

SUMMER 2012 | ISSUE 3

# NATIVE *foreigner*

M A G A Z I N E



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# Contributors



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**Name:** Cathy Ly

### What was your favorite destination?

My favorite destination was South Luangwa National Park. There, I went on hours and hours of game drives and was able to see some amazing things, like a leopard eating an impala in a tree and lions walking right past our vehicle.

### Who was the most interesting person you met?

The most interesting person I met was Asher, a young medical student from New Zealand. When I was staying at Victoria Falls, he was in the same hostel. We ended up hiking around the falls together and I heard about his hopes of being a doctor in the rural areas of Zambia.

### What was your favorite mode of transportation?

The game vehicles on the safaris were definitely my favorite mode of transportation. They are huge trucks with no doors or windows so we could get really close to the animals.

**Name:** Erika Laete

### What was your most memorable moment?

The moment I arrived in my first destination and realized I had all the power to mold my adventure to my liking!

### What was the most exotic food you ate?

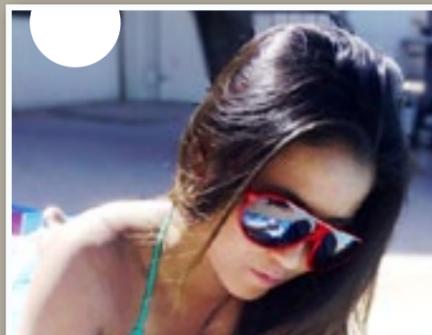
Balut. Fermented Duck Egg in Vietnam.

### What item can't you travel without?

Universal Sink Stopper or my 100% Silk Cocoon sleeping bag

### What did you miss most and least from the U.S.?

I missed the convenience of buying food on a Sunday. I did not miss the fast food restaurants from America.



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**Name:** Gabrielle Field

### What was your favorite destination?

Petra in Jordan

### What was the most exotic food you ate?

Chicken feet in Kenya

### Who was the most interesting person you met?

Cosmo the bus conductor during our bus trip in Africa. When our bus unexpectedly made a stopover in Lusaka for the night, he let us stay on his bus, sleeping in the aisle way in front of us to make sure we were safe. He spoke 42 different African languages so he always knew what people were up to on his bus and ensured there were no unfavorable situations.

### What did you miss most and least from the U.S.?

While living in Denmark, I missed friendliness, small talk, and general interactions between strangers. I did not miss traffic or having a car—I loved my bike!

**Name:** Heather Morton

### What was your most memorable moment?

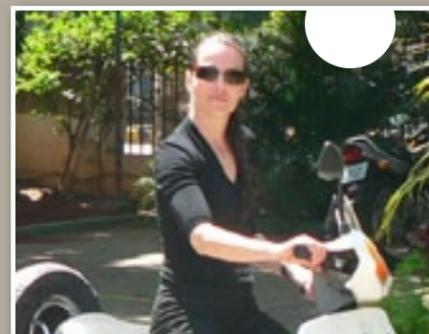
One of my most memorable moments was when I first saw the dome of the Taj Mahal in Agra. My driver had let me off at the back so I could avoid the crowds. As I walked closer to the palace I remember the exact moment I saw the peak of one of the domes in between the trees. It was a magical moment in which I breathed to myself, "ah, there it is..." I actually started to walk faster to get closer.

### Favorite mode of transportation?

I enjoy getting around Mysore, India by scooter. It may look dangerous but in many ways it is safer.

### Favorite travel destination:

India is by far my favorite destination. India possesses a charm and fascination like no other country. It probably has to do with its age and the diversity from east, south, west and north.



[Click here to visit her blog](#)



**Name:** Erika Spofford

### Favorite destination:

Costa Rica! Study abroad there, and also teaching English there. It will always have a special place in my heart!

### Most exotic food:

Cod testicles! Hahaha, in Japan.

### Item you can't live without:

I can't travel without my Ipod! Helps a lot with some of those long bus rides.

### What I miss the most:

When I'm traveling, I miss my family the most, otherwise I'm always super excited to experience a new culture and don't usually miss the culture of the U.S. much.

## Want YOUR profile featured here?

Be our next featured contributor! Send your article submission to [submissions@nativeforeignermag.com](mailto:submissions@nativeforeignermag.com) and your article could be featured in our next issue!

Describe your journey, share your living experience and tell us what you learned.

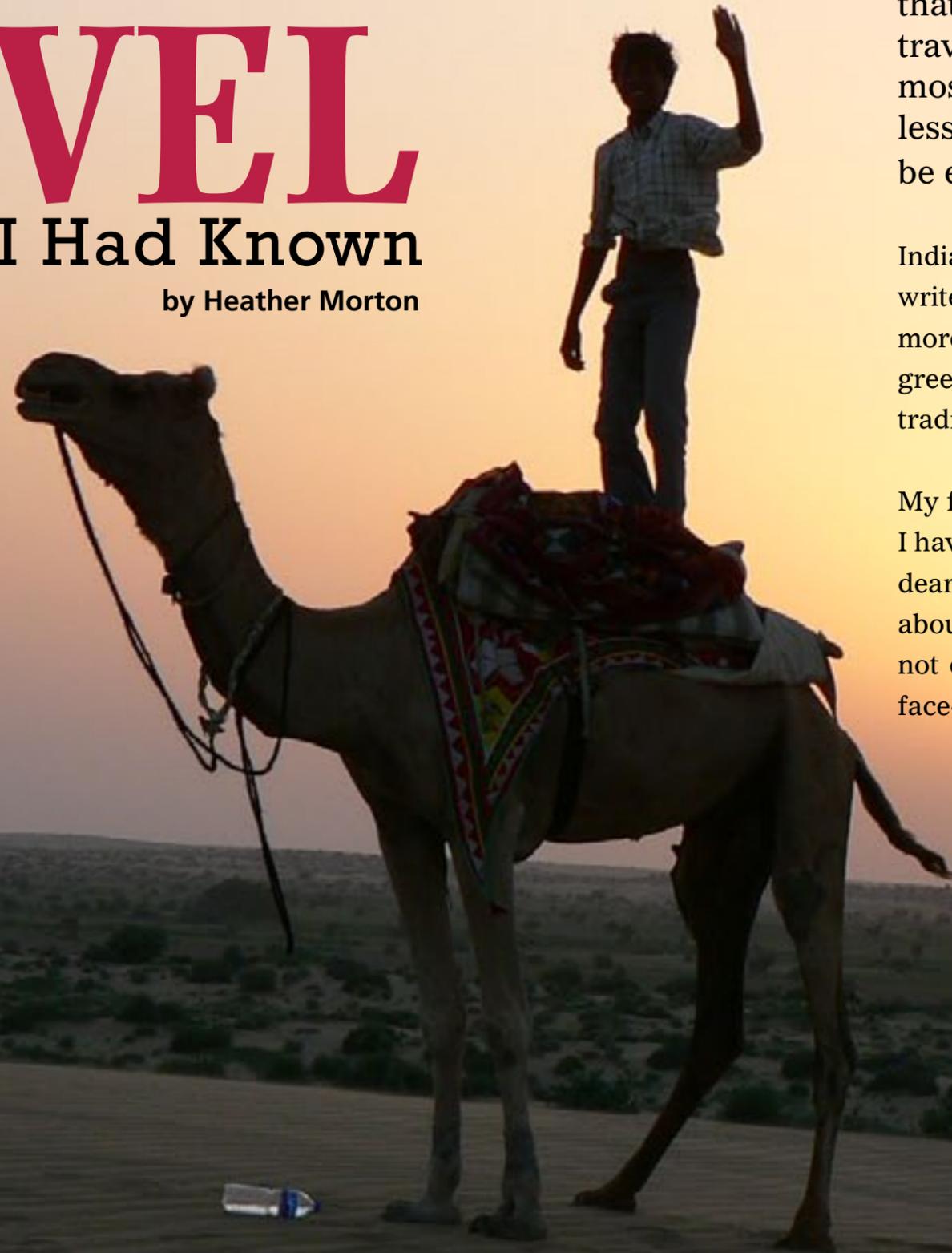
For additional guidelines, [click here](#).

Submissions for the fall issue are due: **SEPT. 10, 2012**

# INDIA TRAVEL

## Things I Wish I Had Known

by Heather Morton



**MARK TWAIN** wrote that the city of Varanasi was "older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together" (from *Following the Equator*, 1897). Many people may not know that his trip to India was to help him write a non-fiction travelogue with the intent to get himself out of debt. While most of us may be lucky enough to travel to India under less strain, the drive to experience a country like India can be equally as intense.

India is a fascinating country as much as it is a confusing one. It is every writer's paradise and photographer's dream. Socially, however, it appears more Westernized than it actually is. Indian men who sport jeans and greet you with a handshake give off a modernized attitude, but their traditional roots are more than skin deep.

My first trip to India was made in 1999. As a yoga teacher and student, I have been traveling to India for the last 13 years; a sojourn that is very dear to me. As a woman traveling alone, I have learned many things about myself, people and life itself. In particular, I have learned it's just not enough to pack the right clothes and toiletries. India brought me face-to-face with the real meaning of the phrase, "live and learn."



There are often many misconceptions when it comes to traveling in India. And, to make things more confusing, some of these myths are intermingled with a couple of truths. These are some of the things I wish I had known.

#### **PART I: TRAVEL MYTHS AS I EXPERIENCED THEM...**

##### **Traveling Alone is Lonely and Dangerous**

Indians are very interested in foreigners and quite surprisingly so. More times than I can remember, I have often been the subject of photos taken by Indian tourists. As the minority, I felt like a novelty. There was simply no time to feel lonely with so many curious people inquiring about where I was from, what I was doing and how long I was staying.





As a woman traveling solo, I also felt it was easier to get around alone than in a group. It's easier to slip into a crowd and disappear from a pushy vendor when you're alone than when you're with a mob of people. In addition, I heard fellow women travelers say they interacted more with the locals when they were alone than when they were accompanied by a partner. In the latter scenario, the women were ignored as the men 'talked.'

It is wise, however, not to have in-depth conversations with men off the street. Street-smart rules still apply.

### **Staying Healthy**

Getting sick is not advised and can be avoided by taking a few precautions. While there is usually a lot of hype about hygiene in third-world countries, I did not wear a mask or wash my hands every five minutes.



## **Some handy tips to avoid getting sick, include:**

- Bring a hand sanitizer and use it before and after eating.
- Drink lots of water. It's easy to get dehydrated.
- Don't eat off the street. There are juicy fruits and yummy nuts tempting enough to try. I learned the hard way and returned to Canada with whipworm (a parasite)!
- Consult a Travel Medicine doctor (<http://www.tmvc.com/>) and not a family doctor before going. No matter how much I respect my doctor, family doctors are not experts in travel medicine and may not have the latest information.

### **The Food**

Contrary to what many people understand as being Indian food, it is not hot and laced with curry. That's like saying Italians eat spaghetti and meatballs every day! The main staple is rice but there are a variety of wonderful vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. In addition, the food can be prepared to your taste...from very hot to extremely mild.

The cuisine also varies from region to region. I love chapattis (Indian flat bread) and found it was hard to find in the North, where Naan was popular. Chai (Indian spiced tea with milk) is found all over India, but coffee is often the instant kind. Also, please note that coffee is ordered differently. In India, it's ordered as 'separate' (meaning black coffee with the milk on the side) or 'milk' coffee (self-explanatory).



### The Climate

Like the food, most people mistakenly think India is hot. When I traveled to Shimla, the capital of the Himalayas, I was blown away by the 18° C summer breeze. Shimla is a hill station that was taken over by the British when they ruled India. The British flocked there when the temperatures reached a scorching 50° C on the lower plains.

Traveling further north there is snow (yes, snow) while the southern regions have conditions similar to London, England. Depending

on when and where you go, it is possible to avoid the severe heat and the monsoon.

### Safety

Just because it's a third-world country does not mean I needed to fear being robbed. Having made friends with less wealthy Indians, these were the first people to offer me a meal and the last to ask for something in return.

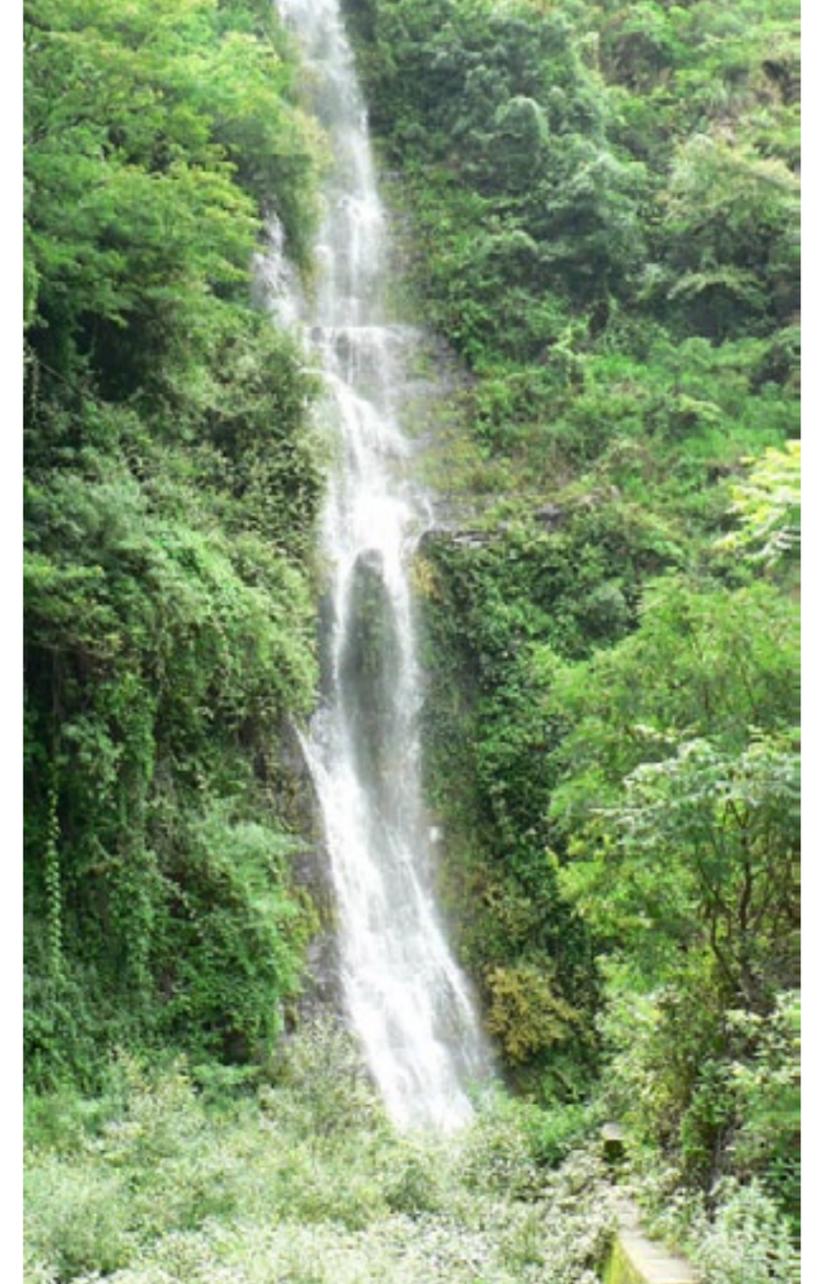
The honesty of the Indian people was put to the test when I thoughtlessly stuffed an

Indian rupee note in my back pocket (it was the equivalent to buying a nice meal). I was shocked when a young Indian tapped on my shoulder and pointed to the money sticking out of my pocket. I felt like giving him the money for his good deed!

### Hygiene and Power outages

I have stayed in 5-star hotels and traveled by plane and taxi; rightfully enjoying Western toilets and electrical power 24/7 with a generator kicking in. On the flip side, I have also stayed in budget hotels and still had a toilet seat in an attached bathroom with the occasional blackout. In both cases, however, I was not subjected to peeing in a hole and using a bucket to flush.

At worst, I needed to remember to bring my own toilet paper, not to look down and to pinch my nose. At best, I accepted this as a part of traveling in a foreign country. I remind myself that the squat toilets in South Korea were worse. ✨



In the Fall Issue of Native Foreigner, check out the truths about India. Stay tuned...

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*Heather Morton is part of a select group of people certified in AtmaVikasa Yoga, becoming the first Westerner to be certified in both the 1st and 2nd series of the AtmaVikasa system. Having made 13 extended trips to India, she studies under her teachers annually in India. In 1997, she founded The Yoga Way (TYW), a Toronto based yoga school for structured programs.*

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