

Practical Advice from 2009 Fulbrighters

Luggage: The savviest travelers brought one midsized piece of luggage, and something like a large duffle that was folded into their bag for purchases along the way. A few people brought huge pieces of luggage that they couldn't carry on their own as they filled them. Make sure you are able to carry your own luggage.

Extra weight fees on airlines: As we shopped and gathered "stuff" for our curriculum units and private cache, some of us (me included after a trip to a great kid's bookstore) had more pounds in our luggage than the airlines permitted. Even with the expert haggling of our guide, we were assessed a group fine. There was some tension about who should pay it, and most of us who either had a heavy bag or an extra bag, volunteered to pay. I think there's no way around some money conflicts, but perhaps the knowledge that there is an option for fines might help alleviate that.

Blogging: Many of us decided on the spur of the moment to send blogs home, and everyone who did it thought it was a very good way to reflect on the day's events, have a great record for later reflection, and also use it as a teaching tool. However, many of us were learning on the fly, as we had never posted blogs before, and we all thought it would have been very helpful to have a media specialist from a local Madison high school give an hour or two evening inservice to those interested in the group so they could feel confident about uploading text, photos, and all the small pieces of technology that challenge you when you're figuring it out by trial and error. Just an idea, but one I think your new cohort would greatly appreciate.

Flexibility: The unanticipated events during the trip to India and the reflections on these events upon my return are what have been most meaningful to me...and they form the core of the instructional strategies that I have created for students. My advice to this year's group is simply to be open to the unexpected.

Group Dynamics: Actually, what I continue to remember about that experience is that it was truly incredible, that so many people worked so very hard to make it as wonderful an experience as possible and it exceeded all my very high expectations. Putting 16 people together in close quarters together for 5 weeks who don't know each other is always an exercise in patience and adjustment, and that was no exception!

Bring your computer: The value of having a computer, netbook or laptop, was immense, but so was the cost for internet at most hotels! However, we became creative and quick about using 2 hours here and there and sharing 24 hours.

Gift giving: Many people brought mostly kids' gifts, and several small things that were momentos from their states that we felt sheepish if not embarrassed to give to some of our esteemed guests. Having a few more substantial gifts would have been appropriate. Maybe

folks can pool money in Madison after seeking advice from Girish, and then buy some nice coffee table books.

More on gifts: Some more appropriate gifts that we might have brought would have been: a Native American basket from Arizona, a small decorative plate from your state (a friend brought a pewter plate from South Carolina that was prized by the recipient), nice pen and pencil set, something that is made from products your state is known for - copper in AZ or a dream catcher or kokopelli which are popular Native American arts and are small and light. Thinking of a more substantial gift that might reflect our culture or something special about where we are from. I hope this helps some. What didn't work was cheap gifts, calendars, t-shirts, sports baseball caps, etc.

Tell people to each bring 2 (or more) gifts valued at about \$25 along with materials to wrap them. Along with this request that they bring about \$20-\$30 worth of school supplies. Our gift giving last year was abysmal!!!! It was really quite embarrassing to give the speakers the trinkets we brought along out of ignorance. Look at the schedule and divide the number of speakers by the number of participants. Gifts that are typical from their state or "nice" and in that price range are needed

Rooming: Most people liked switching roommates for each city.

Clothing: Most people brought too many clothes, too heavy of clothes, and jersey cotton knits never dried. People should bring less and lighter clothes.