



Aarohi

Volunteers Pack

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This document was created by Lucy Lloyd-price (UK), Jodie Giles (UK) and Bernadette Sigg (CH) in 2006. Please use it as a 'rough guide' to volunteering at Aarohi. Please edit and add to this guide and then send it on to future volunteers. These are just some suggestions....

1. Injections

Best thing to do is to go to your local travel clinic and get advice – Nomad Travel Clinic has branches all round the UK. Most of the injections that they offer – you can get free through the NHS at your local GP. Advice varies hugely – we did not get Japanese Encephalitis but we did get Rabies (3 shots over 1 month). (I am not certain how important that is, Rabies is uncommon in the mountains and in case of dogbite by a Rabid dog, you could get the vaccination later too.)

If you have a HIV test result, take a copy with you (for the registration in India)

2. Healthy guts

We have been taking acidophulus (good for your gut flora). If you want to take this supplement, then get some advice from a health food shop and start taking it 1 month before you come out here. Buy a brand that does not need to be refrigerated.

While you are staying in Peora, learn how to make 'curd' or dahi (live yogurt) and eat on a daily basis to keep your guts healthy. You will need little bit of dahi to start off (a teaspoon) so ask a staff member or you can buy dahi from Mamaji and Puran's shop (**or get it free from Seema's kitchen**). Then buy ½ litre of milk (again available from Mamaji's shop or try and arrange a regular delivery). There are many ways of making dahi – here is one method - heat up the milk in a pan until simmering, then let it cool until room temperature. Once at room temp, mix with starter and cover. Take no more than 1/3 of a teaspoon as starter for one to glasses of milk. Keep the container in a warm place. Leave for 8 hours or so and then your curd will be ready.

3. Water

People tend to deal with water in different ways – either bring to a boil and then boil for 20mins or add some form of water purification tablets (iodine or chlorine) or do both. Bring water purifying tablets out with you, chlorine tablets are available in Delhi from pharmacies.

4. Mosquitoes

We were advised to take anti-malarial tablets from travel clinics in the UK but once out here stopped taking them as local volunteers and health workers said that there was no need to take anti malarials.

In Switzerland we received the suggestion, not to take malaria prophylaxis for Delhi (protect with Odomos ointment or buy an `ALL OUT` kit from a local pharmacy) and the hills are too high for Malaria. But take a prophylaxis with you, if you plan to travel around.

We have also been taking Vit B1- B12 complex which is meant to repel mosquitoes – available at health food shops (Holland and Barrett).

5. Travellers cheques and money

We have been using AMEX travellers cheques which you can change at various places. We have changed them at The State Bank of India in Nainital, which is on the Mallital end of the Mall. Other volunteers have been able to change travelers cheques at the State Bank of India on the Mall in Almora.

There are two ATMs in Almora on the Mall Road and we have been able to withdraw cash at The State Bank ATM next to the Shikhar Hotel on a number of occasions with a visa card. However other volunteers have had problems withdrawing money on a mastercard.

At Aarohi, we would advise you to keep your important documents and cash with the cashier in the office safe and keep a small amount of Rupees on your person or in your room. Although most people are honest, there have been incidents of petty thefts. You could take Indian Rupees as an advance from the cashier after discussing the matter with the Secretary of the organization.

6. Visa and Registration

Visa:

From the UK:

In person: Indian High Commission, Aldwych in London – start queuing at 7.30am (visa hours are between 8.30-12 noon). If you are staying for less than 6 months, then the easiest and most hassle-free visa to get is a standard 6 month multiple entry tourist visa for 30 pounds sterling. If you go in person then you will need to take passport, the money in cash and 2x passport photos. Again we had lots of conflicting advice about which visa we needed prior to getting it in person (3 different opinions from 3 different consuls).

By post: if you send off for the visa, then you have to pay by banker's draft or postal order. Look at www.hci.org.uk - nb visas are valid from date of issue and leave plenty of time if you are applying for your visa by post.

When filling out the form, write Dr Sushil Sharma, Aarohi, Village Satoli, PO Peora Via Mukteshwar, Uttarakhand, India down as a reference.

From Switzerland:

India embassy in Bern. You can download all the papers from the internet (www.indembassybern.ch). The best is, you go with all the papers, 4 passport photos and the passport to the embassy. You also need an invitation-letter form Aarohi and an envelope with a stamp of 5 sFr. and your address on.

(Visa: about 120 sFr.)

Registration in India:

If you stay longer than 6 months in Aarohi, you have to make a registration in Nainital with the local Intelligence office. For this bring with you: 4 passport photos, the passport and 2 copies of it, a letter from Aarohi with a description of your work and sometime they ask for a HIV test! Ask at the Aarohi office for guidance. This needs to be done immediately after arrival.

We paid Rs. 1000/- for the registration.

7. Amenities in Peora / Satoli (shops etc)

There are a few shops in the villages selling vegetables, fruits, spices, rice, lentils, biscuits, noodles, chocolate (in the form of kit kats and munch), mango juice, fizzy drinks. Better fruit and vegetable selection in Almora, Bhowali and Nanthukan (last two towns are on the road between Kathgodam and Peora).

Beyond the ISD/STD phone shop (in Peora) is Niraj's shop – you can buy washing powder, soap, Nutrela (soya chunk), coffee sachets and all sorts from here.

Dairy: Mamaji's (a shop in Peora next to the bakery) sells milk, butter and dahi (yogurt) or arrange milk delivery through local family. We have been able to get Aanchal (milk in a bag) from the tea shop at the top of the path to Sitla (via Ashram) where it meets the road next to the big Ashram sign.

There is a bakery which sells bread and you can even ask the baker to bake cakes if you give him the cake mix in a pan. You can also get yeast at the baker's.

In Sitla, you can buy chana (chickpeas) from Kapil's tea shop and we have been able to buy cornflakes as well.

From Aarohi's Nature Shop, you can buy dried herbs, apricot oil, apricot scrub, soap and various other gifts (shawls, woolens)

Most others things you can get in Almora!

Phone:

If you go beyond the bakery towards the Inter College, there is an ISD/STD phone shop which you can make international calls from. You could use the office phone at the going rental or try and get a local SIM card if you have a mobile phone. The SIM could be purchased for Rs. 300/- to 400/- and you could either sell it or gift it to someone when you leave.

8. Home comforts..... (for all those things that you miss)

Mukteshwar

Mukteshwar is a lovely quiet town, which is a 3-4 hour walk from Peora. If you go on a clear day, you will have fabulous views. There are two really good grocery shops and an ISD phone booth. Wear decent walking shoes and take lots of water and snacks.

How to get there....

Get the 7.00am or 8.00am bus towards Haldwani and get off at Sitla (should cost about 7Rs – 10 minute ride). On the bus.....go past Kapil's tea shop and then jump out at the next tea shop after Kapil's where the road forks and there is a sign to the 'Sitla Estate'. If you get the bus, this cuts out 1hr of the journey up the steep path to Sitla via the ashram.

Take the fork signposted 'the Sitla Estate' and cut through Sitla village towards the primary school. Then carry on walking on the road, once past 'the Sitla Estate' there is a police post and then look out for an old colonial cattle shed on the left. Opposite the shed is a path that veers off to the right – follow this up to Mukteshwar (semi steep climb) for another hour or so.

Once in Mukteshwar – behind the temple there is an amazing ravine with breathtaking views.

You will pass the post office on your left opposite the dispensary (aerogrammes and stamps available.) Keep walking past roundabout and veterinary institute, then ISD phone booth is round the corner on the right.

In the bazaar – there is a restaurant, which is also a sweet shop next to the grocery shops for lunch. The two grocery shops have ice cream, chocolate, pasta, nice biscuits, squash, juice, shampoo, toiletries, baking yeast, toilet paper and all sorts.

Papparsali

Papparsali is a small village outside Almora. It is a 40 minute walk or catch a jeep heading towards Binsar via Papparsali and Kasar Devi. There is a great cafe called Pugmark which has European and Indian items on the menu including falafel and chocolate cake which you can enjoy on the roof terrace. There are a few guesthouses as quite a few foreigners stay here including Tara's Guesthouse, Deodar Homestay, Khims', Bhists'. Have a look around and find something that suits your budget. Tara's has a grocery shop with Aarohi products as well as tahini, peanut butter and many other treats. There is also a cyber cafe, ISD booth and small cafe at Tara's. Tara's Guesthouse contact details are tel 05962 231036. In Pugmarks, there is a map of the local area including Kasar Devi which details all the local guesthouses and cafes.

9. Communication

Phone:

We brought a mobile phone out with us and then bought an Indian SIM through Joshi in Almora. This is definitely the best way to stay in touch with family and friends. Make sure you get an Uttarakhand SIM if you are spending the majority of your Indian trip in Uttarakhand. If you buy a Dehli SIM, then it will cost you to receive calls and texts when you are in Uttarakhand as you will be on 'roaming'. You will need the following documents to buy an Indian SIM – (photocopy of passport, passport photo and letter stating permanent address.) Ask the office for a letter on headed paper stating that you are living in Satoli/Peora/Satkhoh depending on where you accommodation is.

You buy a prepaid SIM (tariffs – Rs 5 overseas SMS, Rs 1 Indian SMS, Rs 1 per minute to call within Uttarakhand. Outside of Uttarakhand, it will cost you to receive texts and phone calls). Your family and friends can buy cheap calling cards from home and call you on your mobile and it won't cost you anything when you are in Uttarakhand. It will cost you Rs 1 per minute to receive calls when you are outside Uttarakhand on roaming.

There are ISDs in every town including Mukteshwar and even in some of the bigger villages including Peora.

Email:

We have managed to pick up emails on a couple of occasions in the office. This is a slow process (dial up) and depends on a number of different factors (laptop availability, electricity, operational phone line). Normally we wait until a trip into Almora where there are plenty of cyber cafes. Likewise there are cyber cafés in Nainital.

Laptops and Pendrives:

If you are volunteering for a while (3months plus) it might be worth bringing a laptop with you to download photos, listen to music and for work purposes. You can get by without a laptop. There are 3 PCs with CD Rom Drives and USB ports to read pen drives). If the nature of your work involves writing large documents, then bringing a laptop is probably a good idea. Bring a pen drive – these are excellent for storing drafts of emails, PDF documents and your work etc.

Post:

There are two addresses that you can give for correspondence and to receive packages;

(i) Village post office

c/o Aarohi, Village Satoli, PO Peora via Mukteshwar, District Nainital, Uttarakhand
263138 INDIA

(ii) C/o Joshi in Almora

c/o Aarohi, Joshi PCO, The Mall, opp main Post office, Almora, Uttarakhand 263081
INDIA.

Aerogrammes are available from the main PO in Almora and PO in Mukteshwar (cost Rs 8.50). Standard airmail cost Rs 15 to Europe.

Packages: We have sent parcels from the main PO in Almora and Delhi – they have arrived home. If you are sending parcels from Delhi, you can get these packaged and bound with cotton outside main post offices. There are different options for sending packages (listed most expensive to cheaper options) – speed post, airmail, air/sea post, sea mail.

N.B You can use Joshi's address for post, he can also arrange train tickets, SIMs and top-up. His contact details are: 05962231507 (landline) or (0)9897580205.

10. Getting Around – Transport

How to get to Aarohi....Getting from Delhi to Satoli

Via Train to Kathgodam then taxi

Go to New Delhi Train Station to book train tickets – there is a booking office for tourists above Platform 1. If you use this booking office, make sure you take an ATM slip or receipt of changing traveller cheques with you as you will have to produce this on making a train booking.

We have been traveling by second class sleeper which means you get a berth. However traveling second class AC is more comfortable. Get an upper berth – less disturbances and more sleep. Trains can get booked up very quickly so the best thing to do is book your tickets early.

The Ranikhet Express arrives at 10 am and usually departs from Platform 3 of Old Delhi Station. It sets off at 10.40 pm and arrives in Kathgodam at 6am. At Kathgodam, you can ask Aarohi to book a taxi for you. Dinesh (Taxi No. UA04 5969, Mobile No 94121 31791. Prefix Country code (0091) from outside India and (0) from outside the state) will meet you at the station holding a sign saying 'Aarohi' and charge Rs 850. The Kathgodam – Satoli journey takes an average of 3 hours.

You can get out at Haldwani and then get a bus to Peora (final destination of bus is Morna via Nanthukan). Bus leaves at 8 am from KMOU bus stand in Haldwani and takes 4-5 hours and costs Rs 70 (ask for Mona bus).

Return Trip -Kathgodam to elsewhere

Book train tickets through Joshi in Almora.

Book taxi – call Dinesh or bus to Haldwani – get off at Kathgodam or Haldwani (7.00am, 8.00am or midday/12.30pm) Rs 70.

If you have time to kill in Kathgodam and need to eat – there are a couple of places Udipi (South Indian, just out of town on Kathgodam-Peora road) or Hotel Reelaxinn (5mins walk from station) has ice creams and nice bathrooms!

Getting from Satoli to Almora

Several options including:

1. Private taxi 800Rs

2. Morning shared jeeps

There are two jeeps (Mahinder who lives in Satkhol and guy from Ramgarh). Stand on the road at 06.40am – it will cost you Rs 30 for one way. Sometime they will drop you

off at Quarab (bridge) on the way so this should only cost Rs 20, then catch a bus or shared jeep. If they do go all the way to Almora, then they will drop you on other side of the ridge from Joshi's shop.

Return Journey via shared jeep (Mahinder and Ramgarh driver). They leave at midday from drop-off point (other side of ridge from Joshi.) Sometimes they will drop you off at Morna (only pay Rs 20) and then you can get a bus to Peora (Rs 10) or walk (just over an hour.)

3. By foot and jeep

If the morning jeeps are full, then walk down to Talla Peora. Take footpath opp. Aarohi office by shops. Pass Aarohi Bal Sansar, then veer off to the right down the hill to Talla Peora (there are about 3 different paths) – best to go with someone first time or ask for directions. Go right down to the road and wait by tea shops. You can catch a passing jeep or bus coming from Mona to Almora.

4. Bus

The buses from Haldwani end at Mona and there are also buses from Almora to Mona. There are normally a few jeeps that travel between Mona to Almora (via Talla Peora and Deari).

5 Aarohi transport

You could hitch a ride on a bike or with the Aarohi car depending on availability. There is unusually one trip to Almora every week.

If there are no jeeps or buses at Talla Peora....then you can walk down to Quarab (1.5 hrs – 2 hours) but take lots of water, snacks and wear decent walking shoes. This walk is better early in the morning when there is more shade. N.B After Deari there aren't any tea shops.

Getting from Satoli to Nainital

Via bus (7.00am, 8.00am or midday bus) to Haldwani. Get off at Bhowali (Rs 35) and then shared jeep or bus to Nainital (Rs 10).

Buses from Bhowali to Peora (via Nanthukan) are at midday and 3.00pm – Kali Travels. If you are stuck in Bhowali with a few hours to kill then go to the KMVN guesthouse and drink some tea. The bus should stop here on the way to Peora – check though ! If you get stranded in Bhowali, then a private taxi back to Peora should cost around Rs 400.

11. Important things to take with you

- copy of your passport and your visa
- International Driving licence
- iodine or chlorine tablets for the water
- HIV test (if you stay longer than 6 months in Aarohi)
- Vaccination papers
- Malaria emergency medicine
- Torch
- Little bit of toilet paper (is available, but not very easy)