



HIMALAYAN MULTI-DISTRICT-INDIA

“A LEARNING ADVENTURE CAMP 2019”

17th APRIL - 1st MAY 2019



Dear Surinder,

On March 27th, I boarded a plane from London Heathrow Airport clueless of the amazing experience I would be part of. I have mentioned countless times going to India was a dream of mine. And needless to say, from the beginning until the end, I was mesmerised and under the spell of the beauty of every thing that I was seeing. The landscapes, the dances, the food...the culture in general! And of course, it wasn't always a cruise but it was 'real' and far away from the clichés of India the world has painted. These two weeks could have never happened without you. You showed us a glimpse of what India was really like and kept us on the edge of our seats from the Sunderbans to the beautiful monasteries of Sikkim. You allowed us to experience something unimaginable, and took us out of our comfort zones.

This trip wouldn't have been the same without the eight new people that I can, after all of the adventures we lived together, call my friends. We now share a strong bond over so many great memories. All from different places in the world, coming together to share this trip as one. Over the course of the days, we all grew closer, sharing everything with each other. Our fears, our tears, our worries, our meals, our laughs but most importantly this whole experience.

These eight people, and you Surinder changed my life and made it better.

As a big traveller I always had India on my wish list... I was dreaming about Taj Mahal and all the touristic points of your country. It took me a while to realize, that those buildings are just tourist attractions. The real India, the culture, the people and the atmosphere is totally different when you're the only different person in a village. You showed us how real Indian people live. You showed us how real Indian people behave with different people, and that was an unforgettable experience for me. You showed us the real Indian cuisine. Travelling by train also was a great experience, because it gave us the chance to learn how to take care of each other, and how to behave in a totally different country. I will never forget visiting the small villages, where I learned to appreciate what I have. This whole trip was a life experience, and I can never be thankful enough for you organizing the trip, helping us out in everything, making us feel safe everywhere and listening to your really interesting life stories.

Thank you again for having me in the camp. You are the best!

Jenifer

Dear Surinder,

I can't thank you enough for the once in a lifetime experience you gave us. Not only did we get to see a world totally different from ours, and come to appreciate it much more, we also became family, explored together, struggled together, and had a blast together. You are so dedicated to this camp and making the best experience possible for us, and that made such a difference in all of our experiences.

Being the first American you've ever had, and the only male in the group, I felt a heightened pressure to leave a good impression. I found out quickly that there was no need feel tense, nervous, or apprehensive, as you and the rest of the group were so welcoming, loving, and caring. I encourage anyone under any circumstance, if you are on the fence of whether or not to go, DO IT. It changed my life and will truly change yours.

I don't want to give up the whole trip, but I want to reflect on how perfectly this camp was organized. We got to see three scenes of India, very well representative of their culture. We started out in the busy streets of Kolkata, the city scene. Then headed to Puri Beach of the Bay of Bengal, the coastal scene. Then went to the sacred lands in the Himalayas of Sikkim, the holy scene... Also the cooler scene after over a week in toasty weather.

I have since seen 5 of the 8 group members in their respective countries, and I will keep in touch with all of them for the rest of my life. I now have 8 new family members that I will cherish and surely see sometime in the future. If you are debating going to India, there's no debate, GO TO INDIA, and go with SURINDER.

Sincerely,

Kyle Grady
USA

*"Reduce your desires and you reduce your problems"
"The difference between like and love. If you like a flower, you just pluck it. But when you love a flower, you water it daily."*

So much of our happiness depends on how we choose to look at the world.



Once again an unforgettable experience specially designed for the adventurous who would like to combine their time spent gaining knowledge while having fun!

Learn about the ancient culture and religions - Hinduism at the holiest city of Puri, with its marvelous temples dating from 3rd century, situated at the exotic sea resort in the Bay of Bengal. From there on to the picturesque Himalayan State of Sikkim, in the city of Peling and Gangtok, visiting the oldest monasteries, interacting with the Lamas. Browse in the only Buddhist University in the world, engage in discourses with the monks at the breathtaking Rumtek Monastery.

Visit the world's largest mangrove forest in the back waters of Bay of Bengal, far from the madding crowd, cruise in the river and be lucky to sight a tiger in the wilderness. Along with 41 exchange students we were so fortunate to sight one in 2011. It has left an unforgettable deep impact!



The city of Joy-Calcutta-Rev. Mother Teresa's Tomb pay homage to a modern Saint. The city which once was capital of India during British Rule, with its monuments and the oldest Rotary Club in Asia. Not to miss the shopping, which you will find to be delightfully cheap.

A meeting with Master Sculpturer and visit to his art gallery and workshop in Puri. A visit to an ARTISANS village, declared a world heritage VILLAGE, where each home is an artist's workshop. The Sun Temple of KONARK will be spellbinding, a 11th century masterpiece! And in Sikkim, Peling Exotic town nestled up in the pine covered mountains, oldest ancient monasteries, mind blowing view of tallest peaks. YAKSUM-Ancient Capital, Gangtok, flower show with some of the best orchids. One of the world's highest lake, Tsongo, is a spectacular site situated at a height of more than 4000 mts. With view of the world's highest peaks! Added to all this will be white river rafting in the river Teesta.

The adventure does not end here. The tremendous varieties in food, the people with 18 official languages, with 50 more and 1000 of dialects. Melting pot of different clothes, culture, religions which coexist and not speak of different folk and classical dances. Memorable two weeks of everlasting impact.



Dear Surinder,

first of all, I am really sorry it took me so long to write you this email.

Thank you so much for organizing this amazing trip!

I remember your last email before we started our trip, you said 'come with an open mind and absorb this unique experience with your own eyes' and you were so right. Before that I did have some worries and probably read all the existing blogs about India but once I received your email they all disappeared.

I always try learning about cultures that are different from mine and India gave me the biggest culture-shock of my life but only in the best way possible. I've learned so much about your country, religion and I'm grateful for having met so many amazing and interesting people. Furthermore I discovered that I love Indian food (and will look for a authentic restaurant in my city) and after the Indian traffic, which was a completely new experience, I definitely have a new appreciation for our quiet one :)

I can't tell you how much this trip meant to me and how amazing it was to be a part of it, THANK YOU SO MUCH! I hope one day I get the chance to visit India again and spend a night on the train once more, what an experience!

Please know, you are always welcome in my home!

Warmest regards

Steffi

Dear Surinder,

I am very sorry for sending this report so late.

Like you said - when we come back home we will be so busy again that we will totally forget about it. Also, writing all of my new impressions, thoughts, emotions and experiences down isn't as easy as it might seem.

First of all I want to say that this camp was an incredible experience and almost two months later I am still thinking about it, wishing to relive it again.

In the beginning of the trip you told us to forget everything that we've ever heard or seen about India, to come with "a clear and open mind". And so I did. I was overwhelmed by this country's people, sights, climate and nature. Every day was better than the previous one.

This trip was also a little bit challenging, not only physically but also mentally because every day our group of nine students got to experience something new. In the first night we got to experience Kolkata's crazy nightlife. When the streets had 3 lanes probably 5 cars drove next to each other, passing cows, bikes, motorcycles, humans and other cars.

After Kolkata we went to Sunderbans, the biggest mangrove forest. Our guide took us to a small village where we interacted with little kids. Seeing those kids' smiles when we gave them candy was an incredible experience I will never forget.

After Sunderbans we took our first overnight train to Puri. I will always remember our group sitting in our assigned chairs, laughing, talking, sleeping and eating Domino's pizza and our Haribo candy.

Our last stop was Sikkim, where we rode yaks around Tsongmo lake and played with snow, got to see tea gardens and enjoying the beautiful views of the white peaks of the Himalayan mountains.

My most favorite memories:

- Going shopping for silk scarfs: we know you hate shopping but thank you for putting up with eight girls begging you to take them to stores
- Bargaining with the locals, at the end we became real professionals :-)
- Rafting in the Himalayan river
- Getting up early to do morning yoga
- The food, especially Nan
- Last but not least my favorite quote that our group used (too) many times: "Guys, when Surinder says it's okay, it's okay"

I want to thank you - Surinder - for letting me take part in this incredible Rotary camp and for letting me make new friends worldwide. Kyle visited us in Vienna, shortly after coming back and Steffi and I will visit Claudia at Lake Garda in August.

Sending best wishes from

Vienna, Theresa



Maximum participation will be 30 and on first come basis. Age 16-25 years. Registration ₹82,000 (Indian Rupees)

INCLUDES: Traveling on trains (airconditioned with sleeper berth), local transport. Site-seeing. Meals: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Accommodation-3 to a room with attached bath all in reasonably good hotels and resorts DOES NOT INCLUDE: Cold drinks, mineral water, laundry, telephone, ENTRY FEE TO SOME MONUMENTS, WHITE RIVER RAFTING and anything extra which is not included in the above. All train and hotel reservations have to be done three months in advance.

HENCE IT MUST BE A FIRM COMMITMENT

CONTACT PERSON:

PDG Surinder Singh Sahni, Bombay Motor Co. Chas 827013, Bokaro-Jharkhand, India.

Tentative detailed itinerary:

1st Day :

Participants to report on 17th April by 8.00 am. at Kolkata International Airport.

Emirate Airways has convenient flight from their hub in Dubai, which has connections to most countries. After arrival Check into Hotel. Debriefing and orientation.



2nd Day :

Depart for Sunderbans after early Breakfast 5 Hours journey by Bus and Boat. Arrive in Sunderbans Tiger Resort. Cruise on the backwaters. Evening "Jumer" Folk dance followed by camp fire.



3rd Day :

Cruise, Breakfast on boat. After lunch visit a ethnic village. Evening A folk ballet "Yatra", followed by camp fire.



4th Day :

Early morning Cruise. Check-out and depart for Kolkata. Evening Depart by train for Puri overnight journey.

5th Day :

Arrival Puri Check into Resort. Early morning Yoga under guidance Yoga teacher. Beach Activity. After Breakfast Visit Meditation Centre. After Lunch - Visits to a) Ancient City of Puri b) Visit Art Gallery and the workshop c) Beach Market. Return to Resort.

6th Day :

Early morning Yoga under guidance Yoga teacher. Morning-beach activities. After Breakfast visit Famous 11th Century Sun Temple "Konark". Typical Indian style Lunch. Followed by visit to the heritage village GUTI PAO dance.



7th Day :

Early morning Yoga under guidance Yoga teacher. Morning beach activities - check-out 12 p.m chinese lunch. Depart by train for Sikkim. Arriving following day at 12.40 p.m.



8th Day :

Arrive in Siliguri afternoon and depart for Peling. A beautiful picturesque town up in the Himalayas with ancient Buddhist Monasteries. 4-5 hours picturesque drive. Stay in Norbu Gang Resort.

9th Day :

Early Morning breakfast followed by trek to ancient monasteries. Return to resort for lunch. Followed by another trek.

10th Day :

After Early Morning Breakfast depart for YAKSAM. Return to resort by evening.

11th Day :

Check out After Early breakfast. Depart for Gangtok. Visit Buddha Dham at Reva Bangla. Also visit Temi tea garden and factory. Gangtok hotel check in evening visit-Tibtan museum.





12th Day :

After early breakfast, depart for Tsong Lake. One of the highest in the world. Again drive through the most spectacular view of the Himalaya. Return to hotel for lunch. Evening free for exploring the town and shopping.



about Buddhism followed by White River Rafting. Evening catch overnight train for Kolkata.

14th Day :

Arrive in Kolkata check in hotel after lunch home stay with Rotarian family. Evening Rotary meeting followed by farewell parts.



15th Day :

Depart for your countries and home, as per your schedule.

13th Day :

Early Breakfast and check-out. Visit Rumtek Monastery, Seminary for the Lamas and the only Buddhist University. Interact with the Lamas and learn



What you are is what you have been, what you'll be is what you do now.
-Buddha

THIS WAS ME 30 YEARS BACK, IN NEPAL WITH THE EARLIEST GROUP



IMPORTANT:

1. PARTICIPANTS MUST HAVE INSURANCE AGAINST ILLNESS, ACCIDENTS AS PER ROTARY INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES.
2. While applying for Indian Visa must get "Visit to Sikkim" included.
3. Bring copies of your passports with visas along with copies of your photograph for obtaining permission to travel in restricted areas.
4. Travel as light as possible, include one formal beach wear, walking shoes. A windcheater for Sikkim, where it will be cold. Otherwise will be quite warm 30-38 celsius.
5. Please don't bring expensive jewelry etc., as we will not be responsible.
6. Registration amount: bring in Cash convenient to change here (£ or €).

APPLICATION: To apply for this camp, contact the Camps Coordinator:
Alistair Knox - email: camps@youthexchange.org.uk