

## Diary of a cranky traveler

Sohini Chakravorty



AP Tourists spend an evening on a beach in Kerala

Getting stuck with loud, demanding companions who lack respect for a clean environment can ruin a journey, finds Sohini Chakravorty.

“The gentle, undulating waves of the Arabian Sea were slapping the sides of the slow chugging motorboat,” recalls 27-year-old Marketing Executive Pooja Soni of her holiday in Gokarna. “The sight of a row of green hills meeting the sea and the sparkling sands were a cynosure. Suddenly, a loud shriek pierced the air, causing everyone on the boat to look around. It was a man hankering for his favourite straw hat, which fell on the water due to the sea breeze. The boat was turned around while the boatman dived into the sea to reclaim the hat, irrespective of what the other passengers on the boat were thinking.” Pooja admits that Indians can be a bit of a nuisance when on holiday. Sometimes, you find yourself stuck in the company of loud, raucous companions who exhibit a complete disregard for the surrounding environment and the people in it.

“In one of my train journeys,” narrates 25-year-old Aditya K in Advertising, “a newlywed couple started indulging in some PDA which was hard to ignore, considering I was just sitting just opposite to them. The rest of the passengers were forced into their intimate banter. After a point, we all had to leave the coupe and go stand somewhere else, leaving the couple alone.”

Jumping queues, scrambling to collect cabin bags on flights even before the landing announcement, littering the surroundings, invading co-passengers' privacy and talking loudly in public places are some of the ways the Indian traveller makes life difficult, especially in big groups. During her visit to Sentosa in Singapore, 24-year-old Deepika Sreedharan who works in Publishing was irked when a group of 30 Indian tourists pushed and shoved to cut across the line. “They were even vaulting over the chains in the queue area and shoving people so they could get to the front,” she recalls. “I was outraged when I heard people from other countries talking about them and even glaring at us since we were Indian. But then they had a point.”

Some travelers score low when it comes to preserving heritage structures and maintaining a clean environment. It is common to see them spitting and urinating in public, carving personal images on stones and dumping plastic bottles and packets instead of using garbage cans. “You cannot really blame the government as regular tourists make no effort to keep a clean environment,” points out student Siddharth B. “Despite garbage cans placed at regular intervals people don't make an effort to use them and lewd messages carved on the stones mar the beauty of any place.”

Despite the lack of etiquette and the demanding nature of some of the Indian tourists, foreign tourists have good memories of Indian hospitality. Meeting people, making friends during a journey and getting help from unexpected quarters can also be a part of the travelling experience. As 26-year-old MNC employee Paroma Ray narrates, “On our trek to Ghangaria (Uttarakhand), we were quite behind schedule. It was 7 p.m., pitch dark and we still hadn't reached the camp. One of the locals saw us, gathered the entire group and guided us with his torch. Without the old man's help we could have gotten badly hurt.”