

What I now know about Mt. Everest, Phish Fest

Earlier this summer, I embarked on two adventures that couldn't be more different — on the surface. Here's what I learned about life, travel and my comfort zone in Nepal and at The Gorge.

As Summit County locals, we love our home, but we sure love our adventures, too.

Whether it is a quick overnight road trip to chase the gnar or a flight to some exotic destination, we love to explore the world. Some trips push our comfort zone, and that can be scary, dangerous and have consequences. Other trips are designed for vegging out in



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Dear Drewbie

your comfort zone. Travel can create memories, change our lives and touch our souls. It's good to push a bit and grow from your experiences and, best of all, come back to the place we all love: Summit County.

I took two trips recently. They were polar opposites: the first a month in Nepal to run the Everest Marathon and trek with my wife, the second an impromptu road trip with a buddy to see Phish play at the Columbia River Gorge.

Nepal, Molly's dream trip. Phish, my journey. While these trips might seem like complete contraries of one another, the similarities are astoundingly present, awesome and, hopefully, hilarious.

TO NEPAL

Nepal is a spiritual world like nowhere else, surrounded by mountains that

dwarf the Rockies and populated by people who are so kind and genuine, with a love for nature rivaled by no one.

When arriving at base camp, a member of group, Paul, was literally overcome with emotion. He fell to his knees and wept, making me appreciate the enormity of that place — so humbling, so beautiful, so breathtaking and mystical.

While this was not my specific dream, it was life changing, incredible and transcendent. Embracing the inscrutability of the Khumbu Valley while standing at the feet of The Mother (Mount Everest) is absolutely indescribable. No person could possibly be unaffected by the energy of Himalayas, and I am forever changed.

TO THE GORGE

When arriving at the Columbia River Gorge to see Phish, I felt like a giggling hippie in a utopian musical wonder world. The legends who have played there, the spirituality — "The Mother" of concert venues — and I was there, in first row of the pit nonetheless. The shows were outrageous, truly unforgettable experiences, with the Gorge in the background and a perfect sunset. It was a perfectly phantastic weekend. (I can feel people throwing things at me through their devices as I compare Phish and Mount Everest. Deservedly so, I should say.)

BEYOND THE COMFORT ZONE

They're worlds apart, literally and figuratively, yet these two adventures



Drew and Molly Mikita at Mount Everest base camp in Nepal.

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

involved people who were most in their comfort zones and those who were not in their comfort zones. I am lucky to be chameleon-ish — I feel comfortable in just about any situation that involves being outside, cool people, beers, local food and adventure. Nepal pushed my comfort zone in the perfect way; a Phish Festival is my comfort zone.

Here is a survival guide for many of the common comfort zone-pushing situations you may encounter while traveling, as evidenced through my Nepal and Phish travels.

BATHROOMS

Nepal: Bathroom is Nepalese for "sketchy bucket teetering on an icy-glacial-rock death trap." At basecamp, I thought I was going to die in the toilet tent.

Phish Festival: Bathrooms can be used for just about anything: the obvious, sex, drugs, sleeping, etc. Knocking before entering the Porta Potties is probably a good call. Poop early before things get really nasty.

Survival tip: Always bring TP and baby wipes with you, everywhere. Hold your breath and think happy thoughts. Be quick. Just accept that people are going to see you "make nature" at some point.

FOOD

Nepal: The food in Nepal was amazing: simple, basic and to the point, very fresh and organic. Going local is great, but it did result in stomach parasites for us (whoops). I still wouldn't trade the local experiences for anything.

Phish Festival: You can get all kinds of hippie cuisine at a festival. Some is delicious and healthy, some is the perfect, greasy, hang-over-curing yumminess I crave. You can probably get parasites here, too ... just being honest.

Survival tip: Enjoy local cuisine and immerse yourself in the experience. Be wary that eating bad food can be fatal! Also, having some good snacks is key: jerky, energy bars, candy, etc. (You know your necessities).

WATER

Nepal: Our guide told us we needed to stay hydrated. I listened, probably to excess, and stayed hydrated. I had no problems with altitude or dehydration. We saw many others struggle.

Phish Festival: I met a girl in the bathroom line who had done far too many illicit somethings. I told her she needed water. She slurringly said, "Water is always the answer." It sure is, especially when "experimenting."

Survival tip: Have a

reusable water bottle with you. Also, know cleanliness of the water. If you are unsure, plastic water bottles (or boiled or purified water) is best practice.

FINDING A LEADER

Nepal: Lucky for us, in Nepal we had a leader, Ricky, whom I trusted completely with everything. He was intelligent, articulate, experienced, fun, knowledgeable and a true leader. Following him felt like a newborn duck following its mother — instincts. The dude is the man, and he led us ducklings perfectly.

Phish Festival: If you are by yourself, or in a small group, having someone on top of things — tickets, show time, meeting points, venue traditions and customs — will save stress and confusion. At a festival, this person needs to be uber-fun and want to have an outstanding time, safely.

Survival tip: Someone who knows their way is the best. Trust this person with your life and fun times. The kindness of strangers is impressive, and a smile goes a long way. Don't be scared to ask for help. Remember all this when someone is on an adventure to Summit County and asks you for guidance.

SOCIAL COMPARISONS

Nepal: Many people in Nepal survive off food

they grow and live in very modest homes. Yet, as a whole, they are very happy, satisfied and spiritual. For many, surviving is their job.

Phish Festival: Many of these people "tour" for a living, but not for work. They just follow the tour. Some are homeless, jobless and simply living. They're free-spirited hippies having copious amounts of fun.

Survival tip: It is not a terrible thing to compare yourself and life to others occasionally. Just keep things in perspective and remember: You live your life and are you. Be the best you that you can be, regardless of comparison. Learn from those who are different.

THE SMELL

Nepal: Smelly hikers, yak dung and unique foods.

Phish Festival: Smelly hippies, cannabis and unique foods.

Survival tip: Our memory is closely tied to scent, so breathe it all in.

THE DRUGS

Nepal: Weed, hash and other mystery substances.

Phish Festival: Anything, everything and more.

Survival tip: Know what you are getting into, and never take drugs from strangers, kids.