

Travellers Tips - the Grass Routes way ...

Before you Leave Home

Do your homework! Learn about Orissa. The more you know before you arrive, the quicker you'll be able to adjust to your surroundings and the deeper your understanding will be.

Leave as much excess packaging at home (e.g. film boxes, anything plastic) - so your hosts don't have to deal with your garbage.

Be Aware! Natural biodegradable soaps, shampoos and mosquito repellent can be purchased locally. Not only will you be supporting the local economy, but you can pack less!

Connect with different Cultures

One of the best things about travelling is making connections with people from different cultures, in authentic and mutually enjoyable ways.

- The best way to understand a culture is to immerse yourself in it! Grass Routes journeys provide opportunities to experience real life in rural villages and amongst indigenous communities. Cultures significantly different to our own can be disorientating – that's why our Local Leaders are on hand at all times. They will help you best adjust to different social environments providing that crucial bridge to deeper understanding.
- 'Cultural sensitivity' is simply a matter of respect: take your behavioral cues from the locals. You'll find it easier to slip under the skin of a place if you adopt some typical local practices. Your Grass Routes Local Leader will initiate you with appropriate communication tools to set you on the right foot. We'll give you guidelines on how to greet, meet, eat and dress like a local!
- Go with the flow. Other cultures have very different concepts of time, personal space and socially acceptable behavior. You'll find it a lot less stressful - and a lot more enlightening - if you just chill out. You might even reassess your own ideas.

Recommended Reading – great reads

Third Class Ticket, by Heather Wood

The Hungry Tide, by Amitav Ghosh

The Age of Kali, by William Dalrymple

Goddess in the Stones, by Norman Lewis

Paroja, by Gopinath Mohanty

Bondo Highlander, by Verrier Elwin

A Bride for Jagannatha, by Sisir Das

- Dress appropriately. Looking at the locals is a good way to gauge what to wear. India is typically a conservative culture; so don't flaunt your flesh. Grass Routes Journeys are mostly on the go so keep it casual and comfortable. Long-sleeves will protect you from the sun so you won't need sunscreen. Not only do you save money, you won't be polluting our waterways with harsh chemicals.
- Try to be conservative with resources such as water, food and energy - you may be depriving local people or making a negative impact on their environs.
- Buy local handicrafts and you support the local economy. Grass Routes helps revive neglected folk arts and your support goes a long way to boosting artist's morale.
- Enjoy the ancient art of bargaining: part pas-de-deux, part drama and part chess-game. It's often more about the social interaction than the final outcome. Make sure you know when bargaining is appropriate - and when it's not. Have fun with it and keep things in perspective - does haggling over that last dollar really make a difference to you?

Connecting with different cultures is all about the realization that people are the same everywhere. Join Grass Routes celebrate our natural and cultural diversity with the essential understanding we are all one.

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Credo for Grass Routes Travellers

I am grateful for the opportunity to travel and experience the world and affirm my personal responsibility to:

- Journey with an open mind & gentle heart
- Accept with grace and gratitude the diversity I encounter
- Revere and protect the natural environment that sustains all life
- Appreciate all culture I discover
- Respect and thank my hosts for their welcome
- Offer my hand in friendship to everyone I meet

It's Easy Being Green

Travelling to exotic environments and unique ecosystems is a privilege. Enjoy and learn about the natural habitat, don't destroy it. Grass Routes ensures you learn about the exceptional natural resources in order to understand how best to protect it.

- **WALKING:** Stick to the paths of the ancients. We walk on trails that have existed for centuries. Follow the footsteps of the indigenous communities living in the forest (they know the best routes) thereby keeping erosion to a minimum.
- **CAMPING:** Rather than buying bottled water, bring a strong water bottle and refill with the purified drinking water provided.
- **TOILET HYGIENE:** At Camp we set up a tent (at least 100 meters from a water source). We suggest you burn your toilet paper and cover the hole with a rock (it aids the decomposition process). If you get caught short on the walking track, alert your Local Leader – they always carry a tent peg (they make good shovels)!
- **BATHING:** Grass Routes will identify appropriate and secluded spots for bathing or swimming (always downstream from water collection points and villages).

We suggest you wear a sarong and use only natural biodegradable soaps and shampoos.

- **WILDLIFE:** Maintain safe and appropriate distances when observing wildlife. Do not intrude on the animal's space or disturb their natural movements (if you do, then you're too close!). After all, animal behavior is best revealed in its natural state!

Responsible tourism practices must be observed if we are to keep the wild places, the traditions and the eccentricities of the world. Our future sustainability depends on it.

We hope to inspire you to try a new way of travelling. Grass Routes wants to challenge your perceptions; shake you out of your comfort zone; enrich and enthrall you. Not only will you make a contribution to other people's lives, you might just change your own.

Responsible Travel & Grass Routes

Just some of the concrete ways you can join Grass Routes make a constructive contribution and have the time of your life doing so!

Few know Orissa's famed classical dance form 'Odissi' finds its origins in the folk dance form 'Gotipua'. Journey to where 'Gotipua' first began. Get to know the dancers and watch them perform. Help rescue a traditional folk art from near extinction.

Join our 'Clean Up the Beach' drive on Chilika Lake. Turn your sunset stroll into an opportunity to make a positive difference. Collect litter washed ashore and leave behind a pristine beach.

Join ex-poachers on a Nature Walk through lush grasslands. Enjoy a tranquil boat cruise and support their endeavor for a more sustainable future.