probably the most important step you can take is to religiously use safe drinking water. Even the water you brush your teeth with should be boiled or bottled.
 - ◇ **Higher risk foods:** Stay away from fruits with high water content (e.g. melons and cucumbers) as they may have been watered with untreated water. Stay away from fresh fruits and vegetables that cannot be peeled.
 - ◇ **Indian food:** Acclimate to India slowly. Stay away from spicy Indian cuisine for the first few days, then gradually try a few dishes. The food is delicious but the spices create one more thing to which your body must adjust.
 - ◇ **Hydration:** If you get TD, make sure you compensate by drinking plenty of fluids. Bring powdered drink mixes from home that have electrolytes.
 - ◇ **BRAT diet:** One recommended diarrhea diet is Bananas, Rice, Apples, Tea, and Toast.
 - ◇ **Medications:** As always when traveling abroad, it is good idea to take along Imodium or some type of remedy against diarrhea. Many travelers also request from their doctor a prescription for an anti-biotic called ciprofloxacin (Cipro) to deal with nagging cases of travelers' diarrhea. However, use these remedies as a last resort since they work again your bodies attempt to expel unwelcome germs.

- **Prescriptions:**

- * Though we have not had problems with prescription drugs at customs, some sources recommend a note from your doctor verifying your need for any prescription drugs you will bring on the tour.
 - ◇ If you transfer medications out of the container they came in, make sure you bring the prescription labels. In addition to making your case if questioned by customs, medical staff will need to know what you are taking in the event you need medical care.

MONEY MATTERS

- **Specific recommendations**

- * **Exchange rates:** The Indian currency is the Rupee (INR). The rate of exchange at the time of publication is approximately \$1 = 51 Rupees

- * **Money strategies**

- ◇ **STRATEGY #1—RECOMMENDED—THE ATM APPROACH:**

Purchase a nominal amount of foreign currency—\$50 of Indian Rupee here in North America before departure. Then use your debit card en route as your primary method of obtaining cash in each country (NOTE—We had more difficulty finding ATMs that accepted our card in India than most countries. We did have success, but it required trying more machines).

- ◆ **Emergency fund:** Take along about \$500 US in \$10's and \$20's as backup in case you can't find an ATM and need to exchange dollars for local currency. Expect to bring this money home with you—it is only intended for emergency purposes.
- ◆ Make sure you contact your bank in advance to inform them that you will be in India and verify that your ATM card works there (most do).

- ◇ **STRATEGY #2—ALTERNATIVE—THE CASH APPROACH:**

If you are not comfortable using an ATM, or simply prefer to have your foreign currency purchased in advance so

you don't have to deal with it during the trip, your situation is a little more complicated. We suggest you purchase as much of your foreign currency as possible in North America before departure. In addition, **we recommend you bring an additional \$300 USD as backup emergency cash.** WARNING: You will likely experience a less favorable rate of exchange by purchasing foreign currency in North America.

It is often difficult to purchase small amounts of foreign currencies, and some currencies are not available at some banks. If you are not able to purchase foreign currency, **we recommend you take along \$500-\$600 US to exchange upon arrival in India (\$300 is the approximate equivalent of the minimum budget recommended below in the box).**

- * **Applicable to both Strategy #1 and #2:**
 - ◇ **Bring foreign money!** We do NOT recommend that you arrive in India with no foreign currency—i.e. only with US dollars to exchange. Try to have some local currency with you upon arrival.
 - ◇ **Meals: All breakfasts, 4 lunches, and all but 2 dinners are included in the tour. Drinks at dinners are generally NOT included.**
 - ◇ **Gratuities:** Tips for group meals and lodging are included in the cost of the Adventure. In addition, the Adventure price also includes the tip for the coach drivers and any local guides that serve us.
 - ◆ Tips NOT included:
 - **Optional excursions :** Generally we recommend the equivalent of about \$1-\$2 per person for the person who serves you on these excursions that are not included in the tour price.
 - **Porterage:** Some of our hotels are wonderfully exotic, with rooms that are tantalizingly difficult to access. In these cases, you should be prepared to tip about 50 Rupees (\$1)

per bag to have them delivered.

- **Maid service:** We recommend about \$1 per day per room.
- **Meals on your own: A service charge is included in the bill in restaurants in India. However, it is customary to tip the waiter directly up to 10% of the total bill.**

◇ **Cash budget:** The *minimum recommended cash budget*, for the Adventure, *NOT including amounts for optional excursions, is 15,000 Rupees (equivalent of about \$300).*

◇ This recommended amount is the minimum, no-frills amount you would need if you intended to do no shopping. Many travelers spend double or triple this amount.

- **General Recommendations:**

- * **Use of ATMs:** In general, debit cards at ATM's are the most practical way to manage cash needs when traveling in most parts of the world and we strongly recommend using them to simplify your money management. **India has modern banking systems and a network of ATM's (automatic teller machines). ATM's in India, however, seem to be less integrated into the Western system of banking than most places we travel. You may have to try more ATM's before finding one that accepts your card.**
 - ◇ If your debit card is lost or stolen, most banks have protections that limit losses to a nominal amount. Ask your bank about their policy.
 - ◇ If hesitant to use an ATM card linked to your bank account, consider AAA's (Automobile Association of America) credit/debit card designed for travelers. You can load the card with a specific amount of cash in advance, further limiting your losses should the card get lost or stolen. Log on to www.aaa.com/prepaidcards or call your local AAA branch for more information.
- * **Where to purchase foreign currency:** If you are having trouble purchasing foreign currency from your local bank, try Thomas

Cook, AAA, or some of the new internet outlets (www.travelex.com). A last resort would be to buy some in the airport on the day of departure, but airport rates are almost always less than favorable.

- * **Try not to bring foreign currency home:** The rate is generally 2-3% less favorable for selling the foreign currency back to the bank when you get home than the rate you paid to purchase it. In short, it's better to spend the money overseas than to bring it home and exchange it back into dollars.
- * **Use of Traveler's checks:** We do not recommend traveler's checks for this type of travel. They cannot be used like cash as they are here in the USA, you must have a bank to exchange them for cash, banks usually charge significant fees to exchange them, and banks are not always handy and open when you need money. Please leave home without them!
- * **Make Photocopies:** Be sure to make photocopies of all the credit/debit cards you intend to take. These photocopies should, of course, be kept separate from the cards themselves.
- **Security recommendations:** Over the years, WAI travelers have been fortunate, for the most part, in avoiding scams, and we'd like to keep it that way!! Following are reminders about this unpleasant reality of life, and a few ideas to help minimize your chances of becoming a victim.
 - * **Beware of Distractions:** Any kind of distraction is a huge "red flag."
 - ◇ Con artists and pickpockets need distractions to get your attention (and your hands) where they want them. As soon as you become aware that something unusual is going on (e.g. someone spills something on you), be on your guard. Do not participate. Do not interact with locals that seem to appear from nowhere to "help you." Get away from the surroundings.
- ◇ Why would locals ask you, someone who probably does NOT look like a local, for directions? Asking for directions is a common lead-in to a scam.
- * **Diversify Your Money:** DO NOT carry all of your money in one place! If you ARE the victim of a theft/pick-pocket, and you do not have all your money in your pockets, you will not be entirely cleaned out.
 - ◇ One approach is to carry only \$30 to \$100 worth of the local currency with you. Keep another batch of funds and a debit card and credit card in a body wallet under your clothes. A third batch of funds and credit cards can be hidden in your luggage in your room. To my knowledge, we have never had a confirmed incident of theft from a hotel room, but you may prefer to use the hotel safe.
 - ◇ **Hotel safe warning:** Each traveler must develop their own system for safeguarding valuables, but our personal preference is NOT to use the safe. Over the years, several travelers have forgotten passports and cash in hotel safes. Our preference is to hide whatever we opt to leave in the hotel room in our luggage.
 - ◇ **Credit cards:** Minimize your exposure by bringing no more than two credit cards (2 is better than 1 in case you have trouble with just one).
- * **Use a Money Belt:** Your pockets should only be used for nominal sums.
 - ◇ Though not always convenient, we suggest you BE PREPARED to move any credit cards or larger sums under your clothes whenever you are in a high-risk environment. Any big city can be a high-risk environment.
 - ◇ As mentioned above, keep a little of your money in a secure pocket, so you don't have to make a scene getting out your money belt each time you need to use money. This is a smart, low-risk practice.

- * **Use an ATM Card:** Nothing in life is perfect, but learning the simple steps to using an ATM card is one of the best things to come along in the area of travel money management.
 - ◇ You should NOT rely completely on access to ATM's, but having this tool in your travel money tool box means you are much more likely to be able to replace money as necessary, and can therefore bring less money with you.
 - ◇ Many travelers are uncomfortable or distrustful of ATM machines and rely on credit cards as a back up to cash. This is usually not a practical way to gain access to cash because 1) bankers' hours seem to generate an even narrower window of accessibility overseas than at home, 2) credit card fees greatly exceed debit card fees: money withdrawn is generally treated as a loan with interest due, and 3) all the risks of a debit card are already inherent in a credit card, so why not use a system that is more practical and mobile?
 - ◇ When accessing ATM machines, try to use machines that are inside banks. Those outside can be subject to other kinds of scams involving videotaping your PIN number. Whenever using ATMs, cover the keypad with one hand while inputting the PIN number with the other.
- * **Blend in and Be Aware:** Though it is usually very difficult to conceal the fact that we are visitors, our advice is always to do your best to be a small target.
 - ◇ Blending in is more difficult in some cultures/circumstances than others, yet the more conspicuously foreign you appear and act, the more attention you will get from the unscrupulous who prey on foreign visitors. They always look first for the easiest prey; how you dress and behave can tip them off.
 - ◇ Do NOT wear conspicuous jewelry, and no jewelry is best – leave your Rolex watch at home!
 - ◇ Be wary of carrying expensive-looking

camera gear.

- ◇ Shorts, t-shirts, and white tennis shoes are usually dead giveaways that the wearer is American, and therefore likely carrying significant amounts of money, and likely more naïve than locals. We have nothing against casual dress. On the road, however, we wear dark-colored walking boots, pants with zip-off legs which are almost always left attached in the cities, and long sleeve button-down shirts, partly to blend in and partly to shield the arms from sun. Outside of cities, we are more relaxed about attire.
- ◇ Be aware of your surroundings, especially if walking alone. If approached by someone, be wary. Be prepared to be rude and move away quickly if they invade your personal space.

Remember that we seldom have problems with theft and scams overseas. And we are certainly not advocating a posture or attitude that requires constant tension to maintain. In this case, however, an ounce of prevention is worth many pounds of cure (apologies to Ben Franklin). Be safe, be smart, and enjoy the Adventure!!

POINTS ON PACKING

- **Clothing suggestions**
 - * Most of the time, we are dressed in our walking clothes. You may wish to bring along a set of casual non-walking clothes for the odd occasion when you feel like dressing just a bit more formally. **Some of the restaurants we dine in will be quite nice.**
 - * As mentioned above, our own strategy is to take two or three pairs of quick-dry pants with zip-off legs along with several quick-dry t-shirts and nylon or tri-blend travel shirts. We supplement this with a quality set of breathable raingear. Additionally, we also take along a light jacket and/or silk or high performance fabric undershirts to use as additional layers. In any case, we have found that packing lightweight layers of clothing is the most

practical strategy.

- * **Temples:** Be advised that modesty when visiting temples in India is of high importance. Legs and shoulders should be covered and women may be required to borrow a headscarf if they don't have their own (a tip is expected upon return). We will be required to remove our shoes when visiting temples. In some cases, we will be required to walk barefoot. Having a pair of relatively thick "temple socks" in a Ziploc bag in your day pack is one way to handle the no-shoes requirement.
- **Weather**
 - * India is known as a hot destination. February, however, is winter in India, and an ideal time to travel in northern India. Average high temperatures are generally in the mid 80's and average low temps are in the mid 60's. At this time of year, rain is less likely, but it's always wise to have light rain gear along.
- **Laundry**
 - * Most hotels offer a laundry service, but it may be more expensive than you'd expect. Alternatively, we recommend one of two approaches: 1) pack a few feet of clothes line and maybe some liquid detergent and do your laundry in your room (hotel shampoo also works), or 2) pack tightly and bring enough essentials so that you don't need to do laundry until you return home.
 - * Be advised that Old World hotels do not provide washcloths (the locals don't use them), so take your own if this is something you would miss.
- **Electricity:**
 - * There are two issues to deal with in using your electric appliances overseas:
 1. **Transformer:** Does electricity need to be converted from the higher voltage (230) to our lower voltage (110)?
 - ♦ **Yes, household current in India is 230 volts.**
 2. **Wall adaptor:** What kind of adapter do you need to insert your plug into the foreign wall outlet?
 - ♦ **Most outlets in India will accept the standard, round, ungrounded, 2-pronged adapter used through most of Europe.**
 - * Most electronics (cameras, laptop computers, etc) are designed with a transformer built into the electrical cord. If you look on the back of the adapter that is inline on the cord, it says what voltage it can handle and it is usually 110 to 240, or something similar. **If so**, you don't need a transformer; all you need is a wall adaptor for the wall outlet in India. **If not**, you need an electric transformer to convert the 220 power in the wall to the 110 voltage of your electronics.
 - * Travel transformers for the current and adapters for the plugs can be obtained from most AAA offices or anywhere travel accessories are sold.
- **Hair Care**
 - * Most hotels will have hair dryers—sometimes you can request them from the reception desk.
 - * If bringing a curling iron from home, make sure it works on 220 volts (better) or that you have a transformer to convert the power (acceptable).
- **Luggage Restrictions**
 - * **On the plane:** Airlines have been charging for checked luggage in the past few years. To avoid surprises, check with your airline before you finish packing to see what their current policies are on fees and weight restrictions for checked luggage.
 - ♦ **Domestic flight in India: All of us will be flying once on a domestic flight—either Udaipur-Delhi or Udaipur-Mumbai. Domestic airlines in India restrict checked luggage to 20 kilograms (about 44 pounds). Staying below this weight will expedite our check-in process, and may save you some money.**
 - * **On the bus:** To ensure space for everyone's luggage in the storage bay of the coach, please limit yourself to one large

suitcase.

* **At the hotel: On WAI Adventure, getting the luggage from the bus to your room is generally the traveler's responsibility. In India, there will be several hotels where luggage is portered to your room for you. In some cases, this is just part of the culture of service and maximum employment. In several hotels, our rooms are spread out and this will be a very practical and much appreciated service, for which you should be prepared to tip about 50 Rupees (\$1) per bag.**

• **Partial packing list**

* Though by no means comprehensive, following is a list of things you should consider bringing with you on this walking adventure.

- ◇ Passport **with VISA**
- ◇ Photocopy of passport, **VISA**, & birth certificate
- ◇ Airline tickets/itinerary/receipt
- ◇ Foreign currency and US dollars
- ◇ Photocopies of credit/debit cards
- ◇ Medical insurance ID card
- ◇ Sense of humor
- ◇ Clothing that can be layered
- ◇ Rain gear
- ◇ Two pairs of walking shoes (or boots)
- ◇ Swimsuit
- ◇ Washcloth
- ◇ Walking stick
- ◇ Water bottle
- ◇ Sun screen
- ◇ Sun glasses
- ◇ Sun hat or visor
- ◇ Insect repellent
- ◇ Walking credit books (AVA or CVF)
- ◇ Sense of Adventure
- ◇ Ear plugs
- ◇ Electrical transformer
- ◇ Adaptors for wall outlet
- ◇ Camera (with extra batteries)
- ◇ Extra film or memory cards for camera
- ◇ Travel binoculars
- ◇ Mini-flashlight
- ◇ Country or area maps
- ◇ Highlighter for marking maps
- ◇ Toilet paper (for your daypack)

- ◇ Cold/flu remedies
- ◇ Drink powder mix with electrolytes
- ◇ Medications
- ◇ Handiwipes or waterless hand cleaner

LIFE-LONG LEARNING—THINGS TO READ BEFORE THE ADVENTURE

- We know that “life-long learning” is a core value for many WAI travelers. Check out your local library or the internet at www.amazon.com or www.longitudebooks.com to preview the following list, or find a new gem about this fascinating region of our world. In addition to the suggestions below, we recommend that you obtain a good guidebook such as those published by Lonely Planet, Moon, or DK Eyewitness.

- ⇒ India by Stanley Wolpert
A wonderfully literate introduction to India by the acknowledged master. Author of 14 books and a professor of history since 1958, Wolpert distills a tremendous amount of information in this detailed overview, tackling the environment, religion and philosophy, the arts and sciences, domestic and foreign policy and culture.
- ⇒ Mughal India, Splendours of the Peacock Throne by Valerie Berinstain and Paul Bahn
This illustrated pocket guide presents the history, culture and splendor of the Mughal court and its celebrated architecture in hundreds of archival photographs and drawings.
- ⇒ Culture Smart! India by Becky Stephen
A concise, well-illustrated and practical guide to local customs, etiquette and culture, equally of interest to the traveler and business person.
- ⇒ In Spite of the Gods, The Strange Rise of Modern India by Edward Luce
As the world's largest democracy and a rising international economic power, India has long been heralded for its great strides in technology and trade. Yet it is also plagued by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a vast array of other social and economic issues. Luce tackles the challenges and reality of the world's largest democracy with insight and balance in this portrait of a nation in transition.
- ⇒ May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons, A Journey Among the Women of

India by Elisabeth Bumiller

A veteran journalist stationed in India, the author portrays Indian women from Bollywood stars to Indira Gandhi to prostitutes in this wonderfully written, fascinating book. It's an insightful portrait of the country as seen through the eyes of its women.

⇒ A Princess Remembers, The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur by Devi Gayatri
The memoirs of an extraordinary life. Widow of the Maharaja of Jaipur, member of parliament and a fascinating character, Devi recalls growing up in the palace compound, marrying the Maharaja, her political triumphs and work on behalf of education in India. With family photographs.

⇒ An Autobiography, Or the Story of My Experiments with Truth by Mohandas K. Gandhi
There is no substitute for reading Gandhi in his own simple, direct prose. A highly recommended glimpse into the personality and life of this remarkable figure.

⇒ Kim by Rudyard Kipling
For the sheer pleasure of its prose, insight into the British in India and its extraordinary sense of place, you can't do better than Kipling's classic novel about a boy who travels the Grand Trunk Road with the Dalai Lama.

⇒ A Traveller's History of India by Sinha-Raja Tammitta-Delgoda
The author is a historian from Sri Lanka with an English education and knows how to give a good overview of the various cultural influences that met and merged in India. His narrative is chronological, illustrating the growth, glory, decline and disappearance of vast empires.

←—————→
ADVENTURE TIPS—

THINGS TO KNOW DURING THE ADVENTURE

UP, UP, AND AWAY—AIR TRAVEL TIPS

Airlines continue to change policies and technology continues to impact the pace of our lives and how we get things done. Here are a few tips to hopefully ease the process of getting from home to our destination:

- **Check in online:** Most airlines now allow on-line check-in via their websites starting 24 hours before departure. This is a very

good idea for the following reasons:

- * You can check your seat assignment and/or change it;
 - * You can check www.seatguru.com for information on the configuration of your plane to improve your seat selection;
 - * You can check baggage online;
 - * You can add passport information, streamlining the process once you arrive at the airport;
 - * On domestic flights and some international flights, depending on the airline, you can print boarding passes;
 - * It saves time at the airport since you can avoid the longer line for those who have not checked-in online and use the shorter lines at the electronic check-in kiosks instead;
 - * If there is a problem with the reservation, you will be able to identify it the day before the flight, rather than at the airport at the last minute! Then you have a full day to obtain the help of your agent to correct it.
- **If you don't have a computer, call for help!**
 - * If you do not have access to a computer, and you booked your flight through Debbi Custer, call Debbi the day before the flight during business hours and she will check you in online. Your boarding pass will then be ready for you to pick up at the airport. If you need help after-hours, or you booked with an agent who does not offer this service, call the airline directly to confirm your flight. You cannot "check-in" over the phone, but you can at least identify that your booking is solid and check/change your seat assignment.
 - **Confirm departure details again on the morning of departure – changes can occur at the last minute**
 - **Arrive at the departure airport early**
 - * Since requirements change from time to time and can differ between airports, check with your departure airport for the latest guidelines.
 - * The general standard is to arrive 2½ hours

before departure for international travel and 1½ hours before departure for domestic travel.

- **What to do if you get “bumped”**

- * Sometimes airlines overbook, and it is possible to find yourself being “bumped” to later flights that are not in your best interests. If you arrive at the airport and have trouble with your reservation, call the agent who booked your flight immediately. Debbi Custer’s service also offers a 24/7 emergency line to use if it’s after-hours. Your agent will probably have better leverage to get accurate information and plead your case for you. NOTE: Having the ability to communicate by phone within the airports, both going and coming, is a good reason to take your cell phone with you.

- **Consider how far to check your bags**

- * If your first flight is an international flight, check your bags to your final destination. It is usually not a good idea to retrieve and re-check luggage in a foreign layover airport unless you are required to.
- * If your first flight takes you across North America to a North American layover airport AND you have a long (greater than 3 hours) layover AND you are changing airlines for your next flight, strongly consider claiming your luggage and physically rechecking it onto the next flight. Chances of your luggage getting lost increase with 1) the number of flights, and 2) the number of airlines handling your bags.

- **Pack your carry-on as if you had to live out of it for a few days**

- * Wear your walking shoes.
- * Remember to include any electronic and electrical adapters needed for cameras, etc., in your carry-on rather than your luggage.
- * If possible, avoid checking *any* luggage. This takes some practice, but several WAI travelers travel this way successfully on an ongoing basis.

- **What about confirming the return flight?**

- * Your reservation should be solid on the return flight since you’ve already “tested it” on the outbound flight. However, if you can get to a computer, either at your hotel or an internet café in the area, it is still a good idea to check in.

- **Keep the faith**

- * The life-changing rewards of travel still far outweigh the hassle factor of “getting there”. We’ll meet you with a smile on the other side!

HOW ABOUT HOTELS?

- **Hotel Standard**

- * **Accommodations used in India will be a blend of standards and styles. On the front end of the Adventure, we will stay in 3 and 4-star hotels, mostly in the middle of Indian cities—Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur. The second half of the trip, however, holds some wonderful, uniquely Indian surprises. We stay in a converted palace in the small and delightful rural town of Deogarh, in a forest hideaway resort in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, and in a lovely resort hotel overlooking Udaipur on our last couple of nights.**

- **Bed types for couples**

- * Some hotels may lack rooms with large two-person beds—“matrimonial” queen or king-sized beds — and instead will have two twin-sized beds pushed together.

- **Single rooms**

- * Single rooms are available for a supplement. The supplement reflects the fact that one person using a room alone receives a similar amount of hotel space and service as two people using the same room.
 - ◇ In most cases, a single room will be the same size as a double room. In some cases, however, a single rooms will be smaller. The single supplement entitles single travelers to their own room but not necessarily to a double-sized room.

- ◇ The supplement reflects only what WAI is charged by hotels—we do not price the single supplement to make a profit.
- **Smoking/non-smoking**
 - * **Much of the developing world still considers smoking to be an acceptable practice in public places. We request non-smoking rooms when available. Generally, hotels are good about providing rooms that are acceptable to non-smokers.**
- **Street noise**
 - * **It's not always possible to predict how quiet a given hotel will be on a given night. Life on the street in India, however, can be a cacophony of noise, and it is true that Indian drivers navigate with both their eyes and ears. On the nights we are in city hotels, honking will be part of the experience. If you're a light sleeper, we recommend a supply of ear-plugs to help you get a full night's sleep.**
- **Variety in room type**
 - * **Some of our hotels are Old World vintage, one going back to the 17th century. As a result, it is not uncommon for rooms within the same hotel to differ widely in spaciousness, décor, and view. It is not practical or even possible for us to anticipate these differences and fairly assign rooms throughout the tour. Room assignment is entirely at the discretion of the hotels, so we can take neither the credit for a great room you were assigned nor the blame for the mediocre room you received on the night your neighbors have more interesting rooms. Hopefully, things will balance themselves and you will enjoy the variety of hotels we have selected.**
- **Communicating with home**
 - * Using international telephone systems can be quite a challenge. **In addition to navigating phone systems and dealing with costs of international long distance, we will have a larger than usual time difference to work around.**
 - * Beware of unexpectedly high charges for using the phone in your hotel room.

Many hotels charge for use of the phone even if you are using a pre-paid phone card to call a toll-free number.

- * Emails can be a good alternative to using a phone. Many hotels have computers in the lobby for this purpose, either complimentary to hotel guests or for a charge that is less than placing a phone call.
- * Alternatively, prearrange before leaving home, or by email while en route, to have loved ones call you at an agreed upon time.
- * **Time differences:** We travel in only one time zone in India, GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) + 5 1/2 hours. India is therefore 10.5 hours ahead of New York and 13.5 hours ahead of Los Angeles. When it is noon in India, it is 1:30 am on the USA East coast and 10:30 am on the USA Pacific coast.

WALKING WISDOM

- **General description**
 - * **Walks provide a variety of venues that feature the colonial district of Delhi, two nature reserves, a 1000-year-old abandoned fortress, and the unending wonders of rural India. All walks will be guided and will be led by a local guide and one or two WAI guides. In general, one WAI guide will be “the sweep” and will be in contact, as necessary, with the lead guide by 2-way radio.**
- **Walking gear**
 - * **Walking boots** with good ankle support are strongly advised. **Though most of our walks are not in difficult terrain, a few are challenging.**
 - * **Walking sticks** are advisable for segments of the walks that have challenging footing.
 - * **Hats** for shade from sun should be standard walking apparel for an international trip such as this.
 - * Carrying a **water** bottle on the walks is mandatory. **The Indian climate is normally dry during winter and dehydration can occur quickly.**

- **Walk difficulty**

- * Walk distances and difficulty ratings are listed in the Adventure brochure.
- * We use the American Volkssport Association's (AVA) difficulty rating system of 1 to 5, with 1 representing flat, smooth walk routes and 5 representing very difficult hikes. **Walks on this Adventure are relatively easy, rated between 1 and 2+,** using the following description of ratings listed by the AVA:

1. An easy walk on pavement or well-maintained trail with no significant hills.
2. A moderately easy walk, may be on pavement or on trails. No significant difficulty with hills.
3. A moderate walk in any setting with some difficult terrain, one or two substantial hills and/or steps.
4. A more difficult walk. Most likely in a natural setting with poorly maintained paths and steeper or hilly inclines. Participants with certain health problems should take caution.
5. A very difficult walk. All in rough fields or woods. Many steep hills or high altitude trails, or very rough, uneven terrain, steep or unstable inclines. Not suitable for any person who is not in good health.

- * **Walk pace and preparing for walks**

- ◇ **Time:** We generally allow 3 hours per 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) of walking, assuming a venue that does not involve presentations by our guide. **Most walks on this tour include some kind of interpretive presentation by our local guides, so walks may be slower paced. Walkers should be able to comfortably walk 10 kilometers of flat, level trail in 2 - 1/2 hours.**

- ◆ **WARNING:** In most cases, we are not "strolling". We are walking at a relaxed but steady pace that covers 6 miles in about 2½ hours, plus time for commentary by our guide, picture-taking, or bathroom stops.

- ◇ **Training:** Your enjoyment of this travel

experience will be significantly affected by your level of physical fitness. If not walking regularly at home, we strongly recommend that travelers make a priority of "training" beforehand in order to both enjoy the trip and avoid medical issues due to overexertion.

- **What is volkssport or volkswalking?**

- * Volkssport is a club activity that began in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland in 1968. The international organization is called *Internationaler Volkssportverband* (IVV), a German name which translates to *International Federation of Popular Sports*. There are four primary activities: walking, biking, swimming, and cross country skiing. Walking is, by far, the most popular and well developed. A volkswalk is walked at a steady pace through a scenic and/or historic area over a pre-marked route (usually 10 km, which is 6.2 miles). Normally, it is hosted by a local group of volunteer club members. It is noncompetitive, and aims to involve people of all ages. Everyone who participates is declared a WINNER! Presently, there are walks in all 50 states and more than 30 countries worldwide.

- * **Walk sanctions: It now appears that we will receive walk stamps directly from the IVV in Germany.**

- * **Distances:** WAI takes a relaxed view on clocking the requisite 10 kilometers for each walk. We believe trail conditions, setting, and quality of route should determine walk distance. We therefore do not force an 8 kilometer walk into 10 kilometers by adding filler distance. We often do walks in segments, for example: 4 kilometers in one setting and 5 in another. **Several walks on this Adventure will be less than 10 kilometers.**

HEALTH HABITS ON TOUR

- **Water potability:** In India, you should **NEVER** drink water from the tap! **Drink only bottled or boiled water. Even your teeth brushing should be done with bottled water! See more under Health Habits**

on page 2.

- **Street vendors:** You should also avoid eating or drinking products sold by street vendors. Of course, canned or bottled soft drinks and beer are okay.

FELLOW TRAVELER FACTS

- **Group size:**
 - * Generally, we close the trip at no more than 30 people. Where we spend significant time on coaches, we strive to ensure that we have extra room—about 20% of the seats empty. **This will be a smaller than average group, so there should be even more room on the coach.**
- **Average age:**
 - * Most of our travelers fall between 50 and 70 years of age. This seems to be the age bracket that has the time and means to travel. However, we always have travelers that fall outside that range, from the 20's up into the 80's. Walkers are characteristically great traveling companions — positive, cheerful, and appreciative of the opportunity to see the world. As we travel and observe other tour groups, we are always pleasantly surprised at the difference in mobility and energy level/enthusiasm between our travelers and the typical group of “tourists”.
- **What if I don't have a roommate?**
 - * It's always best to register for the trip with your own roommate, but we do offer to help match travelers up with others needing roommates. We provide contact information for potential roommates and allow travelers to contact each other and make their own decisions.

MOTORCOACH MESSAGE:

- **Seat rotation system:**
 - * We employ a seat rotation system on the coach, which your guide will explain early in the trip. Though we get a few groans from homebodies in the group, and some of us prefer to nest in our comfort zones, experience has shown that the only thing worse than a seat rotation sys-

tem on the coach is no seat rotation system. Most travelers prefer the chance to move throughout the coach. They appreciate the shared access to the front seats and the opportunity to sit across from different travelers each day.

- **Rest stops:** The bus will be air conditioned and we have paid a premium to obtain a luxury, non-Indian, Volvo coach WITH a toilet, which is usable in case of emergency. Rest stops are spaced every 1½ to 2 hours.
- **Bus snacks:** We do our best to schedule consistent meal times, but it's a good idea to carry non-messy fruit or munchies to manage your snack-attacks.
- **Seat Reservations:** Sorry, but it is not possible to reserve seats on the coach. The front two seats must be reserved for the guide team so they can do their job, but all other seats are open on a first-come-first-serve basis.

CULTURAL COLOR

- **Crowds—over a billion people!**
 - * Yes, India is a densely populated country – on track to surpass China in terms of total population in less than a decade. You will feel a sense of the dense population, but population is generally not as concentrated here as in China, or even Japan, where you can encounter huge masses of people in one place. India tends to be more spread out; the majority of people still live outside urban areas. Further, even though our program does visit a few of India's large cities – Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur – most of our time is spent in smaller villages and in rural areas in the state of Rajasthan. This is the heart of our program!
- **Poverty and filth:**
 - * It's undeniable that a trip to India involves exposure to very different standards of hygiene and some heart-rending standards of living. What we discovered, however, is that India is changing. De-

pending on how you crunch the numbers, India has the largest middle class on the planet. Everywhere we went, we encountered new roads being built and signs of a culture adapting to 21st century technology and international standards of education and business. India's economy has been on an upward trend now for years, and millions of people are being lifted out of poverty annually.

- * Still, the reality remains that suffering seems an unavoidable part of the human condition for many in India. We will likely be confronted with some difficult sights at some point during our visit. What we can look forward to is developing a better understanding of how India came to be what it is (e.g. in spite of the fact that it is a net exporter of agricultural products) and what we might do to help make a difference.
- **Smoking:**
 - * Unfortunately, a general awareness of the damages of ingesting large quantities of smoke has not made much of a dent in India yet. The Marlboro Man is alive and well in the Indian subcontinent.
 - * We request non-smoking hotel rooms wherever possible and find that normally we do not have a problem with the cleanliness of rooms.
 - * Though smoking in public places has officially been banned since 2008, smoking in public spaces can be an issue at times.
- **Vendor alert and bargaining:**
 - * Interacting with street vendors can be a ton of fun in India. Be careful, however, that you understand fully what you are purchasing, and have a general idea of its value.
 - * Many items in India have a listed price and a negotiated price—bargaining or haggling is an expected part of shopping outside of established storefronts. Try to get a feel for a fair price before you begin to bargain, then offer about 50% of that fair price and come up. Make sure

you are offering a price you are willing to pay. If the vendor accepts your offer, you are “honor bound” to carry through with the purchase.

- * Also be alert during the exchange of money to ensure that you are certain how much you are paying. If your vendor is not honest, it is much easier to avoid a scam if you are sure yourself of how much money you handed the vendor.
- * Do your best to pay in bills that require the least amount of change, preferably none. Sometimes it is hard to get change and you may receive pressure to apply the change towards another purchase.
- **Hinduism:**
 - * Hinduism is one of the world's oldest belief systems. Out of Hinduism grew a number of other faiths with significant numbers of adherents, including: Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism.
 - * Still, over 80% of current Indians consider themselves Hindus. Unlike religion in the West, Hinduism permeates all of life in India, and has a very strong public and official blessing from all levels of government and all public institutions.
 - * Since, according to Hindu scriptures, the Hindu pantheon boasts over 330 million gods (devas), that leaves very little space in India where one deity or another is not honored.
 - * Regardless of one's personal convictions, the heritage of North America is Judeo-Christian, a mono-theistic faith in which relationship with God is usually considered personal and private.
 - * North Americans come from a culture where adherence to a growing public secularism has resulted in outlawing some displays of personal religious belief. In India, on the other hand, Hinduism provides the reason or explanation for much of what is seen and done. This can be a little overwhelming, but is part of our project of understanding India.

- **Photography:**

- * Often in our travels, the local people become the highlight of the trip. Usually people are happy to have their photo taken, and using a discreet approach from a distance poses no problem. If you want a conspicuous photo of a person, however, it is best to ask by gesturing to your camera. They will usually nod “yes” and may enjoy seeing the results on your digital camera if possible. Children, in general, absolutely love having their photos taken!
- * We do NOT recommend paying locals for the photo. When visitors hand out money in situations like this, it creates an expectation of being paid that spoils the experience for others and tempts the locals to use their smile as a source of income. We seek their photograph because they are beautiful or special or unique to us. That respect and delight should be payment enough. We propose that feeling guilty because of the difference in our standards of living is not a good reason to pay them for a photo, and does not change their circumstances, only their attitude.
- * Don’t take photographs of police, airports, or other military bases or institutions.
- * We suggest that you bring more film or memory cards than you expect to need! In the new age of digital photography, we often hear travelers lamenting the lack of space on their memory cards.
- * If purchasing videos, remember that most of the world uses a different format (PAL/SECAM) than the USA (NTSC). The PAL format will not play in our video/DVD players in the USA.

TRAVELER'S PERSPECTIVE:

As with most things in life, the benefit you receive from this experience will depend to a large degree on the frame of mind you have at the outset. If you've not traveled outside North America before, here are a few things to be aware of:

- Though we attempt to eliminate it as much as possible, travel always contains an ele-

ment of uncertainty. Being ready to adjust will enhance your experience.

- To varying degrees, hotels, food, and local customs are different in other countries. This can be uncomfortable...and exciting!
- Though we continue to look for ways to slow the pace of our “Adventures,” we still believe in providing a full day’s opportunities for our travelers. Some days are therefore quite full and it is your job to manage your participation and energy level.
- Group travel, by its nature, involves giving up a certain degree of individual convenience. Though we strive for added flexibility for the individual, much of the time we all need to be “headed in the same direction.”

We hope we've covered your questions. If not, feel free to contact us and we'll be glad to fill in the gaps. We look forward to *Walking India* with you!



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