Visual Anthropology – Visas, Travel Insurance, Tools and Equipment

Travel and Visas:

Visas: An Indian Tourist Visa is required**.**

Applying for a visa is not a difficult issue EXCEPT it is tedious and can be incredibly **SLOW** - the visa should be granted **before** you make your airlines reservations. With this in mind, visas need to be acquired as soon as possible. There is an Indian consulate in Vancouver but Americans have to apply through the Internet.

The process in Canada for Canadian Citizens: You will need to get online and figure it out as I am not sure of the process in Canada.

For **US Citizens** you can go to this site for the information you require to obtain a visa:

https://www.travisa.com but there are other options... check the internet.

For students with passports other than Canada or the US I suggest that you visit the consulate in Vancouver or get on the internet to determine how the process will move forward.

There are some things you need to know when applying for your visa:

IMPORTANT: Apply only for a **TOURIST VISA**… **not** a student visa or anything else….make sure that, when asked, you are just touring India.

Keep in mind that your **Passport must be up to date and must have more than 6 months left on it BEFORE EXPIRATION**, or you will have to have it renewed.

Air Travel: The way this works is as follows: You will have a 24 hour period to arrive in Leh, Ladakh to join the course. If we are told of your flight number and arrival time we will have someone at the airport to take you to the hotel. Or, if not, you will be provided with a phone number as well as an address and you can obtain a cab to the guesthouse upon arrival.I might note that most flights to Leh originate in Delhi and leave VERY early in the morning.

The dates of the course. Arrival in Leh: July 20th, 2015; Leave Leh, Ladakh August 11th, 2015

Each course participant must arrange their own ticketing to **Leh, Ladakh**. The sooner you obtain a visa and the sooner you book your flights you will find that the flight prices will be much less.

If your plans are to fly from somewhere else in the world you will be leaving for Leh, Ladakh and in most almost all instances, from Delhi.

Travel and Evacuation Insurance: **Each participant MUST have Travel Medical and Evacuation** insurance to attend this course, NO exclusions. This insurance is available from the University and costs a little over $2.00 per day. Buy the insurance so it covers from the day you arrive in Ladakh until you think you will be back home (if you plan to travel in other

Photo and Video:

Cameras and Computers: Each participant should have a laptop, a video camera or still camera OR one that does both. A personal laptop with room for all of the images that one makes on the hard drive as well as one of the available photo manipulation and video editing programs. These need not be the professional level programs by any means. 'Simple' works well such as iPhoto and iMovie on a Mac or the beginner Premier Elements on a Window's laptop.

If one has a higher level editing programs such as Premier or Final Cut X that is fine as well. In any event, hopefully each of you will have a photo editing program of some sort.

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This course will teach each of you how to be a better image maker and to more critically study and "understand" another culture. That being said, the camera doesn't have to be the best camera on the market. Point-and-shoots are fine. In our last iteration of the Visual Anthropology course one student made unbelievably beautiful and anthropologically insightful images using an iPhone and to reinforce this fact it should be noted that the British car maker Bentley created their most recent TV commercial using an iPhone and iPad. iPads have great cameras as well. It isn't about equipment… **this course is about SEEING**.

One does not have to go out and buy the most expensive piece of equipment. It won't matter because great pictures, informative pictures, meaningful pictures are made with one's brain and heart. So, these are the real tools of photography and of visual anthropology. I might note, that iPhones are also good sound recording devices as are laptops. I will bring one high end sound recorder and a microphone as well.

Super lightweight tripods are really useful as well.

So, to summarize: **The course is NOT about equipment**, as I noted above, cameras do not take pictures, people do. So, if you do not have the fanciest camera out there in "camera land" do not worry. We will become competent with whatever tools you have as we investigate other cultures.

Other details on Photo/Video equipment:

Bring lots of memory chips for your cameras; bring as many batteries as you can. Generally, we can charge the batteries but in some locations that will not be possible so. Buy extras and get them (and your extra memory chips) on Amazon as they are substantially less expensive than buying them in a camera store. Also, think about how to carry your camera equipment. A light daypack is terrific. Big camera bags are a hassle and while everyone thinks they have to have one they are beasts to carry around. As a Nat Geo photographer, I never used one in my daily work. You will also want a small blower to clean your lenses and camera sensor, because dust is a big deal in Ladakh.

Checklist of Equipment and Clothing

Generally, it isn't terribly cold in Ladakh during the time of year we will visit. While the altitude is very high, it is also exceptionally dry. It can get chilly but rarely very cold at night. The days are generally warm and comfortable, although occasionally the winds are tremendous. You will need a day-pack but prepared with clothes to keep you warm if it cools off. You should have wind pants and a rainproof jacket. The sun is intense as the lowest elevation on the trip is 11,000 feet. You also will want to be as fit as you can be because these altitudes take a lot away from one's normal energy level until they become acclimatized.

It is important to point out that we will be spending some time in Muslim cultures where shorts and exposure of skin is not recommended - quite the opposite, in fact. The dress code in this part of India is one of propriety. Please keep this in mind. Also, in our efforts to be 'learning anthropologists' we want to be as unnoticed as possible. Keep the bright pinks and reds in your closets at home.

You should have most of the following.

Walking boots: Soft Hiking Boots (make sure that they are broken in). A pair of flip flops is handy for home stays and just hanging out.

Lightweight shoes or sneakers: Useful around camp, in towns and when traveling.

Trousers: For everyday walking, lightweight trek trousers occasional worn over light thermal underwear are the most suitable. There are times when you can wear shorts but pants are generally best as India is not a shorts kind of environment except in Leh. A pair of lightweight wind pants is a good idea.

Tops: Recommended is a layering system comprising items of lightweight breathable fabrics: T-shirt, long-sleeved top, fleece, and a waterproof shell jacket of Gore-Tex or similar material.

Fleece jacket: A warm fleece or down jacket is great. Make sure that your waterproof jacket is loose enough to wear over your sweater or fleece.

Socks: Avoid nylon or other forms of plastic socks because they are abrasive, don't breathe well, and can cause blisters. Wool is best, such as Smart Wool.

Sleeping bag: As you do not carry it yourself this may be down or synthetic, as always small and light is better than heavy and huge. We recommend a cotton liner to help keep your bag clean. If you want to be very comfortable bring one of the super lightweight air mattresses. We will only camp a few nights but be prepared.

Water bottle: **Water must NEVER be considered as drinkable**. The staff will provide boiled or bottled water each day with which to fill your own bottle, or just buy bottled water. If you dislike the taste of boiled water, it is a good idea to add some powdered fruit juice. Bottled water, by the way, is available virtually everywhere except when camping or in home stays and

Visual Anthropology – Visas, Travel Insurance, Tools and Equipment

we will always have it in our transportation. You might also find it useful to have iodine based sterilization tablets or one of the many water purification filters. When in Ley or at other guest houses potable water is always available

It is suggested that you purchase a supply of flavored electrolytes as the dryness at that altitude literally dehydrates you. Outdoor stores have all kinds. Those available in India are good but taste terrible.

Headlamp/batteries/bulb: A small headlamp is useful and important, going to the loo in the night etc. Remember that in most developing countries only a limited selection of batteries is available so bring spare batteries and bulb (better yet, get a LED headlamp). Note: LED lamps will probably last the entire 18 days.

Toiletries: Try to keep bulky toiletries/cosmetics to a minimum. Essentials, of course, are obvious: Toothbrush/paste, biodegradable soap, small towel, and whatever you normally carry. Bring several small travel rolls of toilet paper and keep them with you at all times. TP is available in Leh and generally everywhere there is a store but just make sure you have some with you all the time.

Bring a small towel. Wet wipes are good for a quick clean up in your tent so bring a pack (non-perfumed if you can).

Sunglasses: A good pair of sunglasses is important for protection against UV rays and glare at high altitudes (which is everywhere we will visit). If you wear prescription glasses and have a backup pair, do bring them.

Sun hat: Definitely essential to protect you against high altitude sun as is Sun cream/block & lip salve: Bring plenty. Choose a high factor sun cream (Factor 30 or more) to protect your skin against high altitude sun and also to keep your skin moisturized against the wind. Also use plenty of lip salve. A combination sun cream/lip salve is good for facial protection.

Warm head gear: You might find a windy day that you need it.

It is advised that you travel using a small duffle AND a sturdy daypack to carry your equipment and clothes. Soft duffles are easier to pack into Jeeps roofs and carry. Roller cases are not appropriate so, just use a simple duffle. **The Rule: Keep it simple.** Bring the clothes that you normally wear. Bring clothes that you can wash and let dry overnight. Bring a small bottle of

liquid detergent. You can, in certain circumstances, have your clothes washed but best plan to wash everything yourself.

Personal first aid kit: Each trek carries an extensive first aid kit (although note, we cannot administer any medicines) but you should have your own supply of plasters, aspirin, diarrhea tablets and also a comprehensive blister kit.

It is VERY important for each participant to visit your travel medicine doctor for advice on appropriate drugs that you might want to have such as various antibiotics, etc. And, it is recommended that you each have a personal first aid kit.

Other Important Details:

The course fee includes virtually everything such as food, travel, hotels, camps and so on…. HOWEVER there are three areas of potential spending that the course does NOT cover and these are: LAUNDRY, LIBATIONS, and GRATUITIES, that is TIPS (to be assessed and paid at the end of the course by each student…last year this cost came in a little under 100.00 dollars per student and IS REQUIRED SO BE PREPARED)

Information from the Indian Government:

(notes below in bold are mine)

All travelers should visit either their personal physician or a travel health clinic before departure.

Vaccinations such as Hepatitis A and typhoid are recommended for all travelers. Other vaccination such as polio, yellow fever, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis B should also be taken. All travelers should be up-to-date on tetanus-diphtheria, measles-mumps-rubella, and varicella immunizations.

The most important cause of illness of travelers in India is food and waterborne diseases. Viruses, bacteria, or parasites can cause diarrhea. Infections may cause simple diarrhea and vomiting, fever, or in extreme cases, liver damage (hepatitis). **The single biggest gastronomic issue is the change in the bacteria in the stomach, rather than some horrendous bug. The idea is to be careful about keeping things clean by always washing your hands before eating anything as well as using disinfectant gels and liquids. I suggest that you bring along probiotic tablets and rehydration salts as well**.

Malaria is a preventable infection that can create trouble if left untreated. One can prevent infection by taking prescribed anti-malarial drugs and protecting against mosquito bites. Malaria risk in this region exists in some urban and rural areas, depending on the elevation. **There is NO Malaria in Ladakh and Zanskar, again these are our destinations, so I do not recommend any Malarial preventative UNLESS you plan to travel to other places in India that have this risk, but ask your travel med doctor**.

Visual Anthropology – Visas, Travel Insurance, Tools and Equipment

If someone is visiting the mountainous region of the Himalayas, he/she should ascend gradually to allow time for the body to adjust to the high altitude, which can cause insomnia, headaches, nausea, and altitude sickness. In addition, one should use sun-block rated at least 40 SPF, because the risk of sunburn is greater at high altitudes.

The high altitude travel of this course is an important concern and thus it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT YOU ARE VERY FIT BEFORE THE TRIP as being so makes the acclimatization far easier and can help prevent any high altitude sickness which can be dangerous or at the very least debilitating. Discuss this with your travel medical specialist. It must be noted that neither I, nor the University, defines or recommends medications. Medications are to prescribed solely by your doc… The point here is to discuss this matter of very high altitude with them and obtain the appropriate meds because there are meds that are appropriate for altitude issues.

Many of you have said that you wish to COME EARLY TO ACCLIMATIZE . This is a smart move and will make the course far more manageable. It takes your body a number of days to build the red blood cells necessary to help your body with the altitude. At 10000 feet there is 1/2 the oxygen that you have at sea level. The body adjusts over a number of days by creating more red blood cells.

You are, of course, on your own with respect to costs until the course begins. However, a guest house can be arranged by our supplier. The options through our Ladakhi provider are: 20.00 to 25.00 for a room for two including breakfast, or alternatively, 40.00 for a room for two also with breakfast (all costs in Ladakh are in US dollars). Or you can find your own accommodations if you wish, this is your choice. In any case, we will need to know when you are arriving, what flight it is and so forth so you can be picked up at the airport. Otherwise, just show up at our course guest house on the first day of the course. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.