



Travelogue

Part four:
Learning yoga by
sacred Ganges
Next week: Guatemala

'Living vicariously through the adventures of our friends'

'...the spiritual ritual ... includes singing and praying and celebrates and thanks (Goddess Ganga) two times a day. At the end of the ceremony an oil lamp is lit and is passed around to the large crowd. Hindu priests circle around these lamps while chanting with the crowd to praise Mother Ganga.'

In India, Ellen and Peggy Hudon connect with Hindi people and culture

By ELLEN HUDON
For the News

My mother and I hopped off the plane in New Delhi, India, and were submerged into a new world. The sun beat down on our skin at 110 degrees and our ears filled with sounds of cars honking and loud voices speaking a language we didn't know. It was only a tad different from Hood River. A slight breeze in India feels like a miracle, whereas a breeze in Oregon is a reason to bundle up more.

It was the summer of 2014. My mom and I have had the travel bug since we went to Haiti in the summer of 2013. We then visited London, India, and Italy, and recently, Hawai'i. This upcoming summer, we plan to go to Costa Rica. Our trip to Haiti with doctors from Hood River and a few from Texas was a medical mission to provide check-ups and medical help to those in need. My mom, Peggy, and I wanted to do something similar to what we did in Haiti, by helping out in whatever way we could. Since my mom, who owns Hood River Coffee Roasters, had been to India before to go on a guided trip with a coffee broker, we decided to go to there.

We found an orphanage called Ramana's Garden that liked having volunteers to work in the kitchens preparing food. Once we got there, however, we were disappointed to find that the orphans were on their summer vacation in the mountains. I had heard that Rishikesh was the yoga center of the world. I have loved yoga since I was little, so my mom and I decided to attend classes daily. This became our main purpose for our visit, and we headed out feeling confident with all the right gear for our 3-week trip.

In the first few days of visiting, we went down to the Parmarth Niketan Ashram at the Ganges River to celebrate the Goddess Ganga which is the most holy river in India. On our way to the Aarti, we



bought an offering to put into the water from a little girl. She spoke English well and have vibrant green eyes, which was unusual to see amongst the swarms of brown eyes. The offering had bright orange marigolds delicately placed in bowls made of banana leaves. On top of the marigolds there was a flammable wick to light. The Aarti, which is a spiritual ritual, includes singing and praying and celebrates and thanks this Goddess two times a day. At the end of the ceremony an oil lamp is lit and is passed around to the large crowd. Hindu priests circle around these lamps while chanting with the crowd to praise Mother Ganga.

'Sun salutations and breathing exercises were the basis of what we did daily.'

— ELLEN HUDON

I have always wanted to hold a monkey, and it has been high up there on my bucket list since I was little. When I found out that there were monkeys that hung out on the Lakshman Jhula bridge, I was excited. I thought they would be sweet, harmless monkeys, but these ones were not like the ones you would see in the zoo. After coming home from the market one day with a bag full of juicy lychees, my mom and I spotted a rather large monkey perched on a stone wall. I was stoked to see it because I had only seen one so far. We walked past it, and as it saw my bag of de-



licious fruit it descended from its perch and slowly crept up to me. I was worried that it was going to attack me, so I automatically froze. It reached up quickly and grabbed at the plastic bag I was holding. My mind was on the tasty, tropical fruit, and I was determined to not lose my perfectly ripe snack. I tugged on the bag and my mom nervously told me to "just let the monkey have it!" Sadly, I let the bag go and watched the monkey devour them thoughtlessly.

One of the people we had the pleasure of meeting was a Belgian man named Ronnie Hermosa. He was a well-traveled videographer who worked with fair-trade organizations. He knew what to expect from India

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About the author

Ellen Hudon, 17, is a junior at Hood River Valley High School, is the daughter of Mark and Peggy Hudon of Hood River. Ellen has studied French for several years and is now taking Spanish at HRVHS.



Villagers in Rishikesh, India, top, surround Peggy Hudon of Hood River. "We were the minority there, so just about everywhere we went, people would stop and ask to take our photo with them," Peggy said. "I think we might be on Facebook all over India," she joked. (See page B6 for more on how the Hudons were warmly greeted wherever they went.) With Ellen Hudon is Gopal, a sadhu, or ascetic, elder, of Rishikesh. Above, rice fields on the downhill part of a long morning hike in Rishikesh. At right, the view from a restaurant, one of Ellen's first glimpses of the holy River Ganges.

Photos by Ellen Hudon

