



Date: February 2008
To: All my favorite savvy travelers
From: Teresa Beall Expeditions

Dear Friends!

I have clients who will never, ever, ever go on group tours, because they are super serious travelers, and tours are for, you know, tourists. I have other clients who will never, ever *not* go on a group tour, because tours offer so many advantages for busy people. In some cases, I suspect, these latter clients may be a little insecure about making their way through the world by themselves.

I think both sets of clients are being a little ridiculous.

The next two paragraphs are directed to all of my independent clients. You know who you are. You feel a group journey requires you to be married to a cookie-cutter itinerary with a busy dawn-to-dusk schedule and no opportunity to deviate from the pack. Well, obviously you have never traveled on a TBE (Teresa Beall Expeditions) Spring or Fall group journey. My independent travel posse and I enjoy spontaneous time on our own almost as much as joining others in optional group experiences. And, we enjoy traversing the world with each other almost as much as visiting the unique and exciting destinations themselves. A TBE journey is like a "touring-party-on-wheels" with the opportunity to explore a foreign country independently, or hook up with others to enhance the experience – it's your choice. Best yet, a combination of both is the perfect ingredient for an "exactly-as-you-wish" vacation – ample time to stroll alone as well as plenty of time to be inspired by the energy of like-minded others. The bonus is that groups often make it easier, safer and less expensive when traveling in numbers rather than solo.

A good tour operator (whether a TBE journey, or another independent tour operator) can take you far off the main grid to places you would never reach on your own. While you're crowding into popular hotels in Rajasthan with thousands of other independent-minded travelers, clients of some of the better adventure travel companies (we'd like to think we one of them) are exploring villages further away from the well-worn trade routes marked with discarded Snickers wrappers instead of bread crumbs, like Chandelao village. Granted, there are plenty of operators who will happily take your hard-earned cash and hold your hand on trips you could easily do yourself; but the better ones have a genius for difficult logistics and for wrangling hard-to-get permits for the more interesting corners of the world. And they employ guides (physically fit experts in their fields) who can escort you safely through regions where you would otherwise be seriously in over your head. Not only are they good at getting you into demanding and distant places, they are good at getting you out if something goes wrong. When you break out in a fever and purple spots erupt all over your body while you're deep in the bush of Tanzania, the extra money you spent to go with a quality land operator will seem like the wisest investment of your life.

I don't know if it's because the world is capable of dishing out more trouble than it was one or more decades ago, or because we are now pushing into dicier and dicier areas to distance ourselves from the masses, but today there are large swatches of the globe where we should think seriously about surrendering our independence and traveling under the wing of a company who knows what it's doing.



To my clients who'd never consider traveling independently: Certainly tours offer more bang for your buck providing you are resolved to following the leader and not deviating from the pack. But travel is, or can be, more than just Greco-Roman ruins and incense-scented temples. It's the little things that occur between the boldface items on your itinerary that often stay with you the longest. In my experience, these kinds of experiences are more likely to happen when you're on your own – whether really on your own, or when you (just for a moment) step away from the pack of an organized journey (TBE or otherwise). Even the best-intentioned guides can be like the friend who's already seen the movie and spoils all the surprises for you. It is the discoveries you make for yourself – the dusty used bookstore down the back alley, the mom-and-pop restaurant you found when your laminated pocket map failed you, the dhow captain who ferries you to an unmapped beach, or taking the local train from point A to B on a whim instead of the more-popular scheduled flight (especially in a place like India) – that have the most meaning. And it's amazing how often your most cherished souvenirs turn out to be memories of the misadventures that occur when no one's paving the way for you. Everybody who travels independently has mishap stories. If you don't, think seriously about forgoing the tour bus next time and putting yourself in charge of your journey; just be sure to start slowly in one of the more user-friendly parts of the world.

The moral of the story is to find a comfortable plan – one that works for you, a travel style and itinerary that will make you a better traveler. Call me and let me help you orchestrate your travel dreams into a reality, regardless of your travel style.

P.S. Speaking of TBE journeys – our office will be closed the first two weeks in March. We're headed down to Argentina with the TBE travel posse. We'll be back on the 18th with lots of stories we hope will inspire you to join us next time. Should you have a travel emergency, please call Kathy at 530-345-6939. If your travel request or question can wait until our return, please e-mail or leave us a voice message and we'll respond at our earliest convenience.

NOTE - Each month (sometimes more or less often than that) we send out an e-newsletter containing timely announcements, notices and tips intended as useful, up-to-the-minute information for discriminating domestic and international travelers - you, our clients. The intent is NOT to send unwanted information. If you are not interested, please let us know and we will promptly remove you from our database!

Best, Teresa

...Traveling makes people feel younger. It should be administered periodically, like medicine.