Ep #172: India, Nepal & Bhutan: Pam's Travel Tips

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg

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Alex: If visiting India is on your bucket list, stay tuned. My mom is here to share all about her recent trip to India. Spoiler alert, she loved it.

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Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Pam: And I'm Pam, Alex's mom. Let's talk points.

Alex: All right. Well, as you can tell, Jess isn't here with us. She's actually on her safari in Africa right now. So it's just the two of us, just my mom and I. And my mom is going to be talking about her trip to India. She has talked about it nonstop since she returned. And I'll be honest, India has not been on my bucket list, but maybe after today's episode, that will change. So Mom, why don't you tell us how this whole trip came about?

Pam: Well, when I was in my late teens, I've always been a reader. I love to read. And when I was in my late teens, I got on this kick, I was reading all these books about India. So one of my favorite books was called The Far Pavilions. So I read a lot about India. I read about their caste system, about how they did their crematoriums, their marriages, so many things. And I was just always so fascinated by their culture. And so it was always in the back of my mind, "Ah, I kind of think I'd like to go to India."

Now, I am a person who most of the time is really good at planning my own vacations. I plan them. I can go to multiple countries, I can pick out my hotels, my trains, everything. And I do really well with that. But there have been a few places I've wanted to go that I'm like, "Eh, I don't think I want to plan that one out." They're just a little bit more complex. Maybe the country isn't as stable. I

just don't have, I just don't know anything about it. And so it kind of gives me pause to say, "Mmm, you might do that trip with a tour group."

And so while I don't do that very often, maybe once every three years or so, it has worked for me in the past. I did one to China because we were going to China, Hong Kong, Bali on this. I didn't want to figure out China at all. Machu Picchu with going to the different cities in Peru, we were also doing the Amazon, we were doing Cusco, a lot of things that they offered that I knew I wasn't going to be able to make happen. So it made sense to do a tour with that. And then my husband and I did one where we went to Dubai, then we went to Israel, we went to Jordan, and we went to Cairo and down the Nile. Again, just such a complicated tour, I didn't want to do that, but yet I wanted to go to all those places.

So tour group has worked good. With this one, I found the same, I've been doing the same group. It's a faith-based group kind of. And so not probably everybody's cup of tea, but they're called Fun for Less, they're out of Utah. This one was going to India, to Nepal, and to Bhutan. And while I really wanted to go to India, I think Bhutan really was the hook that grabbed me. I thought, "I really want to go to Bhutan." I mean, that just sounded so insane. And just to go to all three of those places just seemed crazy.

And so when I had gone, the first one I did was China. And when I went there, we talked to people about which their favorite tours were through this group, and they all said that the India was their favorite. And so I kind of had it in the back of my mind and I looked for a couple of years and they weren't doing it. And then all of a sudden, two years ago, they started doing the tours to India again and I thought, okay, I need to book this, got my husband on board, and that's how it came to be.

Now, a tour can be spendy, but the way that I look at it is my plan was going to spend some of my retirement money that I saved for years as a nurse and my husband had been really good at putting away money in a 401k. And I planned to spend it on travel. Well, then I got into points and miles and I haven't dipped into any money out of that account. And so I thought, okay, I can do, I can pay

for some things. And also, I'm able to reduce the cost of that tour by not flying with the group. I book my own flights every time I do this, which is much nicer because they are traveling in economy and I am traveling in business class and paying a lot less than what their part in economy turns out to be. And then I also supplement nights in hotels where I can.

So we got there a night earlier than the tour was starting. So I did use points for that, and then we stayed two nights later. One was just because I couldn't get Q Suites out. So we stayed a couple of nights, which was really good because it was really good for getting through all the jet lag and all the trip because on these tours, they do not, it is not for the faint of heart. In fact, I look at these, these are mainly people that are at least in their 60s and I look at them and how exhausted I am and I travel all the time, I go, "They need to give us old folks some breaks." It is nonstop. It's like you get up in the morning at 8, you have your breakfast, you're either getting on a flight or you're getting on a bus, you're traveling somewhere, you're seeing lots of sites. I'd say we mainly on this trip, lots of forts, lots of temples, lots of just cultural type things, lots of rivers. It was really interesting but it's a lot, a lot of entertainment shows, out in the dunes, just lots of camel rides, just a lot. And I would be so exhausted at night. And so you get back to wherever you're staying to the hotel and you've got to have dinner and before, and then you got to hurry up and go to bed because you've got to get up first thing in the morning and do it all over again.

Alex: Yeah, I don't know how you guys do it. I mean, we had, you went on this trip not shortly after we got back from Morocco. And I was so tired from Morocco. I was like, I don't know how she's going on this trip to India. I'm so tired. So I'm just very impressed that you and all the other retirees on these group tours can go at that pace because I was tired just hearing about it.

Pam: Yeah. Well, I got so everybody else didn't like the bus rides. They would have preferred to go to the airport and go on an airplane. And there was one time we were taking a bus ride and they changed it to a flight. And I'm like, "No!" because the bus rides were relaxing to me. I could sit, I could do some work, I could sleep, I could do a few things. So I liked the bus rides. So anyway, so I

kind of just tried to make it work by going to bed early. Sometimes I'd skip breakfast and sleep in a little bit. I'd rest on the bus rides.

So our flights to Delhi, like I said, were on with points and miles. And coming and going, we went business class in Qatar. That's what I booked. We'll look at that a little bit later. That's what I booked. $8k each way for my husband and I and $299 in taxes and fees. We booked it on BA British Airways for Q Suites to Doha. I forgot how much I love Q Suites until I got on it again. And it was to Doha and then also then we were in business, which actually was very similar to Q Suites. It just didn't have the door that closed. And that was from Doha to Delhi. I especially love Q Suites and their dining on demand. The food is really good. I love the fact that you have not only your seat, you have this little extra seat that lifts up where you can store things. You've got the door that slides. Really, it really is. It gets great reviews and for good reason.

So we positioned to Dallas for that flight. And we stayed at the DFW Grand Hyatt the night before. Now I did have a really scary experience. Talk about stress day. Before when we went in to check into our flight for Qatar. Evidently, I'm going to say Qatar because people are more familiar with that. Evidently, when you go through customs through there, they look at all of your passport stamps. And the same thing happened to Jess just recently. And I haven't heard.

Alex: Her step kids.

Pam: Her step kids had this happen. So they look through there and if you get a stamp that isn't an official passport stamp, and I got one when we were in Machu Picchu. I thought, "Yeah, I want that Machu Picchu passport stamp." It's not an official stamp. Well, I got a guy there that was behind the thing and he was not nice and he was not, he scared me. I was almost in tears. This poor little old grandma and I thought, "How rude. You're making grandma cry." But he said, "I don't think you can go. I'm going to have to call India and see if they'll accept this. They may not accept this." And then he left and he's gone for like 20 minutes. He doesn't come back, he doesn't say anything. I'm getting more and more anxious.

And the other people that are there are kind of rolling their eyes at what he's doing. So I don't think it's as a big of a deal. I think it just depends how hard someone wants to be about it. Probably about between a half hour and 45 minutes, he said he had to call India to make sure it would be okay and that they'd let me in because he wasn't sure they'd let me in. Well, he came back and evidently India was fine with it. And I never had, they had never had India look at it or question it or anything. But so if you are flying out of Dallas and if you have those, just be prepared that it may take a little bit of time. And the big take home is, don't get those passport, well, they're not passport stamps. Don't get those stamps that are not official passport stamps.

Alex: Yeah, so Jess's step kids got theirs on their Alaska cruise on one of the stops. And Jess saw them get it and she's like, "I am not getting this in my stamp, my passport." But they had gotten theirs before she could tell them not to. So theirs wasn't as serious. It sounded like someone was like, "Oh, I don't know about this." And the other person's like, "No, it's fine. They can, it's not a big deal." So yeah, just to be safe, don't get the touristy stamps in your passports. Just get them when you go through customs.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah. So now I'm like, I'm scared to death because you know, Q Suites is flying out of DFW is the way that you usually do it. I'm sure I'm going to be doing that in the future. And so I know I may have to, you know, prepare myself, get there a little early and not get all shook up like I was this last time.

Alex: Yeah. No, that's really stressful when it's your first, you know, you've never had that experience and you don't really know what to expect. That is really stressful.

Pam: Well, and I didn't want to miss my Q Suite flight. That was the biggest thing. I was so frustrated. I was like, "Okay, if this flight can't get on, I'm just going home. I'm just going home."

Alex: So was this when you were checking your luggage?

Pam: Yes.

Alex: That was it then? Okay. So at check, at the check-in place.

Pam: All right. Yeah. Okay. So then, as far as using points and miles to stay in Delhi, we stayed at the Andaz Delhi. And I love Andaz. This was a really nice one, a really big one, really good service. The people there were so nice. The food was great. The first night we used 8,000 Hyatt points for our first night and they upgraded us to a suite and it was gorgeous, big, nice, wonderful. The buffet breakfast you get as globalist, just has everything. It was such a good one. Then we also stayed there and this is close to the airport. It is a great place to stay if you're flying in, flying out of Delhi.

So we stayed there two more nights on our last two nights, but I actually used a suite upgrade award and those nights it cost 9.5k for those nights, but still amazing. Staying in a suite, they had great treats there, just treated us great. They gave us a little bookmark when we left. Close to the airport, beautiful hotel, excellent service.

Elsewhere in India, although these hotels did come with the tour. So they came with the tour package, but they could have been booked with points and miles. So I wanted to tell you about the others that we stayed and how much those would have cost and what I thought about them. So most every hotel we stayed at in India was a Taj hotel. So Taj is just a luxury brand in India. And you can book them on Chase Travel. I'm not sure if the points boost comes with them. I did look at one, one of my favorite Taj hotels was the Trident that was near the airport. We spent one night there when we came back, I think we were coming back from Nepal before we went on, went, wait, no, we were when we got back from Nepal and before we got on the bus and went onward. So and it was, it would have been just 24k. It was a gorgeous hotel. Gorgeous hotel. I would stay there again. In fact, we were really disappointed that we couldn't stay there two or three nights. When we were in Kathmandu, we stayed at the Marriott Kathmandu. It was another really nice hotel. Great price for 24k Marriott Bonvoy points.

Alex: Yeah, that's really good for Marriott.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah, I think they honestly, the prices of hotels is very reasonable in most of Asia and India was no exception. We stayed at the Le Meridien in Bhutan. Bhutan is a really difficult country to get into just because they, you have to book with a tour guide. You can't go there on your own. They add a surcharge. I think it's $100 a person, could be even more than that to be there every day or night that you're there. And so it just isn't, I mean, we weren't going to go to Bhutan by ourselves. I couldn't do that. And that was 42,000 Marriott points a night.

So lots of, even though I wasn't using my own points and miles other than at the Andaz Hyatt, there is a lot of availability to use points and miles to stay at hotels, certainly tons of ways to get into the country using flying on points and miles. So really easy.

So I just wanted to go through our itinerary quickly. I know there were some people who were really interested in all of this and how to plan out an itinerary. First of all, this was a long itinerary. This was not going in and out of India quickly because we were going to Nepal and we were going to Bhutan and we were quite a few days in India. We were traveling a lot. So this was an almost three-week, it was about a three-week tour.

So the first two nights we spent in Delhi. Like I said, the first night was just at the Andaz Delhi that we paid for and then we stayed at a Taj hotel there. Really just waiting for everybody to get there. We did go out and did a tuk-tuk ride through Delhi, which was insane. They go so fast. There's people all over the place. It is really insane. I know I told a lot of people about me going on this trip and they said, "Oh, I couldn't go on that trip. There's so many poor and to see the poor people, the kids begging, this is just something I couldn't handle." And yes, it's true. And they don't like that it's dirty. Yes, it's dirty. Yes, there are cows wandering around. Yes, there is a lot of pollution, but it is fascinating. It was so fascinating. I loved seeing it all.

It was hard with the children that are begging not to give them money. Our guides asked us to please not do that because it propagates the fact that

parents know that their kids can make a lot of money by this and so they keep them out of school. And so they encouraged us not to. There were a couple times I did a couple, just had to, I bought something from a couple, but I tried to keep those heart strings in check.

But I was able to look past some of the stuff of some of the reasons people don't want to go to and see the beauty of the country, see the beauty of the people. The people love, love, love Americans. We are like all Kardashians to them. Everywhere we went to, they would ask us if we could take if they could take pictures with us. And constantly we were taking pictures with groups. People would hand their babies to people and ask if they would get a picture with their baby. If we were in the bus, every we'd go by, everybody that was on the street would be pointing. Now, I would have thought that India and especially Delhi would be used to more Americans or Europeans, we wouldn't stand out so much, but evidently, we still stand out. And certainly as we got out of Delhi, then we stood out even more. But they were all so kind.

So one night there, then we went to Kathmandu, Nepal. The main reason to go to Kathmandu was we saw temples, we saw forts, we saw some really interesting things, but the main purpose was to get in a plane and fly by Everest. And luckily we were on the right side because the people on the other side flew by Everest first, and they, but when we did the turn, we were really close to Everest. And it was, I forget what it's called, the steps. Oh, it's a famous hiker, famous Sherpa. But I mean, you could see everything. It was really, really fascinating. I love that because again, I've read a ton of books about Everest. I've read everything that I could read about Everest, not that I'd ever want to hike it. I think those...

Alex: You're not going to hike it?

Pam: No, I think those people are crazy. And there are people that in Nepal when we got on our flight, there were people that were hiking, that were going to go on a different flight and they were going to hike to the base camp. That would be really interesting. If I was younger, I would certainly think that would be something that would be interesting to do.

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Okay, so we came back to Delhi, spent one night at that amazing Trident hotel that's near the airport and then we got on the bus. The bus took us to Varanasi, which where the Ganges River was. This to me was one of my favorite locations and things to do too. Ganges River is really a holy river. It's known for, you know, they, they have the crematoriums there, they throw the ashes in the river. The women bathe there in the river with the ashes. We saw the first night we went to this very famous holy ceremony. And it was really interesting. And then the next day we got up early in the morning at like sunset and saw the Ganges River.

Alex: You mean sunrise?

Pam: Sunrise. Yeah. I wish it was sunset. I was tired. We got up at sunrise and floated down the Ganges and saw the crematoriums. Now, not everyone loved that part. I have read so much about the crematoriums and about the pyres, even about how they used to when a person was a widow, they put, they'd burn them with their husband. So I just thought it was fascinating, very ritualistic. We could see the whole ritual. I won't go into what the rituals are. I'll just say they are very, very interesting. I could talk forever about them because I thought this was just fascinating. Seeing another culture and what they do for burial or what they do for anything that's different than what we do to me is one of the most fascinating things about travel and I was amazed and yeah, that was, it was great.

But that we were only there for a night. Then we got on the bus and went to Agra and that is where the Taj Mahal is. Now, that was very interesting. I will say that there was a lot of pollution that day there. I'm assuming it was pollution. And so it was hard, you could see it, but it was just wasn't this clear blue sky, what I was really expecting. But it is a symbol of India and many different people from different parts of India go there to make a pilgrimage. There were a lot of people there and these people were really shocked at us because they were coming from other outside areas where they didn't see a lot of Americans or Europeans. And this is where babies were handed off for pictures and people were really fascinated with us.

From there we went to Jaipur, and we spent two nights again at another Taj hotel. There's a really great fort there. Again, in all of these, I'm not going to tell you the different forts, the different temples we went to, we just did a lot of them. Jodhpur for a night. And then we went to Pushkar. Pushkar is where they have the Pushkar Camel Festival and it's well-known, people come to buy horses, they come to, I don't know if they come to buy, it's called Camel Festival. Mainly to me, it was the Camel Festival because everywhere we were taken on these by a camel on, I can't even think of what you would call it. It was just kind of a flat piece of wood. It was almost like a raft that had wheels and it was led by a camel. And so your camels are all over the place and they aren't comfortable. Those are not comfortable things to be on. But that's what we did there. They have a huge fair there.

There is a, we walked through the town and it was the most insane experience I've ever had in my life. You were literally butt to butt to people walking through here. I have never been in a crowd like this. Like you're holding on to your purse, there's then all of a sudden a motorcycle's trying to get through and you think there's no way you could get through. There is we are right, we are butt to butt. You are almost fearing for your life. And then you've got some 90-year-old lady putting her arms in front of you trying to get through. You think this is not going to happen, honey. It was really insane.

Alex: How did you guys all stay together? Do you hang on to each other?

Pam: You really, usually you really hang on to each other. And like I said, you are literally, you could hardly get a piece of paper through people. I have never been in an experience like that before. And it was scary, exhilarating, and I loved it. It was, it was crazy. It was nuts.

So we did that and we did have a desert dune experience where there was dancing and the hotel that we stayed at had, you know, most of them had swimming pools and we were there for two nights. It was a little more low-key. I actually missed an event so that I could just stay back and just lay by the pool and relax. I really needed it, we were midpoint here.

We then went to a real palace, the Samode Palace. We spent two nights there. It was insane. So we get to the city and we get on our camel rides, again, the same camel rides, again, not comfortable. They've got it's at night, they've got torches that are the person that's leading us has these torches and we're going through town and everybody's coming out of the town to see us, to wave to us, the little kids are all excited. I wished I'd had candy to toss out to them. I felt like I was on some famous float. We get to the palace.

Alex: You felt like you were like in a parade, a Thanksgiving Day parade.

Pam: Yeah. So we get to the palace, they have a red carpet that they've rolled out. We've got, you've got girls there, Indian girls all dressed up that are throwing flower petals on us and all of a sudden fireworks are lit off in the sky. It was amazing about this. It was so crazy.

Alex: Sounds like you're like royalty or something coming into the palace.

Pam: It was. It was insane. If you can stay there, I don't know how expensive it is. I don't know anything about it, but it honestly was a real palace. Our experience at dinner there was outside. The fanciest China, again, fireworks, girls doing the dancing. It was really an experience. And I know that they everybody, they did, what were they playing? There's oh, they were going to play cricket. So a lot of the people, especially the guys went to play cricket the next day. And I just stayed, I needed to catch up on work and I just decided to stay in the hotel. And the room I was in was so fancy. I remember taking pictures and say, "This is my office for today." It was unbelievable. It was so nice.

After this, we went back to Delhi, spent one night in a Pullman hotel. That again is something you can get used for with points and miles. I've stayed at them, stayed at one in Australia, no, New Zealand before.

And from there we went on to Bhutan. We spent two nights at the Hotel Pemako Timphu, which was an amazing hotel and two nights at the Le Meridien, which again, you can use Marriott points. Bhutan was gorgeous. Alex, you'll relate to it being looking like Northern California. I mean, the mountains, the greenery. And

this is so different because here when we were in India, there's a lot of dirt, a lot of dryness, not the beauty of Bhutan. It was, it was amazing. It was absolutely gorgeous.

And we saw a lot of sites there, but the highlight, the main purpose of going to Bhutan was to hike Tiger's Nest. Tiger's Nest is a monastery on a 3,000-foot high cliff. You can't even figure out how they were able to, it's just really hangs out there. You're like, "How did they even build this?" This is amazing. And it's at a 10,000-foot elevation. It takes about four to six hours to walk up there and back. It's very steep. You can use horses for part of the way and then walk, but it was, I don't know, I felt like superwoman when I got through with it. I was tired, the elevation was exhausting. So we would have to stop, but you know, here we are again, all of us old people, the bulk of them, and some of them that probably shouldn't have done it, did it and it was gorgeous, absolutely a highlight of one of my travel experiences.

Alex: Yeah, that's really cool. I have a quick question, Mom. Remind me, when you were going on this trip, getting your, was it your visa that was difficult to get?

Pam: Yes. So they can get, the company can get you your visas.

Alex: Was that for Bhutan or Nepal?

Pam: Um, it was for or India? It was for India. So they can get you your visas. My problem was they wanted to have the visa for six weeks.

Alex: No, your passport.

Pam: My passport. Yeah. They wanted to have my passport for six weeks.

Alex: You have to send in your passport.

Pam: Yes. And I'm like, "I don't have a chance to do that. I don't have time to do that. I need my passport because I'm traveling too much." So it got to be kind of a problem. So I sent, I did, I tried with your dad's first, sent his off. It took, they

had to make a couple corrections on it and then we got it. And I thought, "Okay, this is doable. This is doable in two weeks. I have a two-week period. I can do it." And so that's what I did. My backup plan was to just fly to Washington, DC just to take care of the passport and fly back. And this, I think it was, it was a Nepal, it was a Nepal one that we were having that we were having the that was the problem.

Alex: So people will need, if they're going to do a trip like this, they'll need to plan ahead. They'll need to get a visa. It's not something where it's like, "Oh, I can just get my visa the day before online like it is with some countries." You'll need to plan ahead and be without your passport for a bit, it sounds like.

Pam: Yes. I had to send mine in and you know, and it came back and I believe, so that was Nepal. I believe the one from Bhutan, they just did for us and the one to India wasn't quite as bad. And I didn't have to send my passport in for that. It was Nepal one I actually had.

Alex: So if you're planning to go to any of these places, you'll just want to do some research beforehand. And especially with Nepal, it sounds like.

Pam: Definitely. Yeah, exactly. So then after Bhutan, oh, oh, I got food poisoning the night before we left for Bhutan. So I woke up. I wasn't feeling very good. So I wake up about 2:00 and I'm just like running back and forth to the bathroom. I'm vomiting. It's all it's a mess. So I was really nervous. I was like, "I can't stay in Bhutan by myself. This isn't like staying in California by myself."

Alex: It's like you're on a tour. The tour is going to go without me.

Pam: So I was really worried. So I started taking some Imodium. A girl on the thing had really strong Imodium that she'd got because she'd had trouble at one point there. And I don't know what caused it. My husband and I ate the exact same things the night before. So I'm not sure. And when we got to the airport, we just asked if I could be switched to a seat close to the bathroom and they were kind enough to do that. And I didn't have any problems. So but that was a little hard.

Alex: That's stressful.

Pam: Yeah. We then spent our last two nights at the Andaz and our flight from Delhi to Doha was delayed and it turned out that we were not going to hit that flight for our Q Suites coming home.

Alex: So the flight from Doha to Dallas, you weren't going to make that connection?

Pam: We weren’t going to make that. So we didn't know what was going to happen for sure. So they did tell us, we were we were really close in cutting it. We kept hoping, "Oh, please, please, please, let us make it, let us make it."

Alex: What was your flight delayed for? Was it just like...

Pam: I'm not sure what it was.

Alex: Okay. Yeah. You know how they sometimes they don't tell you exactly. Yeah, yeah. But it was just like, yeah.

Pam: Yeah. So we were really nervous, but I got to tell you, Qatar handled this better than I could ever have imagined somebody handling the situation. We got off, we had probably about 10 minutes before they were going to leave. We were hoping they were going to hold the flight. They, when we got off, we found out that no, they weren't doing that. And but there was a representative for...

Alex: Like your flight was leaving 10 minutes after you landed or boarding?

Pam: Leaving.

Alex: Leaving. Oh, yeah.

Pam: Yeah. So they, there was a representative meeting all of us, at least all of us business class people. I don't know, I'm not sure what happened with the other. They had a...

Alex: So it wasn't just you guys, there was a lot of people impacted by this.

Pam: Yes. And so they had us, they had, they told us to go somewhere, they had our flights completely scheduled for the next day. We were flying, unfortunately here, I think we flew, I can't remember we flew to London. It might have been cute, but it was AA coming back then. So it wasn't as, wasn't as good a flight. That was disappointing, but they the good news is they had it all taken care of.

Alex: And you were still flying in business class?

Pam: Yes, still in business class. They had actually already booked us into a hotel in Doha, really nice hotel. We actually got a suite. They gave us, they provided for our transportation to the hotel and back to the airport. Gave us money for dinner and free breakfast. So I mean, not the greatest. I would have loved everything to turn out, but I'll tell you what.

Alex: But you didn't have to scramble like, "What are we going to do? What are we going to do?" They literally said, "Here's what we're going to do. Here's..."

Pam: They did everything.

Alex: That's so nice.

Pam: I was completely, completely impressed.

Alex: How long was your connecting flight before, like if there was no issues? How long was your connecting flight?

Pam: It was probably about three, two hours, two to three hours.

Alex: Okay. That makes me nervous because I when I come home from Maldives, I have a connecting flight and I think we only have an hour and a half to Doha.

Pam: You'll be okay. As long as the flight goes, yeah.

Alex” And if not, I know they will take great care of us.

Pam: And I think they took care of the other people too. I'm just, you know, maybe not quite as well, but anyway.

So here's some hints that I have for you all about traveling to India, these places. Again, like Alex covered, just be aware of the E visas. Make find out what you need to do, give yourself plenty of time. Oh, this was a weird thing. Keep your boarding passes every time you go, especially if you're going through the Delhi immigration. Every time that we were going through customs, they wanted to see our boarding passes for the flight we just got off on, which I usually don't pay any attention to. And in fact,

Alex: I've had that happen a couple of times other places and I'm like, "Oh, I better find that. I'm glad I have it."

Pam: Yeah. Yeah, happened to me in Peru. I didn't have mine. I looked it up on my computer and then for some reason they didn't ask for mine, although they asked for your dad's. So keep them. We took US dollars or a credit card and that was accepted everywhere except from except for Bhutan. So, you know, we didn't have to have rupees.

Alex: Did most take credit card or do would you say, "No, you need to have some American dollars as well?"

Pam: Most took credit card. I'd say Bhutan was the one place where there were, there was a little bit more trouble with that. So, like I said, people love Americans. They are so, so kind, just felt safe, felt wonderful, really enjoyed interacting with all of them. Bring Kleenex when you go to these places. Not

every bathroom has toilet paper. So bring Kleenex and I brought lots of $1s and $5s for tips.

Some of the highlights for me were the tuk-tuk rides in the middle of the cities. We did that several times. Fast, you're going through, you're just like boom, boom, just seeing everything so quickly. The camel carts were at first, I really liked them. They but then they got so they weren't very comfortable. Unfortunately, I would say the food wasn't a highlight for me. I don't like spicy food. I'm a little bit, I wish I was that foodie who liked to go to countries for all their food, but I'm one of those dang picky eaters. So, but I heard from everybody that isn't, the food was amazing.

Taj Mahal was great. Again, the Varanasi and the Ganges River. I love just watching the children and the loving families. They're just like us. They're happy, but you know, it's so amazing. They are so happy and joyful. You know they have very little and to me that's just awe-inspiring. Pushkar was amazing, seeing all the forts and temples, flying past Everest and staying at a palace. All in all, it was an exhausting trip, but it's a trip I will never forget.

Alex: Yeah, it sounds amazing. It sounds like a whole just cultural experience that you got to have that's different than, you know, you can't really have that same experience here. So it just sounds really awesome.

Pam: Yeah. So while I'm still not a fan of spicy food, I absolutely loved the culture of the countries that we visited and I loved the people. Saving money on an expensive trip through the use of points and miles was something I am always grateful for. So if you found this episode helpful, share it with your friends and family and please leave us a review.

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