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Welcome

Dear GESI Student,

Welcome to the tenth annual Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI)! GESI began with the idea and perseverance of an undergraduate like you. It has since grown from a small experiential-learning program in Uganda exclusively for Northwestern students, into a nationally recognized model that has trained and sent over 460 students, from almost 100 colleges and universities, to nine countries for community development work throughout its existence.

GESI offers students the unique opportunity to apply their classroom learning toward addressing global challenges. Students will spend their summer working with, and learning from, our community partners across the world. Northwestern University provides students with comprehensive preparatory coursework and training, ensures a structured and supported in-country field experience, and facilitates critical post-program reflection.

This program will challenge you to think and act differently. To create change you will need to listen, ask questions, and build relationships, not merely provide solutions. We trust you’ll approach GESI with the respect, curiosity, and humility requisite to understanding people, their talents and challenges, and the role you can play to support positive social change.

GESI is one step on a path toward your personal, professional, and leadership development as well as your understanding of complex issues of consequence to the planet and its people. Throughout the program, our professors and student instructors will be in contact with feedback and encouragement; during Final Summit they will help debrief what you’ve learned. Even after GESI, our staff will be a strong support system as you use your own unique skills and passions to live lives of global social change.

We have seen this program make a tremendous impact on students’ academic pursuits, career paths, and worldview, as well as their skills in cross-cultural communication, project management, and collaboration. We are excited to join you on this journey and to see where it leads. Get excited!

Best of luck,

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Program History

Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute:

The Buffett Institute for Global Studies' mission is to prepare undergraduates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to address shared global challenges and to lead lives of responsible global engagement. Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute is a comprehensive student support center dedicated entirely to improving undergraduates' abilities to address global poverty and inequality. We help students attain tangible skills and critique academic theory through experiential learning. Through a unique set of multidisciplinary opportunities, ranging from study abroad programs to fellowships, the institute builds the capacity of young global leaders to cross borders and partner with communities to produce responsible, sustainable solutions to global challenges. We connect students to a network of individuals and organizations at Northwestern and around the world and are actively shaping a new generation of experienced, effective, and compassionate global leaders in a variety of fields. The Buffett Institute runs the Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) program. To learn about other programs and activities, visit: www.buffett.northwestern.edu

GESI History:

GESI was first conceived in 2005 by a group of undergraduate students led by Nathaniel Whittemore, then a Northwestern University junior who had recently returned from volunteering at refugee camps outside Cairo. Talking with dozens of other students volunteering and researching abroad, Whittemore realized that he was not alone in feeling a gap between the desire and ability to make a difference in the world: “The story among my peers was pretty common... tons and tons of passion and energy, a deep belief and desire to connect across cultural, religious, and national borders to make a better world, and frustration at the lack of support, infrastructure, resources, and education necessary to really move beyond our good intentions. Young people knew they didn’t have the skills or resources needed to impact the problems they were trying to solve; they didn’t even know where to get those things.”

Whittemore and a fellow Northwestern student, Jon Marino, went in search of academic training that could be combined with off-campus experiential learning to help students gain the tools they needed to be agents of change. Rather than founding another program to raise awareness of global issues, they sought to create a new type of study abroad experience that would provide the educational tools and experiences that could help students in the field, and then help students reflect on what they had learned by working at the grassroots. The program, they hoped, would provide the training and capacity-building young people would need to run, start, or participate in international development, service, and social entrepreneurship.

From these student-initiated roots, and together with support from across campus—including the Northwestern Office of the Provost, Buffett Institute for Global Studies, School of Education and Social Policy, and School of Communications—the Global Engagement Studies Institute, developed.
Who does what in GESI?

The Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) is a program, not a physical institute (despite what the name might suggest!). Whether or not you are a Northwestern student, the “acronym soup” that surrounds GESI is often confusing. It is important for you to understand the difference between each organization that helps make GESI happen so that you can communicate it effectively to your friends and family, and so you know where to turn for support (now and in the future). There are numerous partners who make important contributions to your academic, cultural, and personal experience in the GESI program.

Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute: The Buffett Institute is the Northwestern University office that runs GESI. We include people you’ve met or spoken with (Patrick Eccles, Meghan Ozaroski, Corey Portell, Jessica Smith Soto, and Emory Erker-Lynch) when applying to the GESI program. GESI is part of the Buffett Institute for Global Studies, which is run by Bruce Caruthers. Brian Hanson and Paul Arntson will be your main professors during the GESI coursework. The GESI team supports you before, during, and after your trip, in the following ways:

- **Program Arrangement and Logistics:** GESI works with the on-site teams to make arrangements for your trip. We also provide you with lots of information and supports you during the program application phase.

- **Pre-Departure Orientation and Materials:** GESI provides you with important information about your program to help you prepare for your experience. This includes resources, such as this packet, and in-person meetings related to health, safety, budgeting, travel, and academics.

- **Academic Coursework and Credit:** GESI is responsible for organizing all Northwestern coursework.

- **In-Country Support:** Your on-site team will provide support for you while abroad and should be your primary resource, but if you need additional assistant or would feel more comfortable approaching GESI staff with any matters experienced in-country, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Ozaroski, Assistant Director or Patrick Eccles, Associate Director (contact information on page 6).

- **Reintegration Support:** Upon your return, we will provide you with resources to help you transition back into campus life, as well as connect you with other returnees and opportunities.
Program Staff

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Emergency Contacts

Students will receive detailed in-country emergency contact information at the pre-departure summit in Chicago. In case of emergency, parents should call (in this order):

1. Patrick Eccles
2. Meghan Ozaroski

Parents should not call the site teams.

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HTH Health Insurance:
001-610 254-8771

University Police:
001-847-491-3456
Program Partners

The Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD):
FSD is GESI’s on-the-ground partner for sites in Bolivia, India, Nicaragua, and Uganda. FSD is a non-profit, non-governmental organization created in 1995 to offer capacity building and funding to grassroots community based organizations throughout Africa, Latin America, and Asia. A professional field staff and trained volunteers provide on-site technical training and project support, while enabling information sharing to more than 300 partner organizations around the world. FSD is GESI’s oldest partner. FSD has a played a key role in supporting the development of the GESI model over the past seven years.

Social Entrepreneur Corps (SEC):
SEC is GESI’s on-the-ground partner at the Dominican Republic site. SEC is a social enterprise that leads innovative and dynamic international internship programs. GESI students will work with SEC’s sister organization, Community Enterprise Solutions, to support the creation, development, growth and impact of social innovations focused on intelligently and sustainably alleviating poverty. Participants create sustainable impact in the field while gaining the perspectives, skills, and knowledge to become the social entrepreneurs of the future.

Both GESI partners have unique offerings based on their networks and development model. They each have a commitment to asset-based community development, provide exemplary health, safety and logistical support to our students, and are well respected locally and internationally, including by our peer universities. It is important for you to understand that each year we adapt our programming to fit the feedback of our alumni and in-country partners and to align with the learning goals of our program. Given the different cultural contexts and models employed by our in-country partners, your experience will differ from what you’ve heard from alumni. To succeed in this program (and in any international engagement), you must be flexible and open-minded. You must also listen to be surprised—something you’ll hear us say a lot during your courses. It is important that you take time to get to know students who are traveling to other GESI country sites. The experiences of your peers in different cultural contexts, working with different types of organizations, can enrich your own learning and reflections on community development, cultural exchange, and global issues.
Academic Information

What is experiential-learning?
The following are definitions of various types of experiential-learning. GESI fits most closely into the “service-learning” category, though the program incorporates elements of all of the below:

• **Volunteerism** – Students engage in activities where the emphasis is on service for the sake of the beneficiary or recipient (client, partner)

• **Internship** – Students engage in activities to enhance their own vocational or career development

• **Practicum** – Students work in a discipline-based venue in place of an in-class course experience

• **Community Service** – Students engage in activities addressing mutually defined community needs (as a collaboration between community partners, faculty, and students) as a vehicle for achieving academic goals and course objectives

• **Service-Learning** – Students engage in community service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines


What to expect at GESI Pre-Departure Coursework (June 13 - 20 or September 12-19):
The GESI pre-departure coursework at Northwestern University is an intense eight days of class. You are expected to arrive by 11 am on either June 13 (summer) or September 12 (fall); we will spend the rest of that day getting to know each other, getting to know representatives from FSD and SEC, and establishing expectations for the week ahead. During Pre-Departure, you will be in class from 9 am to 9 pm, with breaks for meals. GESI alumni will serve as student instructors, facilitating class activities and discussions. We will have many guest speakers supplementing class lectures as well; it is important that you complete all course readings before arrival. Some nights, we will assign additional (short) readings. You will need to discipline yourself so that you are able to complete these assignments and be alert and engaged for long days of class. If your group flight departs on June 21st or September 20, you will have free time that day until your flight departs for your host country. We will provide CTA cards for you to get to the airport.

Below is a sample day of class. A detailed schedule will be provided upon arrival on campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:55 am</td>
<td>Lecture by Brian Hanson on International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:55 am</td>
<td>Language lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:55 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 - 4:45 pm</td>
<td>Lecture and group activities with Paul Arntson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 - 5:55 pm</td>
<td>Guest speaker on your host country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 - 7:30 pm</td>
<td>Dinner with group or on your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Back to hostel for evening reading and sleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Information

In-Country Assignments:
We feel strongly that in a foreign context you should look to your local hosts for “expert” advice. Your interaction with GESI staff and faculty while abroad will be limited. Occasionally, GESI staff, faculty or student instructors will reply to your weekly updates (and/or other deliverables, as outlined below) with comments, questions, cautions or feedback. However, given that they are not in-country with you, their written feedback will be limited. Only you, your site team, and community colleagues can truly understand your situation and challenges in country. Please note that GESI staff are always available to discuss any program, health, safety or other concerns you have.

You will be evaluated based on satisfactory submission of the following (through Canvas):

1. Work Proposal. This should be a maximum of 2 pages; initial proposals are due within the first few weeks abroad.

2. External work plan. These are due at the same time you submit your work proposal. These should be a maximum of two pages and conform to the template provided. FSD students will also be required to submit a budget along with their proposal and work plan.

3. Weekly group reports. These are due on each of the seven Fridays while in the field. Submit these online on your group’s Canvas discussion board. Entries should be a maximum of 1 page, and should answer the following questions:
   • What you accomplished the previous week
   • What you plan to accomplish in the week ahead and who is responsible for these goals
   • What are the barriers/challenges that you are dealing with in terms of accomplishing the work plan, and interacting with your organization, community and your group

4. Field Notes. You will be given a spiral-bound reflection journal upon arrival to campus. It is your responsibility to complete at least two of the reflection activities outlined in the journal each week. You will choose from a variety of reflection topics outlined in the journal. While we will collect these journals from you at the Final Summit, you can choose to fold any page you do not want us to read and we will honor your request. We will mail the journals back to you after we are done reviewing them.

5. Final Reflection Summit Summary. In order to share your work with your fellow GESI colleagues, you will complete a summary of your work, including your rationale, process, and assessment. This will be shared with all students at the Final Summit to guide discussions.

6. Evaluations. Before you return to the US, the country site teams will complete a 2 to 3 page evaluation with you. You will also be required to submit a comprehensive GESI program evaluation electronically shortly after returning from GESI (date will be specified during Final Summit). Failure to complete the electronic evaluation will result in an “incomplete” grade appearing on your transcript until we receive your completed evaluation.

Note: There may be times when you do not have access to internet or communications for some time. If you are unable to submit any of the aforementioned assignments due to communications issue, do not worry. GESI staff and faculty are accustomed to technological delays and this will not be held against you as long as you submit any missing deliverables once your internet access allows for it.
Academic Information

What to expect at the Final Reflection Summit (August 16 - 18 or December 8-10):

Upon returning from their host-countries, students meet back on campus for a three-day Final Reflection Summit where we will reflect on some of the program's learning outcomes, including but not limited to the following:

- Understanding ethical, historical, political, economic, and/or social issues in relation to community development
- Analyzing multiple perspectives of the social issue at hand
- Taking responsibility for your own actions as they have an effect on society
- Contributing to the society through the application of new field knowledge
- Appreciating ends as well as means
- Appreciating cultural pluralism and global connectedness – as well as the challenges and opportunities of each

In addition, GESI participants from all sites share and compare geographical experiences while processing their immersion and what it has taught them about global development challenges, culture, and themselves. Students will also consider how to respond to the GESI experience by networking with professionals who are creating social change in a range of fields.

What Happens After GESI?

As the program closes, GESI transitions into the role of alumni support. GESI aspires to help students lead lives committed to international social justice. For us, this means helping our alumni find internships, jobs, or project support opportunities that allow them to continue engaging with the issues they care about most. You may always contact the GESI team for guidance and support.

Changing our worldview is an implicit goal of most service-learning programs. Unless we understand how political, economic, and judicial systems tend to favor one group over another, we will be unable to truly assist those in need.

Crisis and Emergency Procedures & Contacts:

In the event of any unanticipated crisis or emergency, it is important that you understand the action plans that your on-site staff will follow to ensure your health and safety, as well as your roles, responsibilities, and appropriate prevention and response steps.

General Policies and Preventive Measures:

• Site teams will arrange to ensure students have cell phones. You must provide your cell phone number to your on-site staff, so that you can be contacted in case of emergency. You should also program your cell phone with your country Program Director’s, GESI’s, other students’, and local emergency contact numbers.
• All students must carry the list of emergency contacts and the Emergency Card--both provided on campus during the pre-departure coursework--with them at all times. If an emergency arises and you cannot access the contact numbers in your cell phone, you should have a backup, so that you can call the emergency phone numbers.
• Contact your country Program Director first if an incident arises. They will lead you through next steps and make any necessary arrangements. If your Program Director is not available, contact another on-site contact to help you. If the incident involves your on-site administrators or if, for some reason, you cannot reach anyone on-site, contact GESI staff.
• Do not participate in any kind of rally, protest, or political manifestation.
• Report any independent travel, including a written itinerary and contact information, to your on-site administrators. Also, enter your travel information into the Personal Travel Locator in International SOS.

Scenario I: Physical or Mental Health Emergency
If you are not feeling well or are experiencing emotional distress, contact your country Program Director or other on-site administrator, and they will help you get the care that you need. You will be given more specific information at your in-country orientation.

Scenario II: Crime Committed Against a Student
If you are the victim of a crime (e.g., a robbery or assault), contact your country Program Director or on-site administrator, and they will notify you of the proper procedure for reporting the crime and if applicable, the steps for replacing stolen items. If your passport is lost or stolen, you will need to contact local police and the US Embassy.

Scenario III: Hostility Toward United States Citizens & Terrorist Acts
We monitor International SOS and the State Department for announcements regarding the safety of our students abroad. In case of emergency, we will work with the US Embassy, the State Department, and International SOS to analyze the severity of the situation. We will keep you informed of any situations that have occurred and any relevant warnings and update you about any potential risks or areas to avoid. If necessary, we will make arrangements to evacuate students to a secure and calm location far from anti-American or terrorist activity to prevent attack.

Note: You will be provided with comprehensive safety sheets and emergency contact information prior to your departure!
Cultural Adjustment

Cultural Norms & Adjustment:

Students will experience cultural differences and react to these differences (commonly referred to as "culture shock") in a variety of ways. There is a lot of helpful literature related to the cultural adjustment process, including common themes and experiences, representing phases of highs (comfort and excitement) and lows (discomfort and anxiety).

Your on-site teams will be the most important resources for helping you to navigate cultural differences and adjustment, but just keep in mind a few things:

• Culture shock is normal and however you experience it is normal.
• Intercultural adjustment not only varies by individual, but also by program. You may find that some of the traditional “low” phases may correspond with program excursions and produce a “high.”
• Culture shock can exacerbate other mental health challenges or conditions. If you have seen a therapist or psychiatrist for any mental health conditions within the past three years, be sure to indicate this on the required NU Health Assessment Form and meet with your doctor to discuss your condition in light of study abroad. If you require any special accommodations, be sure to discuss your situation with GESI prior to departure, so that we can work with on-site staff to determine what—if any—provisions can be made.
• Be aware of what you are experiencing. If you encounter any difficulties or discomfort, which prevent you from participating and being successful, discuss this with your on-site administrators or GESI staff ASAP.

Encountering Culture:

For many GESI students, witnessing extreme poverty first-hand causes a great deal of culture shock. Encounters with beggars, for example, can be a deeply unsettling experience. Richard Slimbach offers the following advice:

“Begging may be a deeply flawed method of redistributing wealth, but letting ourselves lapse into callous indifference only injures our moral sensibilities. Whether to give or not to give ultimately must be decided case by case, because much depends on our knowledge of the particular beggar and the larger social context. We simply cannot give to all beggars but neither must we refuse all. Over time, our giving probably will be selective, biased in favor of those who provide some service. Instead of our “gift” reinforcing the notion that poor folk are simply welfare wards of wealthy westerners, it can become a legitimate and dignifying form of payment for services rendered” (Slimbach , p. 188).

Bargaining is another cultural experience that can sometimes overwhelm students. Yet bargaining can be the most enjoyable of experiences abroad and we hope you’ll learn to have fun with it! Remember that if you really want something, you should plan to pay fair price, not the lowest possible price. Bargaining can be a fun way to form relationships with locals. Just be careful not to pay high prices for basic goods because it may harm locals. If local merchants can get premium prices for their goods and services from foreigners, they may be less likely to sell to their neighbors at lower, fairer rates.
You are passionate about making a positive impact while abroad, yet short-term study abroad can have long-term negative impacts if the traveler and program provider are not thoughtful and reflective about their engagements abroad. The following are a list of questions taken from First, Do No Harm: Ideas for Mitigating Negative Community Impacts of Short-term Study Abroad (Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, and Koen, 2009). These questions are meant to help you think about the unintended consequences of study abroad and foreign travel. Many GESI sites are located in areas frequented by general tourists throughout the year. We encourage you to reflect on these types of questions with your GESI groups, in your personal writing reflections, and whenever you travel abroad again. These questions can help us continue to develop programming that does not harm local communities.

- Upon arrival, figure out where your food/water/housing comes from. Do foreigners/tourists impose any hardship on local people, such as water shortages? What about garbage disposal and pollution? Is land being used for visitors rather than local needs?
- Does the economic impact of study abroad or tourism create economic inequality in the community? Do foreigners or local elites own or manage the hotels that students/tourists frequent? Are guides and drivers outsiders or wealthier members of the community? Do local prices go up as a result of the student visit? The giving of gifts can contribute to similar questions, however well intentioned—can nonmaterial gifts be given instead, or gifts to the community as a whole?
- Do student/tourist visits contribute to economies of dependency on outsiders, orienting those economies to pleasing or providing pleasure for wealthy foreigners rather than to local needs?
- Is there a season for foreign visitors to come to the area, such that student visits contribute to a boom and bust cycle in the local economy? Is there any way to mitigate this effect?
- Do outsiders’ patterns of consumption contribute to problems in the community? The “demonstration effect” of students bringing high-end travel gear, lots of clothes, spending money easily on restaurants, giving gifts, etc. may create resentment, the perception of American students as wealthy consumers with no responsibilities at home (McLaren 2006), or the desire in local people (especially youth) to leave the community so they can make money to buy similar goods and services. Even traveling on an airplane or traveling away from home can create these problems among people who do not have that option.
- Are local people excluded from any of the areas where foreigners are encouraged or allowed to go?
- Are foreign visitors well-behaved and respectful in terms of the local culture? Do they dress in culturally appropriate clothing, or otherwise commit cultural offenses that will anger, distress, or shock people in the local community? Do outsiders see culture and the “authenticity” of local people as commodities to be consumed? What other cultural impacts result from outsiders’ visits? Cultural differences in themselves are likely sources of confusion and conflict in unanticipated ways.
- Do foreigners smoke, drink, or do drugs during their visit? The effect of these behaviors can range from being poor role models for local youth to bringing new addictions to the community.
- Do students/tourists demonstrate other expressions of privilege during their visit, such as doing things “our” way, eating “our” food, playing “our” music, requiring things to be done on “our” schedule?
- How well are students prepared to understand the community they are visiting? Do they bring damaging stereotypes that can be countered throughout the program? These might be as narrow as “Bolivians” but for most students are more likely to be broader such as “poor people”, “indigenous people”, or “people in developing countries”, as well as racist and exoticizing images of people in out-of-the-way places.
- Are there human rights issues already present that are exacerbated by the presence of foreigners?
- Does anything about the students’ presence or activities reinforce a negative self-image for local people, for example that Americans are smarter, more competent, more attractive? Is there any way their presence could promote a positive self-image instead?
Food for Thought

To mitigate potentially negative impacts, we encourage you to honor the host community's independence and encourage self-reliance; to never impose your personal agenda when working with the community; to respect local people's visions and opinions above your own; and to be vigilant of any cultural impacts you might be having and adjust your behaviors and actions as necessary. Here are some additional tips to make the most of your time abroad and to leave a positive impact:

• Take advantage of opportunities to interact with people who are different from you.
• Engage in every activity fully, remaining mentally and emotionally present. Consider going unplugged, leaving technology like laptops and iPods aside or even at home. While technology can be helpful to keep us connected to our world and people at home, many times it ends up restricting our ability to immerse ourselves in the local community or interferes with our ability to make ourselves available to the people right in front of us. Think about ways you will travel abroad with technology and still remember to look up.
• Do not try to replicate the U.S. in your host community; avoid demanding the services you would expect at home. Observe the way things are done locally, refrain from judgment, and when you feel yourself getting irritated or judgmental, take a step back and try to understand why the locals do things differently from the way you are accustomed. Speak with locals to understand their viewpoints, listen to be surprised so that your own assumptions are challenged.
• Question your and your peers' use of words like “authentic”, “real”, “rural”, “indigenous”, and “traditional”. (“To suggest the life of a rural citizen is any more or less “real” than that of an urban citizen of the same culture is condescending and can indicate a disturbingly colonial nostalgia for a cultural experience laden with pre-development realities”) (Johnson, 184).
• Avoid the “theme park” experience, the places that were clearly designed for foreigners' amusement.
• As you meet people and form strong relationships with your hosts, remain curious about the larger global, national and local structures that exist, that recreate the poverty and inequality you are trying to grasp. Global learning must reach in both directions—toward persons and structures.
• Recognize the value of play and lightheartedness in cultivating friendships.
• Practice culturally sensitive photography: Always ask first. Be especially mindful of children, who are often readily photogenic. Photos of children are sometimes easily taken as we seek to document memorable experiences in the community, but be careful and considerate when taking kids' photos.
• Keep an open mind and heart but avoid romanticizing your experiences in host communities. Remember that below the surface of a seemingly homogenous social structure are power hierarchies, conflicting interests, and patterns of discrimination and exclusion.
• Be a listener, more than talker; a learner more than teacher; a facilitator more than leader.
• Observe, listen, and inquire rather than criticize, rationalize, or withdraw.
• When confronted with a language barrier, speak English as little as possible. Expand your vocabulary, if necessary, actively engaging community members with nonverbal communication.
• Risk making mistakes.
• “Go slow. Respect People. Practice humility, and don’t condescend with your good intentions. Make friends. Ask questions. Know that you are visitor. Keep promises even if that means mailing a photograph a few weeks later. Be a personal ambassador of your home culture, and take your new perspectives home so that you can share them with your neighbor” (Potts, 2008).
Food for Thought

Stop complaining and start reflecting!
When you catch yourself complaining, ask yourself: Can we—both hosts and guests—learn to adapt to each other? Can our differences be a source of mutual enrichment rather than separation? When we discover that things abroad are profoundly different from things at home, our natural tendency is to flee away from them. Instead of seeking to understand why certain practices irritate us, our immediate impulse is to simply spurn them as primitive and uncivilized, even immoral... “Doing so justifies our escape from the culturally disagreeable environment into behaviors where we can feel protected and affirmed: calling home frequently, sleeping either too much or too little, reading romance novels, blogging or listening to music for hours, movies...We may not “return home” in a physical sense, but psychologically we’re a world away” (Slimbach, 158-160).

Get out your journal.
Writing in an analytic mode helps us to calm down, gain some objectivity, and ask the critical questions: What provoked this reaction from me? How do locals interpret this act or event? And what does my reaction tell me about myself? Especially as we learn to put personal experiences and reactions into a larger social and theoretical context, our writing takes on a distinctive character—one that joins personal expression with cultural analysis—and encourages a more rigorous cognitive process than is common in conversation.

Think About the Six Skills of Intercultural Communication:
1. Cultivating curiosity about another culture and empathy towards its members;
2. Realizing that effective communication requires discovering the culturally conditioned images that are evoked in the minds of the people when they think, act and react to the world around them;
3. Recognizing that role expectations and other social variables such as age, sex, social and economic class, religion, ethnicity and place of residence affect the way a people act and behave;
4. Recognizing that situational variables and convention shape behavior in important ways;
5. Understanding that people generally act the way they do because they are using options that their society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs; and
6. Developing the ability to evaluate the strength of a generalization about the target culture (from the evidence substantiating the statements) and to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, internet, mass media, people, and personal observation and reflection.
Works Cited


International Program Development Study Abroad Handbook, Northwestern University, 2011.

Congratulations again on your choice to work abroad on sustainable development projects in conjunction with Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) and Northwestern University!

For many of you this experience will spark a lifelong interest in development. For others, it will be a chance to gain insights into other cultures that can only be obtained through direct experience. For all of you it will be a chance to make a lasting impact on people and communities in your host country, and an opportunity that will make a lasting impression on your life.

Many challenges await you. It is likely that the most difficult obstacles you face will not be the ones that test your technical skills or knowledge. More often it will be the difficulty of gaining the cultural competencies necessary to do successful work in a community. It will be learning to see the problems facing a region from the eyes of a community member rather than through the eyes of an outsider. Remember that culture, community, and language should guide your work as much as your own knowledge.

During your program you will represent both yourself and FSD in your community. Many people in the region that you will work in have had very little experience with people from outside their country. As such they will develop opinions of you and the work of FSD through their interactions with you or what they hear about you. We ask that you take your visibility into consideration when you make decisions about your actions in your host country.

It is the intention of FSD to provide you with a broad support network to best position you for success, but at the end of the day, it is your effort that will most influence the success of your experience with FSD. You will need to take initiative and put yourself in situations that stretch your comfort levels. You will have to work within cultural contexts that can cause extreme frustration. Many other challenges await, but at the same time you face these challenges you also have an incredible set of opportunities. Go into the experience with the willingness to listen and learn. You will find that through this willingness you will increase your ability to give to your community.

This guide has been developed to help make clear what FSD expects of our interns and volunteers and what you can expect of us. We look at your internship or volunteer program as a partnership. It is our hope and belief that clear expectations are the foundation for a solid working relationship. Please read this guide thoroughly; it contains information that is crucial to the success of your experience and our partnership.

Above all, you should feel comfortable contacting us in the San Francisco office if you need any additional support or have any questions.

Good luck!
About FSD

Values, Vision, and Mission:
At the center of the student experience are the core values, vision, and mission that make FSD the organization that it is. We ask that you understand and remember these tenets throughout your time abroad, in order to make your program a meaningful experience for both you and the communities in which you serve.

Vision: FSD envisions a world where all people have the opportunity and capacity to direct economic, social, and environmental resources toward sustainable outcomes that improve their lives and communities.

FSD’s mission: FSD achieves community-driven goals through asset-based development and international exchange in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Core Values:
- **Start with Assets, Not Problems:** We take an asset-based approach to development work. We begin by listening to the priorities set by our community-based partners at our international program sites. We then identify and utilize existing assets and capacity to address those priorities.

- **Motivate Community Ownership:** We partner with leaders, organizations, and stakeholders committed to change, action, and social justice. We stress community ownership and participation before launching initiatives, especially in our volunteer and student programs.

- **Generate Enduring Results and Impact:** We ensure the outcomes of our support have long-lasting benefits for our partners. We think hard about how to participate appropriately and effectively in development, and on how to become redundant so that our initiatives outlast our involvement.

- **Focus On The Site Teams:** We are headquartered in San Francisco, but our 10 Site Teams direct our programs across Africa, Asia, and Latin America on the ground, 365 days a year. These teams build partnerships based on trust, respect, efficacy, and alignment with an asset-based approach.

- **Build Capacity:** We strengthen the skills, competencies, and abilities of the leaders of our community-based partners and of our students and professional volunteers. We educate and train, facilitating the sharing of best practices across all of our stakeholders to support our partners’ priorities.

- **Be A Bridge:** We relentlessly build a network of students, professionals, and passionate advocates for our community-based partners to access. We connect this network of assets and volunteers with the work of our partners through our international exchange and grantmaking programs.

- **Change Perspectives:** We share our experiences and learning about the complexities of development with friends, family, and colleagues. We promote cultural exchange and sensitivity, encouraging a reflective approach to navigating cross-cultural issues, confusions, and tensions.

- **Promote Reciprocity:** We operate on our founding principle that producing strong community outcomes must be the priority. We base all partnerships, strategies, and decisions on the Fair Trade Learning concept that we must be ethical and reciprocal in our planning, implementation, and outcomes.
About FSD

Web of support:
FSD is a key partner in your experience. Below are the two main players on FSD’s team, with a description of exactly how they will support you.

Site Team Roles:
• Program Director: Program Directors are local experts in the field of community development. Their experience and strong community ties make them a great resource to support you during your in-country project work. The Program Director develops and maintains FSD’s relationships with our Host Organizations and is heavily involved in the process from the time you apply to GESI, through your NGO placement, and through the duration of your program.
• Program Coordinators: Your Program Coordinator(s) provide ongoing support to you, FSD’s host families and our partner organizations. They also fulfill the following roles:
  • Culture and language bridge
  • Placement advisor
  • Culture shock lifeline
  • Project development advisor

San Francisco Office (SFO) Roles:
SFO works closely with the Northwestern staff to ensure safety and productivity of your in-country experience. Northwestern is in direct contact with the SFO office.
• Emergency Contact: SFO is available at all times in the case of an emergency.
• Additional Support: If the support offered in your host country is not satisfactory.
• Re-Integration Support: Upon your return, SFO will connect you with other veteran and offer opportunities for you to share your experience.

International Programs Team (San Francisco Office):

Lisa Kuhn
Executive Director
lisa@fsdinternational.org

Keiko Pinces
International Programs Officer Asia and Africa
pinces@fsdinternational.org

Devin Graves
International Programs Officer Latin America
devin@fsdinternational.org

San Francisco Office Hours:
9 am – 5 pm PST
Office Phone: 415-283-4873
Emergency Cell Phone: 415-828-8414
About FSD

Udaipur Site Team:

Roma Bhardwai | roma@fsdinternational.org
Program Director

Before joining FSD, Roma was the Urban Block Coordinator with the renowned NGO Seva Mandir where she focused on women and children’s education, health, and other issues. She has a Masters degree in Human Resource Management from Udaipur University (Mohan Lal Sukhadia University). Roma is originally from Udaipur and has great contacts throughout the city, including within the Allied System (government and NGOs alike). She has one twelve year old son, and she enjoys social work, working with interns, talking to people, building relationships, and helping the local community.
The safety and security of our program participants and staff is our first priority. Our safety and security protocols meet international standards and have been developed over our 15 years of operation, and from the practical experience of our staff. We have rigorous and conservative safety and security procedures, including triaged security measures for students (such as restricted travel, curfews, and buddy systems) should any emergent or potentially emergent event occur. Every site has an emergency evacuation plan (supported by our travel insurance partner) that identifies safe houses, identifies on-call transportation, and provides a variety of options for moving participants out of unsafe area via land and air routes.

For each site, we have identified physicians, health centers and hospitals for routine and emergency care that meet standards of care for foreigners, and we know the locations of and how to contact the relevant embassies and consulates. These procedures are supported by duty officer training of our support staff in San Francisco who monitor an emergency call line 24/7. But the most critical components of our safety and security system are our local staff, who are also on call 24/7, and our network of community partners at each of our program sites. Our local staff have the best knowledge as to the potential of local events to become critical, and have a network of community members to turn to for safety information, such as best routes to safer locations. Every program participant undergoes safety and security training during orientation.

It is an unfortunate but usual part of development work that emergencies occur, and we have had experience dealing with a variety of issues, from localized civil unrest and natural disasters to total evacuation of programs. The US office is in constant communication with our program sites through a variety of communications channels, including biweekly phone calls and reporting on each participant, and we also monitor international media for emerging events.

All of our sites are in safe areas. However, similar to any semi-urban or rural area in the US, certain common-sense safety measures must be taken. These will be reviewed extensively during orientation, when every participant receives a safety briefing. We emphasize that the most important ways to stay safe are to exercise good judgment, to have a strong network of local contacts, and to have a strong awareness of the potential for harm.

FSD will do its utmost to provide a safe environment and a responsive support system to you throughout your experience. To ensure a safe and successful experience for everyone involved, we depend upon our staff to serve as a barometer of the local political, social and economic climates, and to use that knowledge to maintain a safe and secure environment for FSD participants. We depend on our participants to act prudently and be receptive to instructions and suggestions regarding safety and security.

**FSD’s responsibilities:**
- Ensure a safe and secure host community. Our host organizations and programs are run by FSD staff and trusted colleagues who live locally and often have years of experience with FSD. While the political climate varies by location and timing, we feel that our extensive local networks of host families and partner organizations provide us with a good barometer of the climate in relation to the safety of foreign volunteers.
- Inform you about safety and security in your host community through materials like this pre-departure guide. We equip you with the information and tools to be aware of the realities of your host community, to avoid situations that would put you at risk, and to manage these situations should they arise.
- Send you an electronic proof of insurance card.
- Direct you to a preferred medical facility in the case of an emergency.
- Support you logistically and emotionally through any medical or emergency situation.
- Contact your emergency contacts in the case of a major emergency.

**Your responsibilities:**
- Learn about the history and current events of your host country and community.
- Secure all recommended vaccinations.

Continued on next page
Health Preparations

As a GESI student, it is your full responsibility to identify and take all necessary health precautions prior to, during, and following the Program. Please start your health preparations early, as some vaccinations must be taken as far as eight weeks or more before departure. Providing detailed medical advice is beyond the expertise of FSD so it is very important to consult the resources below as well as medical professionals such as your doctor or local travel health clinic.

Resources:
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Recorded information about health risks and precautions for international travelers: 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747)
- Traveler’s South Asia Region: http://www.cdc.gov/travel/indianrg.html
- Malaria Hotline: 404-332-4555

Topics to talk to your doctor or local health clinic about:
- Anti-malarial medications and mosquito repellent
- The symptoms of the most common illnesses contracted by travelers, and the appropriate treatment
- Medicines and supplies for preventing and treating common illnesses and maladies like (but not limited to) diarrhea, dehydration, sunburn, food poisoning
- Yellow Fever
- Typhoid Fever
- Dengue Fever
- Altitude Sickness
- Nutrition (especially for those with dietary restrictions)

What happens if I get sick?
- For serious illness that may occur during your program, there are public and private clinics and hospitals available in most areas. If you should become sick, please alert the FSD site team and your host family immediately and they will ensure that you receive appropriate medical care. Udaipur is home to several very good hospital facilities and well-trained, sensitive doctors are easily found.

Other Considerations
- Follow the directions of your site team and host family.
- Register with the US State Department or your country’s equivalent.
- Avoid volatile or risky situations. Travel with someone you know, and avoid being out alone after dark.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Walk purposefully and act as though you know where you are going.
- Notify your site team of any incidents of harassment, illness, accident, or any other serious event as soon as possible.
- GESI’s cost includes comprehensive medical covered through HTH Worldwide; your enrollment will be completed for you, and your member number will be provided to you at the start of the program.
- The illnesses and medical issues you are more likely to encounter may require medical consultations and prescriptions that will generally incur a cost between $25 and $100. Beyond taking all necessary precautions to prevent illness and accidents, please plan financially for these types of expenses. Hospitals and clinics may require payment up-front for services (but are reimbursable through HTH); please bring cash and/or a credit card (Visa or Mastercard) for emergency medical expenses and seek reimbursement directly from the insurance provider. FSD and GESI are not responsible for up-front costs or cash-related medical fees.
Visa Information

All GESI India participants are required to obtain an Indian visa before departure. It is your full responsibility to secure the appropriate visa and ensure the full legality of your stay in the host country during the program. In order to apply for your employment visa as required by the Indian government, you will need several employment documents from your host organization, which GESI and FSD will provide in March, along with detailed instructions for obtaining your visa. You must apply as soon as you receive instructions from GESI. Delays as long as ninety days are not uncommon.

The recommendations provided below are for information purposes only, and are subject to change at anytime. Please refer to the separate mailing from GESI (which you will receive in March) for the most current information, and do not attempt to obtain a visa until you receive that information.

Even if you are waiting on your employment documents from India, there are some things you can start working on before they arrive in March:

Gather your documents:

- **Resume** – you can use the one you submitted with your GESI application.
- **Bank Statements** – You should prepare three months worth of bank statements to prove that you have a bank account. The statements should have your name listed, but it is alright if it is a joint account with your parents. The amount in your account does not matter, they just want proof that you have one. Be sure to cross out any account numbers.
- **Passport Photo** - You will need one official 2x2 inch passport photo (white background) printed on photo paper.
- **Proof of Illinois Residency** – Acceptable forms of proof of residency include:
  - A valid Illinois drivers license or state id card
  - A major utility bill (water, gas, electric, or sewage)
  - A letter on Northwestern University letterhead with your current campus address. This can be obtained from Residential Services or from the GESI office by request.
  - **Non-Northwestern students living outside of Illinois**: Contact the GESI office for more information.

If you need further information on the visa process for India, please consult the following resources:

**Consulate General of India, Chicago**
www.indianconsulate.com

**Cox and Kings Global Services**
CKGS handles all of the visa applications within the US as a private contractor to the Indian Consulate.
www.in.ckgs.us

**Perry International**
Students may opt into the visa processing services provided by Perry International, and the cost will be covered by the GESI program. Perry will collect your visa forms from you and then submit them to CKGS for processing.
www.perryvisa.com

**Important Note**
If you are not a U.S. citizen, you will need to contact the Consulate General of India, Perry International Services and/or Cox & Kings to obtain the visa requirements for entry. It is very important that non-U.S. citizens notify us as soon as possible if they require any additional documentation from us to obtain a visa.
Packing List

Clothes:
- Several pairs cotton underwear and socks
- Light waterproof jacket & umbrella (if coming in the rainy season, May-Nov)
- Long-sleeved top(s) (to fend off mosquitoes, protect from sun or use in a cooler evening)
- Warm jacket and/or sweater
- Pants/capris (1 to 3)
- Skirts, knee-length or longer for women (1 to 3)
- Light sports attire if you are interested in sports, running, hiking, etc
- Multiple shirts appropriate for work, leisure, travel
- At least one nice outfit for special occasions
- Sneakers and sandals (“nice” footwear optional)
- Bathing suit, sarong, and other beach gear
- Modest sleepwear
- Hat for sun protection (baseball caps are the norm for guys)

Health and Hygiene:
- A supply of handwipes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion (some restrooms will not have running water)
- Your medications, in their original containers, with a copy of your prescriptions
- Personal hygiene products—soap, shampoo, toothpaste, tampons, floss, etc. (These can be purchased locally to save room in your luggage, but you should pack travel sizes to use until you can go to the store the first week.)
- Strong insect repellent and Calamine lotion or other itch-relief cream (you will get bitten by insects at some point during your stay)
- Vitamins
- Antibiotics for travelers’ diarrhea
- Sunglasses
- Contact lens solution and eye drops (prohibitively expensive in-country)
- Feminine hygiene products (sanitary pads are widely available, tampons are not)

Practical supplies:
- Steel or plastic water bottle
- Travel alarm clock
- Towel (Families may not have them, and they are useful for beach days. Hostels in India almost always offer towels.)
- Medium-sized pack for day and weekend trips
- Flashlight/headlight (power outages are relatively common)
- Earplugs (notably if you have trouble sleeping with noise)
- Lock for luggage (can also be used at lockers in hostels)
- Money belt (around the waist is more secure than around the neck)
- Utility knife

Documents and money:
- Airline ticket
- Passport
- Vaccination booklet
- Insurance Card
- Visa or Mastercard
- Photocopies of all documents
- Cash (US $100 is good to begin with)
- Small gifts for your host family (optional)

Other:
- Pictures of your family, friends, neighborhood, work
- Small inexpensive gifts for your host family
- Books and other reading materials

Packing tips from 2015 students:

“What I wish I brought to India”
- Lots of leggings! (women)
- More pants for work (men)
- Less American clothes (many students buy clothes in India, especially women)
- American snacks

“What I wish I brought less of...”
- Towel (easy to purchase and saves you room!)
- Toiletries (easy to purchase, and cheap)
- Shorts (women and men)
At work: On the job, women generally wear salwar kameez sets which consist of loose pants tied at the waist or leggings, a printed top that reaches down to the knees (kurta), and a scarf (dupatta) around the neck for modesty. Female volunteers should expect to wear these salwar kameez sets daily (especially when traveling to nearby villages). This is a very affordable option as women can have salwar kameez sets tailored to fit from scratch material for as little as 800 Rs (US $15). Men should expect to wear full pants and decent shirts (polo shirts will be more appropriate). Men can have pants and shirts made for 300 Rs (US $6).

At home: At home or when going out in the city, any clothing is fine, but again, it would be safer to stay on the conservative side so as not to attract unnecessary attention. At home, students will be able to dress casually, but it is important to maintain respect for your host family by not wearing any clothing that may be overly revealing.
Electronics FAQs

• Should I bring my laptop?
Generally, it is recommended that students bring their own laptop or netbook when possible. Computers are frequently used at work for doing research, writing reports and proposals, and designing materials. Most host organizations have limited computers for staff and one is not always available for student use. It is unusual for host families to have computers at home. Netbooks offer a cheaper alternative to the traditional laptop and are often sufficient for the work necessary. It is also a good idea to invest in a cheap USB drive. These are an excellent way to cart around your documents: email, print or fax them from an Internet cafe. It is recommended that if you bring a laptop or netbook that you back up your files, install anti-virus software, and install any programs you may want to use while abroad before leaving.

Please understand that taking a laptop entails the risk that it could be lost, stolen or damaged - FSD and GESI are not responsible in these scenarios.

• Should I bring my smart phone?
Smart phones are becoming more common, but you should generally not walk around listening to music or podcasts on your phone; they automatically advertise your wealth and set you apart. Keeping it at home and listening to it with your family is perfectly fine.

Voltage Converters: If you do decide to bring your laptop or other American electronic devices you will need voltage converters which convert to 230V with “c” and “d” plugs. Converters can be bought in India, however to be safe you may consider purchasing one before departure.
Food & Water

• Can I drink the tap water?
NO. Do not drink or brush your teeth with the tap water. You are only to drink filtered water (generally referred to as “AquaGuard”, after the most common filtration system), or water that has been boiled.

• Where can I get safe water?
Your host family will make either filtered water or boiled water available to you. When visiting other families or communities, bring your own bottled water with you; when in doubt, drink a bottled beverage. You may also consider bringing water treatment tablets or a camping water filter.

• What is typical food or a typical meal?
Breakfast is light and usually consists of roti (Indian bread), chai (milk tea), and possibly fruit. Lunch is more substantial and will include a subjee (vegetable dish), roti, and possibly a dal dish (lentils). Dinner will, again, consist of a subjee dish, dal, roti or chaaval (rice), and a sweet (of which there are a wide variety in India.) Snack foods include namkeen (a spicy, dry mix of nuts and crunchy, fried nuggets) and biscuits (cookies). Please note that most meals will include mirchi (or chilli) but you can ask your host family to add none or only a small amount of chili to your meals.

• What do most people drink?
Chai. Expect to be offered sweet milk tea several times daily. Fresh fruit juice and coffee are also commonly available at home. Alcohol is not usually consumed at home and students should not expect to bring alcohol into their homestays. A wide selection of bottled sodas is readily available and is generally safe to drink. Local favorites also include yogurt based Lhassi, fresh sugar cane juice, and a variety of fruit smoothies. These are widely available from numerous street vendors. While they are generally safe to drink they should be approached with a degree of caution.

• How vegetarian-friendly is the local cuisine?
India is home to some of the tastiest vegetarian cuisine. Finding vegetarian food should not be a problem.

• What foods should I avoid?
To prevent parasites and diarrhea, you will want to eat lightly the first week and stay away from milk and cheese that has not been pasteurized. Avoid uncooked food, street vendors and restaurants that have not been recommended by the FSD Site Team. Do not eat fruits or vegetables that have been washed with water unless they are peeled or the water was treated beforehand. When eating leftovers, be sure to re-heat them thoroughly.

• Can I eat fresh fruit from street stands, and trees?
In India you are likely to encounter an abundance of fresh fruit. As a general rule, if you can peel it, you can eat it! Avoid peeled fruit served on the street unless you watch the vendor peel it.

• How should I express my preferences, or turn down unsafe food that is offered to me?
Your host families will be notified of what you can and cannot eat or drink, but be both aware and respectful of the situation – never put yourself at risk, but please be diplomatic in expressing your needs. It is often difficult to turn down food, as people feel that visits are incomplete without some kind of food or drink; either take just a little of what is being offered, or say that you are afraid of getting sick and would like to just have water. You should feel comfortable politely mentioning to your host family your food preferences. Also please advise your family in advance if you do not plan to be home for a meal.

• Are there any US-style restaurants?
Chinese food, pasta, and pizza are available in some restaurants, but as a rule these foods are not quite what one expects coming from the West! This is not to say that there are not a plethora of fabulous Indian food options, but you will often find that home cooked food is better than restaurant food.
Communication

What is the best way for friends and family at home to reach me?
Email and cellular phones are the most reliable ways to be in touch with your friends and family at home. If your host family has a phone, you can also ask them if it is all right for your family and friends back home to call you on that line. Please ask permission first. Realize that phone communication is often interrupted by bad weather, local technicalities or overloaded circuits, and sometimes lines are cut in the middle of a call. Please ensure that your friends and families are aware of this with the understanding that it is best not to schedule international calls at exact times. In case of an emergency, your family can call the FSD Site Team and leave a message for you.

Are cell phones available?
You will be provided with a cell phone upon arrival by your Site Team.

Where can I make and receive phone calls?
FSD has a cellular phone bank for students in Udaipur. Upon arrival you will be provided with a cell phone for you to use during the GESI program. We use Reliance phones as the carrier has pretty reasonable international calling plans. While in Rajasthan, all of your incoming calls (even international calls) and texts are completely free. Students can also purchase 100 Rs. or 200 Rs. calling cards that last 20 or 40 minutes respectively and can be used from a landline. Long distance telephone access is easy to obtain through privately owned telephone booths, which are often marked with a handy yellow “ISD/STD” sign. These private booths are found everywhere – sometimes several booths can even be found right next to each other. An average call to the U.S. will run you about 8 Rs. a minute.

Can I make and receive phone calls at my host family's home?
Your host family may or may not have a telephone. Never make any long distance calls from the phone of your host family or that of your employer, and always ask permission from your host family before making any local calls on their phone.

Is there access to Internet and email?
Udaipur is well stocked with Internet cafes, especially in the Old City area. Stores that feature the ‘I way’ logo ensure a speedy connection (although the service isn't always as reliable.) The local Reliance store has opened up its own Internet cafe with high-speed connection. It is probably the most dependable of all Internet services. The FSD office has wi-fi which is available to you during office hours, Monday through Friday. It is requested that students limit their personal time in the office and use the facilities only for project-related work. There are companies that offer USB Wireless Internet adapters with plans. The Site Team can offer advice on which services offer the most competitive rates. Internet enabled computers can then be used to communicate back home through services like Skype.

How do I receive mail while in India?
To receive mail, please have letters sent to your name, care of the local FSD office. It costs Rs. 20 ($0.50 USD) to send a standard letter from India. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery. It is wise not to send or receive packages or valuables due to the uncertainty of the postal system. If a loved one wishes to mail you a package from abroad, make sure they use FedEx, DHL, or another well-known private courier (otherwise, your package is liable to be opened en route.)
Money

• How much cash should I bring with me?
You should plan on bringing about US$200 in cash when you arrive, an ATM card (with a Visa or Mastercard logo), and a credit card for emergencies. You can exchange money at the airport or upon arrival in Udaipur. Most ATMs in India will only accept 4 digit pin numbers so make sure your account is assessable with a 4 digit pin. Also be sure to notify your bank and or credit card company that you are traveling abroad as to avoid unnecessary cancellations or holds.

• How much money should I plan on spending in country?
GESI covers all of your necessary expenses, including room and board, in-country transportation, field visit expenses (if applicable), orientation and debriefing sessions, etc. You may want additional money, however, for entertainment, snacks, books, gifts, newspapers, weekend excursions, additional transportation and health emergencies. A good guideline budget is $3.00 per day or $100 a month. Bring more if you plan to go out often or buy gifts. Never carry a large sum of cash or your passport in public; if you must, please do so with caution. Bring only what you need for the day and use a nondescript bag to carry books or papers. Do not wear expensive sunglasses, watches or jewelry, and dress modestly. Keep your valuables locked in your suitcase at home.

• How can I get cash?
ATM machines are recommended because they are available, secure, and offer a good rate of exchange. Traveler's checks are not recommended: they do not offer a favorable exchange rate and are not widely accepted. Do not exchange money with street dealers; banks or exchange bureaus are much more secure.

• Are credit cards accepted?
Credit cards are only accepted in more expensive shops and restaurants. Visa or MasterCard are more widely accepted.

• What is the local attitude towards bargaining?
Bargaining is part of the culture and expected at local markets and the handicrafts in India are as outstanding and unique as they are affordable. You should bargain for nonfood purchases made at the market (as a foreigner, localsellers will without a doubt charge you higher prices). A meal out will cost you between 30 and 150 Rs., a tempo (local shared transport vehicle) ride will cost you up to 10 Rs. one-way to your destination, and a rickshaw ride with friends will cost between 10 and 60 Rs. each. You can also bargain for food at the market, especially fruit and vegetables. The FSD Site Team will talk to you more about appropriate prices and bargaining during your orientation.

Indian Monetary Unit: Rupee
Exchange rates fluctuate. Be sure to check them online before you leave, at websites like:
www.x-rates.com or www.xe.com
Arrival & Transportation

• Your Arrival in Udaipur
The Udaipur airport is approximately a 30 minute taxi ride to the orientation site. The Site Team will pick you up at the airport and bring you to the hotel in which you’ll be staying for orientation.

• What are the most common modes of transport, and are they expensive?
Auto-rickshaws are very common and can take you anywhere in Udaipur. Tempos are like large rickshaws and have set routes and you can choose when to get in and out. Tempos are simply the cheapest way to get to most parts of the city. The Site Team will provide students with a basic orientation to these different forms of transportation. In general transportation to and from major parts of the city will be inexpensive relative to prices in your own country. Public buses are the general mode of transportation for field visits. Trains are also a popular mode of intercity transportation.

• Can I travel after dark?
You should plan ahead, be cautious, and try not to travel after dark. The FSD Site Team will talk to you more about safety and travel during your orientation. Keep in mind that public transportation stops at 9 pm.

• Is it safe to go out at night?
You should not walk around at night after 9 p.m. If you are planning on going out with friends, please let your host family know well ahead of time and plan on being home before 9:30 p.m. Consult with your host family about safety information specific to your neighborhood, plan ahead, and be cautious.
Family Homestay

One of the most rewarding, challenging, and meaningful experiences during your time in India is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. Host families offer the rare opportunity to truly integrate yourself into the local culture and build meaningful relationships that will last long past your stay. The families who host GESI participants are carefully selected and offer their homes out of a genuine sense of generosity and the wish to learn about another culture. Your host family will view you as a member of the family and treat you as such. We hope that you will feel equally at home with your family but we ask that you never forget you are a guest in their home. Please always be respectful of their rules and help out the best you can.

• A typical FSD host family in Udaipur, India:
Students will stay with a host family for the duration of their stay in India. They will have their own room with an attached bathroom. All homes have electricity, running water, indoor plumbing, and access to clean drinking water. Host families range in size from a single woman with no children living at home to a large household with children, aunts and grandparents. In some homes, students will use squat toilets and take bucket baths. Host families may be Christian, Hindu, Jain or Muslim in religion. Some may be socially conservative, and many are vegetarian. Since smoking and drinking alcohol are frowned upon in Indian society, you should not take part in either activity at your home. When students spend time with their host family and adapt to the family’s practices and schedules, most become a welcome part of their adoptive family. All of our host families are eager to welcome GESI students into their homes and share their Indian culture.

• What will my host family provide?
Your family is required to provide you with a private room, three meals a day, purified water and laundry detergent. Toiletries and a towel are not provided; you must bring your own. A mosquito net will not be provided in most cases, but are only necessary when staying overnight in rural areas.

• What are the living accommodations like?
Living accommodations may be basic by U.S. standards. Electricity often isn’t available for short periods of time. Due to water shortages bucket showers are the norm. You will become accustomed to a fair amount of night sound, including traffic, animals, and radios. Earplugs can help. Ants, mosquitoes, lizards and occasionally spiders and small rodents can creep into the house. Your family can help prevent these unfortunate visitors, so let them know if you see something.

• How are families structured in country?
Indian culture is centered around the family unit, and families are generally very close-knit. Many people live in joint families, with several generations living under the same roof. FSD families in Udaipur are usually middle to upper class. The men in these families often own businesses (usually family businesses) or are employed by companies in Udaipur. Some of the women in these families stay at home taking care of the children and the home, some get involved in their own small entrepreneurial adventures, and others have jobs teaching or working for NGOs.

• Do I need to help out with chores?
We ask families to treat you as another member of the family, which means you will pick up after yourself, keep your area neat, and help out with the cooking and cleaning as appropriate.

• Is it safe to bring/store valuables with my host family?
There is no need to bring many valuables. We require that you keep items of value locked in your luggage at all times. While all of FSD’s host families are personally known to the FSD Site Team, this is extremely important because friends, relatives, and household staff are often in and out of the house. However, there have been incidents when a participant thought something was stolen only to find that s/he had misplaced it. This kind of “scandal” is hard on the host family who takes great care to protect you and your things. If something unusual of this nature does happen, please speak with the FSD Site Team immediately before speaking to your host family.
Family Homestay

• **How much time should I spend with my host family?**
  One of the most rewarding, challenging, and meaningful experiences during your time in country is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. You will learn a great deal about India through the people who live there, so cultivate a habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Ask questions and share your perspective. Be sensitive to the feelings of others and embrace the different viewpoints, lifestyles, experiences and company your family provides. Host families are eager to get to know you and learn about your life so be ready to talk about your interests, culture, family and plans. We encourage you to share pictures and stories from your life at home.

• **What language should I expect at home?**
  While FSD families are relatively comfortable with English, Hindi is the primary language spoken in the home and with friends. This will be a great opportunity to improve your language skills!

• **What will be the largest adjustments I should expect to make while living with my host family?**
  The concept of personal space is very different than what participants may be used to, and while participants will have their own rooms, privacy is not considered a necessity here, and is often seen as undesirable. However, you as a participant will be welcomed with more genuine and unabashed hospitality than you ever thought possible. Household servants are a common facet of many Indian homes. Some families have servants who live with them, but most have people who come and clean the home and help with the cooking daily. Participants can do their best to make sure servants are treated with the respect that they would expect.

• **How often should I check in with my family?**
  You are entrusted in the family's care and just like your own family and they will worry about you if you don't check in. Please advise your family in advance if you do not plan to be home for a meal, and notify your family in advance of any program-related overnight activities or field visits.

• **Can I have visitors come over to the house?**
  Please advise your family before you invite anyone to the house, especially someone of the opposite sex. Overnight guests are NOT appropriate and are unacceptable during the program. Protect your family's safety and privacy. Do not give out their home number. Remember: Even though you will be treated as part of the family, you are still a guest in their home and must be respectful of their rules.

• **Can I go out at night?**
  Yes. If you do make plans to go out at night, please advise your family of your transportation, who will be accompanying you, your return time, and arrangements for getting home and into the house. Remember that it is difficult to find transportation after 9 pm so it is your responsibility to make the necessary arrangements to be home before this time. Please also remember that it is inappropriate to return home intoxicated, so if you plan on drinking, please do so in moderation. Exercise good judgment: as anywhere, it is best to go out with family members, co-workers or friends that you meet. Simply being a foreigner draws extra attention to you and puts you at higher risk for harassment or theft.

• **How should I handle requests for money?**
  FSD program fees subsidize all of your room and board expenses so there is no need for you to discuss money with your family. They should not ask you to borrow money and if this happens, tell them it is against your program rules to lend money. If children ask for money, gently remind them that it is against the rules, and let your Site Team know about the incident.

• **What types of gifts are appropriate to bring for my host family?**
  We suggest that you bring small and modest gifts for your host family as a token of goodwill and gratitude for their hospitality after you stay with them. Ideas include: souvenirs of your hometown, state or university, chocolates/candies, inexpensive watches or jewelry, school supplies for the children, etc. It is possible to purchase small gifts in country too, but regional gifts are special. Your host family will also greatly enjoy seeing pictures of your hometown and family. Use your imagination!
A GESI 2011 student’s reflections on his experience in India:

Ari Sillman

During the fall quarter of my freshman year, I saw a flyer for an info session about GESI, which I subsequently attended. The passion and ingenuity of the GESI alumni about their respective projects during the program convinced me that this would be a great opportunity to experience the field of international development firsthand. Moreover, as a History and International Studies double major concentrated in Asia, especially south Asia, GESI was especially attractive as it provided me an opportunity to fully immerse myself in Indian culture.

In Rajasthan, India, three other students and I developed a project focused on improving the local cooking methods of a small village outside the city of Udaipur. We worked with the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), a national NGO which does a variety of environmental projects. We met families in India who used wood-fueled indoor cook stoves, without ventilation, to prepare meals. We discovered that this method of cooking can lead to environmental problems for the community, such as deforestation, along with health problems for the individual families, such as increased risk of asthma, cataracts, as well as lung and eye infections.

We also learned that many families wanted to learn new methods of cooking. We worked with 10 such families to install smokeless stoves that direct smoke and soot out of the household through a chimney, and one family to install an outdoor bio-gas stove. These methods ensure that smoke does not concentrate in the household, and they utilize sustainable fuels such as dung to prevent deforestation. We also created an image-based maintenance poster to make sure the residents knew how to repair these devices. The project serves as an example to other communities, as well as to future interns or NGO employees, to expand upon.

Through GESI, I gained key insights on the nature and problems of poverty that I will take to both my academic studies and to my future career. Most of all, I learned patience. Development, like other forms of social change, requires a shift in mindset, both individually and societally. As such, rapidly implementing a variety of projects, even if the need is great, will result in many failures. The most successful projects are the ones that actively engage the communities that they affect over the long-term; in the process, one must be patient and willing to accept failures and setbacks. I look forward to continually applying my learnings from our challenges and successes to my studies and personal development.
Cultural Practices & Beliefs

For the most part, you will gain insight into Indian culture through your own experiences, but here are a few common questions that are likely to arise:

• **How do people in country view time/punctuality?**
The concept of time is very flexible in India and Udaipur is a very laid-back city. Patience is a virtue because punctuality is difficult to come by. Depending on the people you are with or the organization you work with, things often do not happen until much later than planned. Please come prepared to cope with this cultural difference with patience, flexibility, and a sense of humor.

• **Do people in country have different beliefs about personal space or privacy?**
The definition of personal space is very different from what you may be used to. The concept of needing to be alone and needing space that is just yours is often considered odd, and aside from your room, there are very few places where you won’t be bombarded by the general loudness of life here. People often crowd together especially when riding public transportation or attending outdoors fairs and festivals. Indians are also very personal people. They will ask questions that seem nosy or too personal, and it is not considered rude (you can do it too and it is alright).

• **How should I approach photography?**
You should always ask permission before you take someone’s photo. People may ask you to send copies and please keep track of addresses to send them. It is prohibited to take photos of military or security zones.

• **What are some common greeting gestures in country?**
The most common greetings are “namaste” or “namashkar” said with palms together in prayer position at chest height. Namashkar is more formal and respectful, whereas namaste is a more informal greeting and is more frequently used. They both mean, “I bow to you.” These greetings are used throughout the day and can be used to signify either hello or goodbye.

• **What kind of public touching gestures are acceptable?**
Affection is very rarely displayed in public and you should always refrain from hand holding, putting your arm around another, kissing, etc. - this type of affection is not condoned by society. It is common, however, to see men holding hands in public and you should be aware that this is an accepted expression of nonsexual friendship.

• **Are there customs surrounding eating that I should be aware of?**
Most Indians rarely use utensils to eat and instead eat with their right hand, using only the tips of their fingers. The left hand is never used because it is reserved for toilet duties. If possible try to use only your right hand at the dinner table. It is understood that you are foreign to these customs and are not held to the same expectations, but efforts to adjust to their culture are always appreciated.

• **Are there any customs I should be aware of when visiting someone’s home?**
It is common for guests to take off their shoes before entering a home. It is customary to offer food to guests when they come visit (at home, at the office, anywhere). Students will often find themselves in situations where they do not want to eat or drink anything, but are being forced to. The problem is that people often take it personally if you try to refuse, even if you go about it in a diplomatic manner. The best option is simply to try to say no, but then agree to eating or drinking just a small amount.

• **How are children treated? Is it common for children to be reprimanded physically at home or at school?**
Since India is such a family-oriented culture, children are the center of attention in most families and are very well taken care of. Disciplinary measures vary from household to household, but in school physical reprimands are commonplace. Teachers and principals will strike unruly students as this is a widely accepted form of discipline.

• **How are animals treated? Do people keep pets?**
You should expect to see cows, donkeys, goats, water buffaloes, and dogs roaming the streets. Both dogs and cats as pets are extremely rare, and often dogs are strays that live on the streets. Though some are friendly, you should keep in mind that dogs are often mistreated and can tend to be more aggressive than what you’re accustomed to. Take caution when around all animals, though cows and the like are very tame.
Culture & Workplace

• What place does religion have in country?
Religion plays a major role in the lives of most Indians. Approximately 82% of the population is Hindu, 12% Muslim, and the rest is comprised of Christians, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists. Social structure, political affiliation, and cultural norms have been heavily influenced by these religions throughout India’s 5000-year history. India has an incredibly rich religious history and since Indians are generally very open about their religious beliefs don’t feel shy about asking questions regarding customs, festivals, beliefs, gods, etc. In fact most Indian take pride in their religious heritage and appreciate the opportunity to share their beliefs with others.

• What are the rules for visiting a religious or sacred site?
Always dress conservatively, and remove your shoes before entering. Also know that it is offensive to touch someone with your feet and to touch a carving of a deity.

• What is the general perception of work in country?
People do work very hard, either in the office, with partner organizations, or in the field, but the general attitude towards work is different than students may be used to, as work is frequently intermingled with socializing with coworkers and chai (tea) breaks.

• What is a typical work schedule in India?
Like many parts of India, Udaipur works on a six-day work week with Sunday being the only day off. Some organizations, however, have the second Saturday of each month off. While this may seem quite intense, the working environment in the NGO sector is generally quite relaxed. Offices open around 10 am after a leisurely morning and full breakfast, lunch is usually taken around 1 or 2 pm either with coworkers at the office or at home, and people leave the office for home around 5 or 6 pm. National holidays occur frequently.

• How is personal initiative viewed? Is it appropriate to voice my opinions?
Initiative is encouraged and in many instances a necessity at work. According to former FSD student Maggie Jacoby, “Have as clear an idea as possible about what you want to get done. Don't wait for work to be assigned to you; actively seek out ways in which you can be useful and helpful. Even if it is only that you have a better grasp of written and spoken English, find ways to utilize these skills at your organization. More importantly, suspend all your Western notions of how things should, and will, work. If you come in expecting efficiency and quick changes, you'll only get frustrated.” You should always feel that you can share your ideas and opinions, as creativity is always encouraged; however, be prepared to adjust to the Indian work culture and not place strict expectations about timing and efficiency on those around you.

• What are common practices for socializing with colleagues?
Expect to get to know your colleagues well as office teams spend significant time around each other (given the six day work week!). It is most common to socialize during work hours, however, on occasion colleagues see each other outside for coffee or dinner.
Race, Sexuality & Gender

How you interact with others (and they with you) will initially have a lot to do with preconceptions. You'll feel more comfortable once the inevitable "getting to know you" period is over, but keep some cultural norms in mind:

• Race and Ethnicity:
In India, you may not encounter the same level and/or kind of awareness and sensitivity surrounding race relations and conceptualizations of heritage as you may be accustomed to finding in the U.S. If you have dark skin or features associated with an African heritage, for example, people may refer to you as "Negro/a." If you have fair skin, people may refer to you as "Angrez." In most cases, these names are not necessarily derogatory terms; many people use them simply because your skin color or features are unusual or intriguing within that context. In some cases, it may be valuable to engage the people you meet in a conversation about the specificity of your heritage.

• Sexuality:
Sexual orientation is not a topic that is openly discussed in India. Please realize that any affiliation or experiences you have at home (especially in the LGBTQ community) may not be regarded with the same understanding or sensitivity in India. Please do your best to take this into consideration when discussing such issues with your host family or other members of the community. While same-gender relations between men were decriminalized in India in 2009, there is still a lot of discrimination and harassment towards gay people. For more information and resources you can contact the GESI office, visit Northwestern's Study Abroad website, LGBTQ Students and Study Abroad: http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/resources/online-guide/identity-and-diversity/lgbtq-students-studyabroad.html, Gender Abroad: http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/resources/online-guide/identity-anddiversity/gender-abroad.html, or get in touch with NU's LGBTQ Resource Center.

• Gender:
As a foreigner, you are going to attract attention. Women should expect to experience with much more harassment than men, including occasional lewd comments and grabbing. The best thing to do is ignore negative attention, be cautious and aware of your surroundings, dress conservatively so as not to attract any extra attention, and don't stay out too late (especially not alone). Do not give out your phone number to people you don't know. You can explain that you are living in someone else's house and are not allowed to receive calls or visitors. Please remember that most attention you receive reflects innocent curiosity and interest in you, instead of malicious intentions. Please also note that any physical harassment (i.e. groping) is unacceptable behavior and should be reported to the site team immediately.

Also it is important to understand that Indian men interact differently than what you may be used to in the US. It is common to see men and young boys holding hands, or walking with their arms around each other. This is a frequent occurrence and you should expect to encounter this whether on the street, in the office, or at home. Women in general should also expect to be treated differently than men.

In 2014 the Supreme Court of India recognized transgender people as a third gender. In an advance for human rights, transgendered individuals will now be provided with equal opportunity under the law.
Language Guide

No less than eighteen major languages are officially recognized by the constitution, and numerous minor languages and over a thousand dialects are spoken across India. When independent India was organized, the present day states were largely created along linguistic lines, which at least helps the traveler make some sense of the complex situation. Hindi is commonly spoken throughout northern India and will be the language you will find most helpful to know at work and at home.

Practice! Speaking a language is the best way to learn, so don’t be afraid to practice your Hindi with as many people as possible. Your best resource in learning the local language will be your host family and co-workers at your host organization. Relax and remember that the key to learning (or improving your skills in) a language is the ability to laugh at yourself. Indians are also very receptive and appreciative of foreigners who speak even a little broken Hindi so don’t be afraid of making mistakes. Hindi is spoken by such a wide diversity of people in India (many who actually speak it as their second language) that it is rarely spoken in its pure form and Indians are used to hearing mistakes and variances of grammar. Many Indians these days also speak Hindi with a generous amount of English mixed in (“Hinglish”). This is great for new Hindi students because when you don’t know a vocab word it is often acceptable (and even trendy) to just use the English equivalent. Pronunciation, however, causes the most confusion both for new language students and those trying to understand you, as mispronunciation can often completely change the meaning of a word. The Hindi alphabet is very phonetic with each letter having a specific sound which often can not be directly translated into an English equivalent. It is helpful to learn the Hindi alphabet so you can read and understand the sometimes subtle differences in pronunciation.

Hindi Language Resources:
The following is a list of basic to intermediate Hindi language learning materials. This is a limited selection of books that past participants have found useful; there are many other quality volumes available. Many of these may be available in Udaipur, though selection will be somewhat limited. It’s a good idea to find one that you like before leaving home to give you the chance to start practicing.

Teach Yourself Hindi by Rupert Snell
This book is one of the very best books for learning Hindi and is probably one of the only books participants interested in learning Hindi will need. It is fairly challenging and can take the student from a complete beginner to an intermediate level. It contains an excellent dictionary, lessons in writing and pronunciation, and a solid review of Hindi grammar. It is particularly recommended to purchase this book as a set with the audio CDs and is best purchased in the US.

Advanced Learner’s English-Hindi Dictionary by Dr. Hardev Bahri
An excellent English to Hindi dictionary for the intermediate to advanced student complete with numerous examples of words being used in sentences so one can understand their use in context.

Hindi-English Phrase Book by Kavita Kumar
A wonderful and very small pocket book with many useful phrases, grammar lessons, dictionary, and useful lessons about Indian culture and religion. It is written in both Hindi and English alphabet for beginning to intermediate students.

The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary by R.S. McGregor
This is the best and most reputable Hindi to English Dictionary. It is available in India for much less than in the US and is meant for intermediate to advanced students who can read Hindi.

Hindi Structures: Intermediate by Peter Edwin Hook
A great intermediate grammar book that sheds light on some hard to understand grammatical variations.

Hindi for Non-Hindi Speaking People by Kavita Kumar
An excellent upper intermediate to advanced level grammar book which is written more as a reference guide than a textbook. The numerous examples and detailed grammar rules it covers are extremely helpful for more advanced students.

A Course in Advanced Hindi by Sheela Verma
An excellent book for the advanced student with an introduction to some of Hindi literature’s greatest short stories, plays, and poetry, advanced grammar lessons, and useful regional variations and proverbs that are rarely covered in other language books. She also wrote an intermediate level book which is ok.

Pimsleur Audio Language Learning - Hindi
Combines well-established research, most-useful vocabulary and an intuitive process to get you to learn and start using a new language in a fluid, natural way. Purchase as an mp3 at iTunes, Amazon.com or other online sites, and listen on your device.
Film Guide

Hindi film is beloved in India and having a familiarity with films, songs, and actors can give you a window into Indian popular culture. While in the U.S., a good source for renting Hindi films is www.netflix.com and Wikipedia has a good guide to Bollywood cinema with great links (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bollywood). Hindi film is often very long (~3 hours) and usually incorporates song and dance routines and far-fetched story-lines which sometimes surprise and amuse foreign viewers. However, amidst the stereotypical mass-released films are a good number of very high quality movies with fantastic cinematography, story-lines, acting, and yes...usually music. The following is a list of some recommended films based upon their influence and popularity in Indian society, their quality, and entertainment value.

Fire (1996) directed by Deepa Mehta - A romantic drama where a tender and passionate love story develops in the dark recess of a traditional New Delhi household signaling the slow and painful dissolution of the old order in this contemporary story of women breaking the bonds of obedience, fidelity and silence; and of men struggling to maintain their traditional advantages while exploring the freedoms of westernized life.

Water (2005) directed by Deepa Mehta- The film examines the plight of a group of widows forced into poverty at a temple in the holy city of Varanasi. It focuses on a relationship between one of the widows, who wants to escape the social restrictions imposed on widows, and a man who is from the highest caste and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi.

Delhi 6 (2009) directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra- A story about love, hope and self-discovery set in the walled city of Delhi (zip code 6) and its chaotic but touching life that forces us to ask questions about ourselves.

Dor (2006) directed by Nagesh Kukunoor - The film is about two women who come from different backgrounds and how fate brings them together. Meera, a young woman who becomes a widow shortly after marriage, is trapped by tradition. Zeenat, on the other hand, faces the daunting task of saving the life of her husband, who is on trial for murder. A bahuropiya helps her reach Meera, who holds the “string” to Zeenat’s hope. The companionship that develops between Meera and Zeenat results in redemption for both.

Rang De Basanti (2006) directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra- A young women from England comes to India to make a documentary about her grandfather’s diary which was written in the 1920s about the Indian Independence with five young men who hesitate to get out into the real world. Gradually the friends ponder over their roles and the lives of the selfless freedom-fighters, and in the face of a tragedy, realize that they too, like Bhagat Singh and Azad, must take action, to ensure that their now corrupt and poverty-laden country, awakens and the guilty do not go unpunished.

Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006) directed by Rajkumar Hirani- A musical comedy where the lighthearted Munnabhai falls in for a radio jockey Jahnavi, and to meet her, he wins a competition in Munnabhai style! But to woo her, he has to study about Mahatma Gandhi. This brings about a new change in him and he tries to change the lives of people around him using his ‘Gandhigiri’.

Three Idiots (2009) directed by Rajkumar Hirany- A comedy where two friends embark on a quest for a lost buddy. On this journey, they encounter a long forgotten bet, a wedding they must crash, and a funeral that goes impossibly out of control.

My Name is Khan (2010) directed by Karan Johar- A drama where Rizwan Khan, a Muslim from the Borivali section of Mumbai, suffers from Asperger's syndrome, a form of high-functioning autism that complicates socialization. The adult Rizwan marries a Hindu single mother, Mandira, in San Francisco. After 9/11, Rizwan is detained by authorities at LAX who mistake his disability for suspicious behavior. Following his arrest, he meets Radha, a therapist who helps him deal with his situation and his affliction. Rizwan then begins a journey to meet US President Obama to clear his name.
Lonely Planet Guide by Various Authors
An excellent travel guide on North India, South India and contains a Hindi/Urdu phrasebook.

Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts
A book about a convicted Australian bank robber and heroin addict who escaped from Pentridge Prison and fled to India where he lived for 10 years. While partially based on Roberts' own experiences, Roberts himself has clarified that the story and its incidents are largely fictional.

Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found by Sektu Mehta
A narrative nonfiction book by Suketu Mehta, published in 2004, about the Indian city of Mumbai. Mehta writes as someone who is on one hand an outsider to this magnificent city and on the other hand was born and raised in the city then known as Bombay.

Two States: The Story of My Marriage by Chetan Bhagat
It is the story about a couple coming from two different states of India, who face hardships in convincing their parents and persuading them to get married.

Three Mistakes of My Life by Chetan Bhagat
The novel follows the story of three friends and is based in the city of Ahmedabad in western India. Govind dreams of starting a business. To accommodate his friends Ishaan and Omi's passion, they open a cricket shop. However, each has a different motive: Govind's goal is to make money; Ishaan desires to nurture Ali, a gifted batsman; Omi just wants to be with his friends.

Five Point Someone — What not to do at IIT! By Chetan Bhagat
The novel is set in the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, in the period 1991 to 1995. It is about the adventures of three mechanical engineering students (and friends), Hari Kumar (the narrator), Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta, who fail to cope with the grading system of the IITs.

Hindu philosophy: The Bhagavad Gita; or The Sacred Lay, a Sanskrit philosophical poem translated by John Davies
The Bhagavad Gita is a Sanatana Dharma or Hindu scripture produced from the colloquy given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna during the Kurukshetra War. Its philosophies and insights are intended to reach beyond the scope of religion and to humanity as a whole. It is at times referred to as the “manual for mankind” and has been highly praised by not only prominent Indians such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi but also Aldous Huxley, Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Carl Jung and Herman Hesse.

In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India by Edward Luce
As the world's largest democracy and a rising international economic power, India has long been heralded for its great strides in technology and trade. Yet it is also plagued by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a vast array of other social and economic issues. Here, noted journalist and former Financial Times South Asia bureau chief Edward Luce travels throughout India's many regions, cultures, and religious circles, investigating its fragile balance between tradition and modernity. From meetings with key political figures to fascinating encounters with religious pundits, economic gurus, and village laborers, In Spite of the Gods is a fascinating blend of analysis and reportage that comprehensively depicts the nuances of India's complex situation and its place in the world.

India: Development and Participation by Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen
A fantastic book that looks at the inequality of India's economic reforms during the 1990's. It displays the positive impacts of reform but also argues that India must develop in ways that uphold democracy and spread the benefits of reform among the poor and rural sectors.

The Ramayana translated by N.K. Narayan
Ramayana is one of the two great epics of India that depicts the duties of relationships, portraying ideal characters like the ideal father, ideal servant, the ideal brother, the ideal wife and the ideal king
Website Guide

www.samachar.com
Headlines from and links to major Indian news agencies, including Times of India, The Hindu, and Indian Express.

www.indianngos.com
An informative site on the development sector in India.

www.thehindu.com
A respected newspaper, which often has stories related to the development sector.

www.flonnet.com
Top national news and current events magazine.

www.thetimesofindia.com
India’s most widely distributed daily.

www.epw.org.in
An influential journal for social development studies and policy discussions.

www.financialexpress.com
India’s leading business newspaper which covers the economy, financial, and industrial news and stock market reports.

www.travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html
US department of State’s page for country-by-country travel warnings, consular information and public announcements.

www.indiaimage.nic.in
The Government of India portal, it has links to most government of India websites, including departments, autonomous bodies, state governments, ministries etc.

www.indiatoggether.org
Informative development sector news, features, and stories.

www.livemint.com
Offers international and domestic stories in conjunction with the Wall Street Journal that vary from business, financial and lifestyle news.