

Dear Expedition India 09 Travelers (from Jacqueline):

In just a few months and we will be off on our Expedition to India.

Suggested Reading:

Knowing what to expect and understanding Indian culture are key to enjoying India. I think it is one of the most remarkable places on earth and I can't wait to share it with all of you. I do have some books that might enlighten you. If you read them before we go and then again after we come back, I'm sure you will see things in an entirely new light.

1. **Arrow of the Blue Skinned God** by Jonah Blank – This is one of Dick's favorite books about India. It tells the story of Ramayana (India's most beloved epic) and explains the story of the Gods and Goddesses in a modern context.
2. **Holy Cow** by Sarah MacDonald. This is one of my fav's. It is a funny and enlightening rollercoaster ride through India in search of the meaning of life. Sarah was in India the exact same time I was and her stories are both similar and extremely different from my own. You'll simply LOVE this book and it will explain a lot about why Indians do the things they do.
3. **City of Djinns** or ANY other travelogue by William Dalrymple. He is England's most beloved travel writer and he has spent years in India. We will, most likely, meet him when we are there. City of Djinns is specifically about Delhi, but any other work of his is also appropriate.
4. **Snakes and Ladders** by Gita Mehta. This is a quick and easy guide to the history of politics and leadership in India – from Independence from England in 1959 to Nehru to Indira Gandhi to Rajiv Gandhi, etc. She is Sonny Mehta (editor of Penguin Books) wife and lives in New York. It is funny and easily processed. It ends with the leadership of the 90's, so you may have to bone up on what has happened since.
5. **White Cargo** by Felicity Kendal. Felicity is a famous British actress who spent her youth with her father, the famed Shakespeare-wallah Jeffrey Kendall, travelling throughout India performing Shakespearean plays to Maharajas, villages, etc. Since it is set in the twilight of the British Empire in India, it serves as a wonderful contrast to the India of today.
6. **Lonely Planet Guide to India**. This is one of my favorites. You should all have your own copy.

That should hold you for awhile. If you want more specific recommendations – Poetry by Tagore, storytelling by R.K. Narayanan, trashy fiction by Shoba De – do let me know.

Weather and Dress:

The weather will be hot in the daytime (but not humid, until we travel further south). Expect 70's – 80's up north, and significantly warmer down south. Cottons are most appropriate for the daytime. The evenings are cooler and the dress is more formal. Indian men will appear less formal than the ladies, as nothing is more elegant than a sari and Indian women will jump at any chance to wear their plethora of jewels. If you are arriving in India early, I suggest purchasing a few Indian ensembles which will look very elegant and will be huge hits at home. Dick often wears the Indian kurta (long tunic) over pajamas (drawstring pants) and a Nehru collared vest. This can be purchased anywhere at very inexpensive prices but our favorite place to shop is FabIndia (the Gap of India). They have several locations in Delhi, but the best choices are at Greater Kailash 1 Market. Anyone will know where that is and we can arrange for the owner (William Bissell) to help you make your selections. This being said, a pair of slacks, blazer, and tie are always appropriate. We won't be formal every night, so a polo and khakis are just fine. For the ladies, Indian dress is very flowing, so if you have tunics, long scarves, long skirts, etc, you will fit right in. Shorts are fine for men and women when we hang out at the hotels, etc. You might feel a bit uncomfortable exposing more of your legs as you will be stared at in any case, more so when wearing shorts. Exposed shoulders and backs are fine, however, so sundresses would be just the thing. I am planning on bringing a variety of Indian clothes; saris, salwar kameezes (tunic, pants, and long scarf ensembles), etc.

Shopping:

Anything you buy in India – containers of furniture, carpets, inlaid marble table tops, etc – can all be shipped and always arrive. Anything your heart desires we can find in India at a tenth of the cost. As your personal shopper, I'd be happy to help. Let me know if you have specific needs in advance so we can plan a shopping excursion (and we will have plenty of shopping opportunities). I consider this a personal challenge, so go ahead and see if any of you can stump me!

Travelers Checks and Credit Cards:

Almost everyone takes credit cards in India. The few exceptions are the street vendors. Once you negotiate a price (everything is negotiable) they may add 3% to the price to pay for the credit card fees. MC and Visa are more prevalent, but AMeX works some places too.

Medication and Immunization:

Tummy issues are the most common ailment we'll face. Delhi Belly as we call it. We had 280 houseguests over the four years. 50% of them suffered from some sort of stomach discomfort. The others sailed through. No rhyme or reason to it. The good news is that a

dose of Ciprofloxin (sold over the counter in India for 11 cents) can usually cure you. Some friends who visited took this drug daily to ward off any upset stomachs and did so very effectively, however I do not subscribe to this method. Check w/ your medical professional. Constant hand washing and antibacterial solution can be your best allies. The water in the hotels where we are staying is all filtered. The food is safe. Sometimes it is just a matter of the different and unusual spices that cause some ill side effects. Go out and eat some spicy Indian food a few times before we go! If all else fails, a doctor will come to your room, give you a handy dandy little shot in the derriere, and you'll be feeling good as new. See "pre-departure to do/know list" for additional immunization information.

Cell Phones:

Cell phones are very inexpensive in India and easy to get. If you want to save A LOT of money, just get an Indian cell phone when you come. Rates are the cheapest in the world. I can call America twice a day for a month and my bill is usually less than \$100. If you roam, you could be looking at \$1000's! All you need is a passport AND a passport photo. You can get those in India cheaply, but if you want to expedite things, get a few extra photos taken here. When the ladies shop, we can get your phones in the same market.

Other:

Our friends have planned some wonderful parties for us and we have requested a reception with the Ambassador and his staff at Roosevelt House to give us a briefing on India/US relations.

I hope your visa and travel arrangements are in the works. Dick and I will be arriving on the 8th of November. If you arrive early, we can do some shopping or sightseeing together.

I hope you are as excited as we are. Remember, Ganeve can help you with your travel plans either before we get started or after we end (info@himalayanriverrunners.com).

Don't hesitate to email me with questions (jlundquist@coloradocollege.edu).

Looking forward to seeing all of you soon.

Jacqueline