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LP

Advice

WE SIX YOUNG ADULTS ARE GOING TO INDIA FOR THREE WEEKS IN FEBRUARY AND ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ON TOP OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE TO DO. WE ARE THINKING UTTARAKHAND AND THE HIMALAYAS, BUT ARE UNSURE WHETHER THIS IS POSSIBLE IN WINTER?

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T. RUSBATCH, OATLEY

It is possible, and the winter views of the Himalayas from Uttarakhand are sensational, but expect temperatures to fall below zero in Almora. There are several guesthouses and small resorts along Binsar Road, Deenapani, just outside Almora. The pick of the bunch is Kalmatia Sangam (kalmatia-sangam.com), which has wood fires in its cottages. From here you could do day walks down the terraced hills into the valleys.

If you have a week to spare and are feeling intrepid, you could travel in a circular route north from Almora to Kausani, then to Karnaprayag, Srinagar, south to Rishikesh, then return to Delhi. This route would take you close to the peaks along the border with Tibet and close to some of India's holiest pilgrimage sites. Consider hiring a minivan with a driver.

As a frost-free alternative, February is an ideal time to explore Rajasthan, one of the most sensational and colourful parts of India. The high points would be Ajmer, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer.

HOPE YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO GIVE SOME THOUGHTS ON A FAMILY HOLIDAY. WE ARE 10 ADULTS AND SEVEN CHILDREN FROM TWO TO 12, WE'VE ALREADY BEEN TO FIJI AND NEW ZEALAND AND WE WOULD LIKE SOMEWHERE NOT TOO FAR WITH SOME SORT OF CULTURAL EXPERIENCE. I LIKE BALI BUT THE OTHERS ARE WARY OF TAKING THE YOUNGER CHILDREN. WE THOUGHT OF LORD HOWE ISLAND OR ULURU.

J. KING, PALMERS ISLAND

Is Bali right off the table? Because there are not too many places that could satisfy your needs quite like the Island of the Gods. You could hire several villas within the same complex and have oodles of private space, swimming pools, cooks if you want and massages in-house, and it doesn't cost a bomb. Depending on your location you could have shopping, restaurants and cafes close at hand, and as for culture, there are not too many people who celebrate, dance, perform and pray quite like the Balinese.

Some of your extended family might have health concerns about those young children but for sensible and careful parents Bali is a low-risk destination.

Lord Howe Island is flagrantly gorgeous and it's well equipped for adventure despite its modest size, but it's hardly a cultural experience. I'm not certain that Uluru would offer the variety that you might want to please everyone.

Vanuatu is another possibility, and I'd be inclined to look at Espiritu Santo rather than Efate, although Melanesian culture is more subdued than that of Asia.

MY HUSBAND AND I ARE GOING TO VISIT OUR SON WHO IS STUDYING AND PLAYING SPORT IN SKAGIT VALLEY, WASHINGTON STATE, USA. WE ARE HOPING TO CATCH A FEW OF HIS GAMES AS WELL AS ENJOY SOME SIGHTSEEING. CAN YOU RECOMMEND A WEEK'S WORTH OF DAY TRIPS IN AND AROUND THE AREA SO WE CAN EXPLORE BUT WATCH HIM PLAY IN THE AFTERNOON?

M. HARVIS, MARYLAND

The problem is that Skagit Valley is in a wilderness area in the north of the state close to the Canadian border. This is a majestic region, but most of the activities there take more time than the five or six hours you would have available if you also want to see your son's games. To the east are the postcard-perfect mountains, lakes and forests of North Cascades National Park, but you need time to experience them. To the west is Anacortes, gateway to the maritime wonderland of the San Juan Islands - again, time required. It would be a great shame to miss out on the opportunities to experience some really remarkable parts of the west coast that your visit presents.

It might be possible to tailor your visit so you can satisfy both objectives, but not if you confine yourselves to staying in the vicinity of Skagit Valley. Along with the two areas already mentioned, Seattle, Vancouver and Vancouver Island are all worth a visit.

CONVERSATION

OVER TO YOU ...

THE QUESTION WAS "PICNIC LUNCHESES OR GREAT TRAVEL PASSES - GOT A MONEY-SAVER TIP YOU'D LIKE TO PASS ON?"

From H. and G. Chirgwin, "My wife and I travelled in **China** in September/October last year. We saved a lot of money by organising our own tour guides in each city and travelling between cities by rail. Where feasible, we travelled by public transport within each city. This was more personalised, at a slower pace and a much more immersive experience than the large **group** tours, and also at a significantly lower cost."

K. Phillips writes "When I told my friends that I was planning to spend three weeks in Europe without my partner but with my 21-year-old daughter and her boyfriend, most were convinced it would cost a fortune. How wrong they were. In Amsterdam we stayed in a lovely two-bedroom apartment at the heart of the city courtesy of a house swap. We did the same thing in Berlin and Stockholm. We paid nothing for accommodation for three weeks staying in some of the most fascinating cities in Europe. And because we were in family homes we had all the benefits of home. There are so many advantages: you **buy** fresh food to make your own cheap healthy snacks. **Wine** and beer from the supermarkets instead of exorbitant prices in bars. You avoid all the hidden costs of staying in a hotel like surcharges for Wi-Fi. And you live like a local."

Next question: Ever tried to learn a foreign language to enhance your holiday experience, and what was the result - informative, funny or just plain embarrassing?

Send responses to tripologist@fairfaxmedia.com.au. The best response will win a Lonely Planet guidebook.

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