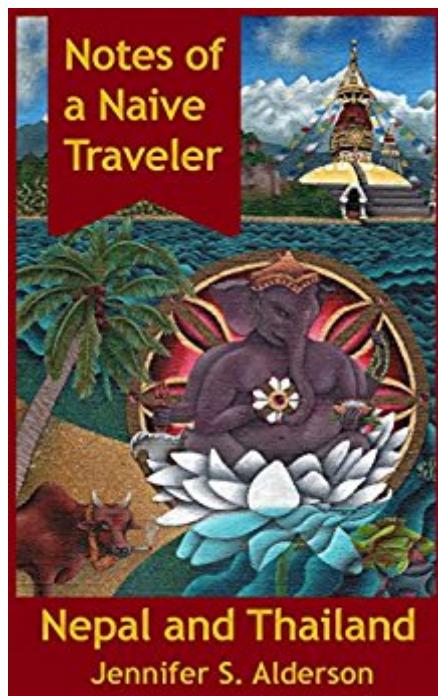


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# Notes Of A Naive Traveler: Nepal And Thailand



## Synopsis

“The ride back to Kathmandu was comfortable and relaxing. There were more overturned trucks (the gas-powered ones seem to tip the most, I’m surprised there weren’t more explosions), goats being herded across the highway by ancient women, children playing games in traffic, private cars and buses alike pulling over in the most inconvenient places for a picnic or public bath, and best of all the suicidal overtaking maneuvers (or what we would call ‘passing’ by our bus and others while going downhill at incredible speeds or around hairpin turns uphill with absolutely no power left to actually get around the other vehicle.) I was twenty-six years old, had a well-paid job, fantastic apartment and large circle of friends. I had everything, except I didn’t. I couldn’t shake the feeling I was missing out on the experience of living. Part cultural and travel guide, part journey of self-discovery, this travelogue takes you on a backpacking adventure through Nepal and Thailand and provides a first-hand account of one volunteer’s experience teaching in a Nepali school and living with a devout Brahmin family. Trek with me through the bamboo forests and terraced mountaintops of Eastern Nepal, take a wild river rafting ride in class IV waters, go on an elephant ride and encounter charging rhinoceros on jungle walks in Chitwan National Park, sea kayak the surreal waters of Krabi and snorkel in the Gulf of Thailand. Join me on some of the scariest bus rides you could imagine, explore beautiful and intriguing temples, experience religious rituals unknown to most Westerners, and visit mind-blowing places not mentioned in your typical travel guides. Notes of a Naive Traveler is a must-read for those interested in learning more about Nepal or wishing to travel to Nepal and Thailand. I hope it inspires you to see these amazing countries for yourself.”

“Notes of a Naive Traveler is a heart filled journey through the eyes of a young nomad who had the courage to exchange Starbucks for Stupas. So pack your bags and enjoy your trip. Just be sure to bring hand sanitizer.”

5 stars - Libro Illustrato by Kyra, Book Blog

Related subjects include: travel, adventure, memoirs, non-fiction, backpacking, volunteering, travelogue, travel writing, solo travel, journals, cultural travel, cultural heritage, Asia, Nepal, Thailand. Front cover artwork: “Folly in Divinity”, acrylic on canvas by Don Farrell

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## **Customer Reviews**

For anyone who has never traveled to a country whose culture is different from your own, you don't know what you are missing. It's an incredible experience, as this journey through Nepal and Thailand portrays. The author's story is whimsical and at times flirting with danger. For those who have traveled, it's the trip home that actually is more of a culture-shock, than the places visited. Travelers expect and anticipate differences, but once experienced, we look at our own culture with entirely new eyes. This book gives you that look at Nepal and Thailand, and I recommend it for anyone thinking about taking a trip ... anywhere.

Reading Notes of a Naïve Traveler, I felt like I was meeting up with a friend as she undertook the trip of a lifetime - a friend who happens to be observant and thoughtful.

Notes of a Naïve Traveler is a review blurb. This on-site experience is an entertaining read for both armchair travelers and future trekkers. Having read Jennifer Alderson's first two well-written and entertaining novels, my expectations were high for Notes of a Naïve Traveler. I was not disappointed. This uniquely engaging account of living and teaching in Nepal is a feast for the senses. Jennifer shares her personal account on the sights, smells, and tastes of Nepal and Thailand. Likewise, she allows the reader into her emotional journey. Her animated character sketches add to the enjoyable read. I've never read a "travel memoir" where I keep turning the pages to read about what happens next; this book is the first. Jennifer Alderson's descriptions, writing style, and personality all make

this a great read. Five Stars!

"I never thought I would have reason to say to someone, 'Sorry I'm late, it took longer to dismember the goat than originally planned'."Staring twenty-seven in the face, with little life lived outside Seattle, a young woman decides to spend six months ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• though this becomes fluid later ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• and explore Nepal, Katmandu and Thailand. In order to finally have the kind of adventure she ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å„çs only heard others talk about, she uses Cultural Destination Nepal, agreeing to teach children for a certain period of time on her way through. Bikash sets her up with various families in different areas, and this adds to the experience in both good ways and not good ways. Basically, these are diary excerpts, emails, and letters to friends and home, that the author took at the time, back in 1999, when she embarked on this journey in which she discovered perhaps as much ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• if not more ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• about herself as the places she got a chance to see. There exists a candidness here, as the likable girl praises, vents, and relates her immediate reactions to people and events which are so different from what she has become accustomed to in Seattle. The author writes in the forward that she cringed ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• not certain that ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å„çs the word she used ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• at including some of these entries, emails, etcetera, which her husband later rescued from the trash and encouraged her to write this book. By including the various entries, however, the reader feels an intimacy with the young woman, a kinship, seeing everything through her eyes, and wondering if we too would react likewise. There is humor, a bit of venting, and moments when you can tell the traveler was genuinely in awe. It is hard not to laugh at the inventive ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å“irrigationÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• system of one small village, and the reason the narrator begged off vegetables while there. It is also laugh-worthy when the very rough and crazy bus ride to Dharan is taken on a vehicle that is a shrine to Leonardo DiCaprio. But it is not humorous to see the unsanitary and deplorable conditions of one of the ÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å“bestÄfÄ¢Ä Å ¬Ä Å• hospitals when she briefly takes ill. Nor is it humorous to discover a family of seven people living in a 20ft. x 15ft. dwelling while a son-in-law spends a two-year stint as a cook in Saudi Arabia to support them all. And then there is the poverty: "Being away for a few days and seeing tourists again for the first time since I went to Mandikatar, made me realize how different and challenging my daily life in Nepal is compared to Seattle. I'm used to seeing cows running through the streets, goats, ducks and chickens everywhere, and tiny houses covered in sh\*t, with humongous stacks of hay and corn drying on and around them. It's all become so common place." She describes Katmandu as a place with rotting garbage on virtually every street corner, with rats the size of small cats running freely into homes and restaurants. Oddly, her

teaching takes up very little of the diaries, and only late into the narrative do we discover why. The children are unruly and unteachable for the most part, unless she uses a heavy hand — perhaps literally — to keep them in line, something the narrator simply could not bring herself to do. It made her success at teaching them, as she herself learned their language, underwhelming. And then there are the families she stays with, the shock of different customs — including what the Western world might consider child slavery — and the narrator adapting to them. At first, there is affection which grows between the members of the host family and traveler. Eventually, however, greed on the part of the host damages the relationship. It is, in fact, a strange paradox, since one of the things pointed out and noted, is the incredible drive to learn, to get a Master's degree of the older youth. It is in stark contrast to the Western world, where everyone expects to live on the system, being on the dole. And yet, in homes with roofs made partly from cow dung, are satellite dishes and a television they watch — when there is electricity — giving them a fake world to believe in, and envy. It creates greed, and aggressiveness in demanding money, as if the time volunteered to teach, the books donated, were not enough. These are honest emails, letters and journal entries, however, so we get warts and all of the writer as well. At twenty-six, when you'd think escaping to smoke a joint would have been left behind, she still enjoys it. Mostly, however, her reactions are tempered and positive, and she just rolls with everything as best she can — even the casual and gory animal sacrifices. It's small wonder that getting away once in a while for a beer with others there to teach was necessary for someone who'd never been exposed to the world outside America before. And there is a general feeling that she loved it, and would not have traded the enriching experience for anything: "Isn't it amazing how quickly the mind and body can adapt to totally different cultural situations and ways of life? But this is so very different from my 'real' life - I have to keep remembering that and not miss all the beauty here. I can leave anytime, but this is their permanent reality. I can never forget that." There are wonderful portions as well, and they include for the most part a friendly people. Stupas, shrines and temples, cobblestone paths, the breathtaking Himalayas — experienced atop a mountain in the clouds, and from a low-flying plane —, the Dashawn Festival, Tihar, described as the 4th of July and Christmas rolled all into one, Chitwan National Park, elephants and rhinos, and the excitement of being in a foreign land, wondering what you'll encounter next, is not lost in this travelog. Neither is knowing that the photos you take of people and leave with them, will be the only ones they'll ever own. And then her time in Nepal is

over: "It's going to be so incredibly difficult going back, I know already. I can't get into the life everyone leads at home because I know it's not me. I don't care about computers, finely-aged ports, yachts, cigars or the hassles of everyday working life. I never did. It just drags me down instead of lifting me up." The author's time in Thailand, is a chance to unwind, get her bearings again after disappearing into a life she'd never experienced before. Bangkok was very Western, just like any city, and much different in colors than Nepal. She describes it as Chinatown on steroids. But she discovers other places, with palm trees and coves and snorkeling, the things we imagine a vacation to be. There are the Tiger Temple Caves, and Ao Nang. And suddenly, a journey in which the narrator learned what she is capable of, and what she is capable of handling, ends. This engaging and never boring read has cover art by Don Farrell, and the author reveals that she changed the names of her host families and others. I really enjoyed it, even though it's on the peripheral edges of my wheelhouse. On a technical note, the text was justified, though there were no indents to paragraphs. With most entries being relatively brief, it wasn't an issue. Overall, a very engaging and revealing look at Nepal and the surrounding areas, and its people during the latter days of the twentieth century which is less than twenty years ago. I purchased this from Australia on Kindle. If you have any interest in the area, or this type of travelog, you'll probably enjoy this greatly, as I did.

After reading *Down and Out in Kathmandu*, the first fictional adventure of Zelda Richardson, I was eager to learn more about the incredible country of Nepal and author, Jennifer S Alderson's experiences as a volunteer teacher. Jennifer was indeed a naive traveller, who had left her family and secure job in Seattle to live with locals deep in the Asian countryside with little modern comforts. Written in late 1999, this is a frank, spontaneous journal, augmented by messages home to friends and family. Beautiful word pictures are created of the lush countryside and fascinating shrines but we are also given details of the dirt, lack of hygiene and cultural clashes. So many interesting customs and festivals are included but we are also informed of how menstruating women are prevented from preparing food or even eating with their family for the first few days of their period. Some of the places visited are so remote that few westerners are likely to see them. Jennifer describes a holy site up in the hills behind the house where she is staying, which is called Budhanilkantha. She finds an enormous sleeping statue of Vishnu reclining on a bed of snakes. There are also shrines to Ganesh, Shiva and other gods.

Returning from this journey, she is stricken with diarrhea, vomiting and fever, as a result of a few sips of unboiled water. Interspersed with the accounts of the killing of a goat and demands for donations from her host Jennifer also enjoyed some thrilling expeditions where she proves herself to be fearless, but it is with some relief that she leaves for Thailand, at last able to have privacy. I was not surprised to read that Thailand is much more westernised and modern than Nepal, but after leaving Bangkok, Jennifer finds paradise in Koh Tao on the East coast and Krabi on the west coast. This travel memoir is a great read, whether you have some experience of the East or not and it should be required reading for anyone contemplating volunteering in a different part of the world.

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