

**MUSSOORIE**  
**BEYOND THE MALL:**  
**22 DAY-WALKS**  
**IN AND AROUND**  
**MUSSOORIE**

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**&**  
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Every effort has been made to provide accurate and up-to-date information, but sometimes things change. The authors would be grateful if readers would bring to our attention any errors that may occur. This can be done at [www.mussooriewalks.com](http://www.mussooriewalks.com).

Any of the authors' profits from the sale of this book will be used towards health, education, and access to health care for those living in poverty in rural India, while those from the publisher will be to promote outdoor education.

The GPS files for each of the walks in the book are also available for sale on [www.mussooriewalks.com](http://www.mussooriewalks.com). The profits from the sale of these files will be used towards health, education, and access to health care.

The authors accept no responsibility for the safety of persons using this book. Walking in the mountains is a potentially dangerous pastime. If you take any of these walks, you do so at your own risk.

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*For Bidy Hart who passed on her love of Mussoorie to us. Thanks to her Mussoorie is now our favourite place in the world as well. She was the inspiration behind this book, being with us the first time (of many) that we were completely lost.*

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## FOREWARD

Walking is a fundamental part of the Mussoorie experience, whether you promenade along the Mall Road or trek to the top of Nag Tibba. All of us who grew up here know that the real pleasure of “taking the air” in Mussoorie comes from physical exertion that clears both lungs and mind, not to mention the arteries of your heart. Promoting healthy tourism should be a priority for all, rather than encouraging more vehicles to choke our narrow roads. Visitors from cities like Delhi come here to escape the pollution and traffic jams but they often end up bringing both things with them. The old, reliable “*gyara number ki gadda*” (Vehicle No. 11, whose double digits symbolize two legs) is still the best way to get around.

Amanda Thrift and Roger Evans have visited Mussoorie many times, travelling here all the way from Australia. They have discovered the simple magic of these mountains by exploring hidden paths on foot. This book is a tribute to their perseverance and spirit of discovery. The detailed descriptions and accurate maps will ensure that nobody gets lost. It is significant that this guide to walking in Mussoorie was written by annual visitors, rather than year-round residents of our hill station. Many of us take these trails for granted and forget the rewarding destinations where they lead. Amanda and Roger are to be congratulated for showing the rest of us the way!

Of course, there was a time when the only method of reaching Mussoorie was to walk, whether you hiked up from the Doon Valley and Rajpur or came in across the ridges from Chamba and beyond. Gradually and inevitably, motor roads have penetrated the Himalaya, bringing prosperity and access to people in remote regions. But we should never forget our pedestrian heritage, the challenge of putting one foot in front of the other on a rocky path, while breathing in the clean mountain air. A few unspoiled places remain, which can be approached only on foot. No better examples exist than the summits of Benog or Top Tibba, at either end of Mussoorie. Both hilltops offer spectacular views of the snow peaks as well as dense upland jungles full of birds and wildlife.

Walking through a Himalayan forest at 7,000 feet above sea level is one of the richest experiences anyone can have, accompanied by the cackle of laughing thrushes or the morning raga of a grey-winged black bird. Ferns brush our ankles, the resinous fragrance of pines and cedars lingers in the air, and branches of rhododendrons and oaks shade us from the sun. Cicadas sing in chorus and a barking deer yelps with alarm. If you tread softly, nothing separates you from nature and the soles of your feet keep you firmly fixed to the land. Walking can be a form of meditation that allows us to escape our troubles and anxieties, even as we absorb ourselves in the wonderful diversity of the world around us. As the Buddha once said: "To walk along the path, you must become the path itself."

This book will guide you on your quest!

Stephen Alter

## INTRODUCTION

For most visitors to Mussoorie, the Mall is the beginning and the end. Most tourists take a walk or cycle rickshaw along the Mall, do a little shopping, perhaps take the ropeway up to Gun Hill, and enjoy a meal in one of the numerous restaurants along the Mall. But as the title of this book suggests, there is much more to see and do beyond the Mall. The motivation for us to produce this book was to assist others to discover the beauty of the hills beyond the Mall. We have been lucky enough to spend extended periods in Mussoorie so have had plenty of time to discover these walks. But those of you who visit Mussoorie for only days or weeks have no time to waste on dead-ends. We hope this book will help you get the most out of your brief visit to Mussoorie so you will want to come back for more.

Mussoorie runs from west (the library end) to east (the Picture Palace end) along an escarpment rising up from the Deccan plateau at Dehra Dun. Walks from Mussoorie past the library end take you to Kempty Falls (Walk 17), George Everest's House and Survey Point (Walk 15), historic Cloud End (Walks 12, 15, and 22), and Binog (Walks 14, 16, and 21). Walks past the Picture Palace end take you to Thatyur (Walks 8 and 20), Lal Tibba (Walks 4, 6, 13 and 18) and Top Tibba (Walk 11). All of these walks take you through forests and streams, and past small villages with friendly inhabitants. There are plenty of places for a picnic lunch, and quite a few little tea stalls and restaurants with delicious fare. To the north-east of Mussoorie are the Garhwal ranges of the Himalayas, which include the peak of Gangotri, the official source of the Ganges. On a clear day you can see panoramic views of these mountains from vantage points along most of the walks in this book.

Up until the late 1980's, motorized traffic was banned along the Mall Road. All transport along the Mall Road was by foot or cycle rickshaw, so it was quiet and serene. The coolies and cycle rickshaw drivers still ply their trade, but now have to compete with the cars, vans and motorbikes which dominate the Mall. Consequently, the Mall has lost some of its original charm. But

you do not have to go far beyond the Mall to find quiet and serene places where you can get up close with nature.

Having said this, the Mall does have its attractions, including shopping, the ropeway to Gun Hill, and historical if dilapidated hotels such as Hackman's (now potentially being renovated). In the early evening locals and tourists promenade along the Mall Road, giving the place an air of excitement and a genuine holiday feel.

All of the walks in this book start from the Library, which was first established in 1843, or the Picture Palace. This was an arbitrary choice, and there is no reason why you should necessarily start out from either of these places, at least once you have familiarized yourself with the basic layout of Mussoorie. Today, the Library is rather dilapidated. It is for members only, but if you sneak up the stairs and ask the librarian nicely he will probably let you have a look around, and then no doubt will be eager for a nice chat. There are some fantastic old books in the Library and it is a pity that the conditions under which these books are stored is less than ideal. However, if you get chatting with the librarian you will see he has a real passion for the conservation of this important and historic resource. The Picture Palace, as it is still known, is now a venue for video games. It has not functioned as a movie theatre for many years.

The maps in this book were constructed by the authors using a global positioning system device, so they are all to scale. All the tracks, in GPS exchange format, are downloadable at [www.mussooriewalks.com](http://www.mussooriewalks.com). There will be slight errors with the tracks as the accuracy is only as good as the access to satellites. This means that in some places, particularly in the valleys, errors can be up to about 30 metres (both on the ground and in altitude). In addition, the maps are far from complete. It would take a lifetime to walk all of the interconnecting village paths and goat tracks, so there will be paths you will come across which are not on the maps. Nevertheless, we are confident there is enough detail in the maps so that you will not get lost. At the front of the book you will find a master map that covers all of the 22 walks.

For each walk, we then provide a section of the master map pertaining to the specific walk, along with the route for the walk itself. Roads and paths are in black, dead ends or driveways are in grey, while the route for the walk is in red. For each walk, we then provide some general information followed by a graph showing the altitude, and numbered steps to guide you along each section of the walk. The steps are numbered on the maps and the graphs so you can (we hope) easily find your way from one section to another.

All of the walks in this book can be completed within a day. So you can have a nice sleep in a comfortable bed, breakfast, a picnic or restaurant lunch at some stage on the walk, and then be back for a great meal in the evening. We begin with two short walks (~ 1 h) to help you acclimatise to the altitude and then three longer (~4 h) but relatively easy walks to familiarise you with the geography and topology of greater Mussoorie beyond the Library to the west and beyond the Picture Palace to the east. The rest of the walks take you further afield, and in some cases you will ascend and descend 1000 metres in a day. For some walks, we advise that you take a taxi to a point at some distance from Mussoorie and follow some of the small tracks back to town. In all cases, you should consider the recommended track as just that. Feel confident that you can take your own path using our suggested route as a guide.

The terrain around Mussoorie is steep, so some of the walks are quite strenuous. So take it easy for the first few days until you get your 'mountain legs'. The authors are both in their fifties and have sedentary occupations, so none of the walks are really difficult. The times we have set aside for the walks include time for dawdling, lunch and admiring the views. We hope you come to love this place like we do!

When describing the route we sometimes use the terms '1<sup>st</sup> exit', '2<sup>nd</sup> exit' etc, numbered in the clockwise direction. For example, at a cross-road, the 1<sup>st</sup> exit would be a left turn, the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit would be straight ahead, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit would be a right turn.

Some of these walks are to rather remote spots and through steep terrain. You will require sturdy walking boots for all but the shortest walks in the book. We find it useful to take along a walking stick to help keep ourselves upright on steep descents. You should also make sure you take plenty of drinking water along with you.

Finally, there are a few warnings we must give you. We have tried very hard to make the book as up-to-date as possible, but things are always changing. In particular, many of the rough paths are being progressively paved by the municipality. Landslides are also quite common, so you might find your path blocked at some stage. If this occurs, please be very careful. If in doubt, turn back. You should also be aware that some of the wildlife can bite! We have never seen a bear or a leopard, but others have. So make sure you get back to town before dark! We have also come across the odd snake, so look out for curved sticks on the path that move. You will see much birdlife and the ubiquitous macaque and langur monkeys. The monkeys are harmless provided you do not threaten them in anyway.

The authors accept no responsibility for the safety of persons using this book. Walking in the mountains is a potentially dangerous pastime. If you take any of these walks, you do so at your own risk. Nevertheless, we have had many years' of enjoyment walking these paths without major incident. We hope you have as much fun as we have had!

## GRADE, DISTANCE AND APPROXIMATE TIMING FOR EACH WALK

Comparison of timing, difficulty, grade, distance and ascent for each walk.

Walk	Walking Time	Difficulty	Grade	Distance (km)	Ascent (m)
1	1 h 20 min	Easy	Flat	5	75
2	1 h 45 min	Easy	Some steep ascents	5.6	189
3	2½ hours	Easy	Some steep ascents	6.2	197
4	3-5 hours	Easy	Some steep ascents	8-13.9	300-491
5	4-4½ hours	Easy	Some steep ascents	9.7	371
6	3¾ hours	Easy	Long steep ascent	8.4	420
7	3¾ hours	Easy	Long steep ascent	7.9	431
8	4½ hours	Moderate	Long steep ascent	7.3	1088
9	3-5½ hours	Moderate	Some steep ascents	10.9-13.1	461-614
10	5 hours	Moderate	Some steep ascents	14.3	660
11	5 hours	Hard	Some steep ascents	7.9	698
12	5½ hours	Hard	Long steep ascent	15.1	752
13	5½ hours	Hard	Long steep ascent	12.2	716
14	5-7 hours	Hard	Some steep ascents	15.1	791
15	5-7 hours	Hard	Some steep ascents	16.7	737
16	6-7 hours	Hard	Long steep ascents	17.3	739
17	6-7 hours	Hard	Long steep ascent	14.2	960
18	6-7 hours	Hard	Long steep ascent	14.5-14.6	967-1110
19	6-7 hours	Hard	Long steep ascent	15.5	878
20	6½-7 hours	Very Hard	Long steep ascents	17.1	1125
21	7-8 hours	Very Hard	Long steep ascents	18	1023
22	7-8 hours	Very Hard	Long steep ascents	20.5	1062

## **WALK 15: GEORGE EVEREST HOUSE, CLOUD END LOOP**

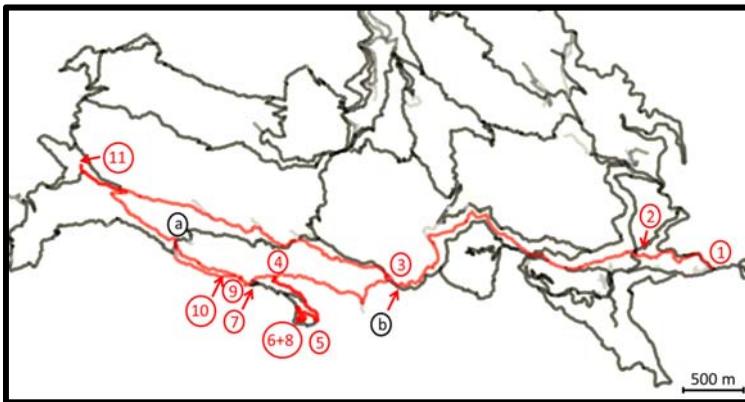
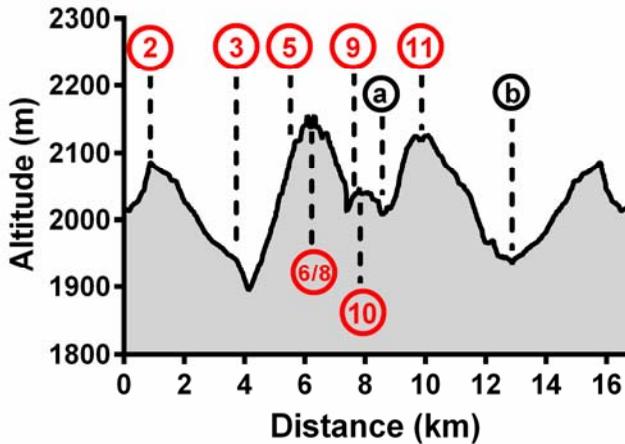
**RATING: HARD/SOME STEEP ASCENTS**

**DISTANCE: 16.7 KM**

**ASCENT: 737 M**

**TIME: 5 TO 7 HOURS (DEPENDING ON ROUTE)**

This walk will take you out to the west of Mussoorie to the house once owned (and occupied) by George Everest (you know, the mountain). The house is also known as Hathipaon, which was the name Everest gave it. The walk out to the house should take you about 2 hours. The house is currently a bit of a wreck, although it has not yet deteriorated to the state of a 'ruin'. Indeed, the structure of the house, with its enormous ceiling beams, is still pretty solid, so one can walk from room to room and imagine what it would be like if restored and comfortably furnished. You can almost feel the warmth of the enormous open fire, but then your day-dreams will be interrupted by a cow wandering through the drawing room, giving you an accusatory look as if you might steal the silverware. Everest knew his geography; to the south west are fantastic views of the Doon Valley and to the north east are spectacular views of the snows with Mussoorie in the foreground. There is an optional hike up the hill behind the house, which will take about 90 minutes return (and this optional hike is included in the above figures; 2.4 km, 170 m ascent). The top of the hill provides fantastic views and is a great place for a picnic lunch. Alternatively, you could break out the samosas at Everest's House and give the hill a miss. From Everest's House there is a walk across the valley and up the hill to Cloud End, which takes about an hour. Cloud End is a 'resort' with fantastic views. Sometimes it is closed, but if it is open, drop in for some chai and admire the views. The walk back from Cloud End takes about 2 hours 15 min.



1. From the Library, take the road to the right. As you round the bend you should get your first glimpse of the snows for the day. At the Hindu temple (before the taxi stand) take the road (Convent Road) to the left which goes up to Waverley past the Country Inn & Suites (formerly Oasis Hotel). Keep left up the stairs; the right road takes you to the hotel. As you go up the hill you will see the turret of Kapurthala's Palace. The best views of the Palace can be had from the car park at the Country Inn & Suites, so take a short detour here if you wish.

2. At Waverley there is a 5-way intersection (plus the driveway to the convent) at the top of the hill next to the entrance of the Convent of Jesus and Mary. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit to Everest's House. As you stroll along the road cast your eyes from left to right along the horizon. You should see The Abbey Estate, Cloud End, Binog, the Buddhist Temple and prayer flags, and towering above this the snows. Once you have had enough of the view, carry on along Hathipaon Road. You will come to an intersection, just before some shops, where the left (high) road takes you to Guru Nanak Fifth Centenary School (Walk 2). Take the right (low) road. The next fork left goes to The Abbey Estate (private property). You will then pass another path off to your right that takes you down to the Municipal Gardens (Company Bagh, Walk 5). At the next fork take the left road (the right goes to the ruins of Mackinnon's Brewery (Walk 14). A little further along if you look down to the right you will see a helipad and the ruins of Mackinnon's Brewery. If you look ahead, from left to right you will see the peak of Hathipaon, Everest Survey Point, Cloud End, Bhadraj (in the distance) and Binog. Below to the right is the valley below Binog (the Siya Valley; Walk 14) going down to Kempty Falls (Walk 17). A little further on you will pass the driveways of Snowdon Estate (now Acharya Tulsi Chetna Foundation Trust) and Lynndale (private properties).
3. You will come to a 5-way intersection at a village named Park Toll. The road straight ahead will take you to Everest's House and Cloud End (you will come back this way), but a more interesting and pleasant (minimal traffic, although this is changing) way to go is via the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit down a gravel road (note the first exit is behind you to the left). You will come down into a lovely valley. You will pass a bridge over a dry river bed (probably a torrent in the monsoon) and then the road bends to the right up to Everest's House. This is one of those climbs where you keep thinking you are there, but then find the road keeps going up. At the fork in the road where there is a grassy area on the right, you have the option of going on up to Everest's House (right turn) or first taking a detour to the top of Hathipaon (left path; Step 4). There is also a third option to go up Hathipaon which is a little more scary, and should not be attempted if you suffer a little

vertigo. For this option take the right turn here to Everest's House and then go to Step 7. If you do not want to go to the top of Hathipaon take the right turn here to Everest's House and then go on to Step 9. Either way, when you get to Everest's House, have a stroll through and around it, and soak in the views.



4. The path to the top of Hathipaon curves around to the left. There are private properties to your left and right, but the road is a public thoroughfare. Continue on up the hill and when you reach a fork go straight ahead (right fork) and up the hill. Shortly after you will come to a 4-way intersection; go straight ahead (2<sup>nd</sup> exit) up the hill. You will then come up to a cliff face. There are two options here to head up to the peak. One involves a little bit of rock climbing while the other is more straightforward. If you want to do the rock climbing option go to Step 5. If not, take the path to the right at the cliff face, and keep right heading up and around the mountain (be careful, as there is another path off to the right just before this one). After passing between some big boulders the path will flatten out. Keep heading around the mountain to the right. You will reach a junction where the path

continues around the mountain and another goes left up the hill. Head left up the mountain along the prayer flags. Turn left along, and on the inside of, a small stone fence. Go to Step 6.

5. For the rock climbing option head for the gap in the two peaks. To get there you must first climb up to your right and then left towards that gap. Climb up the marble face (about 3 metres). Once over the gap head right around the mountain. Continue past the area under the flags, around to a group of trees and then take the path to the right heading up. The path narrows in one place (and is a little scary). You will then come to a point where you will be looking down the ridge towards Everest's House. The path continues around the mountain, but instead head up the mountain towards where the majority of the prayer flags are located.
6. Once at the ridge take some time to enjoy the sensational views of Mussoorie and the snows (>100° views). Below is Mackinnon's Brewery and the Siya valley at the foot of Binog. Further around you will get a view of the 5-way junction (Park Toll) that you passed in Step 3 and the road back from Cloud End. In the distance you can see the radio tower at the top of Lal Tibba. When you are ready head around underneath the prayer flags and around the peak to the right (the one closest to Everest's House). When you reach a small Cyprus tree (a few hundred metres further on), go about 5 metres further on and then head on up the path to the top of the hill. This is a great spot for a picnic lunch if the weather is fine. Go to Step 8.



7. This option is for those who are game and do not suffer from vertigo. First, follow the prayer flags up the hill. There are multiple paths up to the summit, but the path to the right provides great views of the Doon Valley and beyond. It narrows and becomes a bit scary, so take one of the goat tracks up to the ridge. This will bring you to the left side of the hill with great views of Mussoorie and the snows. Below is Mackinnon's Brewery and the valley at the foot of Binog. Further around you will get a view of the 5-way junction (Park Toll) you passed in Step 3 and the road back from Cloud End. In the distance you can see the radio tower at the top of Lal Tibba. The path will come to a 3-way intersection. Take the left (high) path to go up the hill or go right to get back down to Everest's House. You will come to an old marble quarry. To the right are retaining walls. You can ascend through these with a bit of rock climbing to get to a T-junction and if you go right here you will get to the area that has been quarried out of the hill. Turn right just after the Cyprus tree to get to the top of the highest peak. This is a great spot for a picnic lunch if the weather is fine.

8. Once you have enjoyed the views (and maybe a samosa or two), head back down towards the little tree. Turn left at the tree, left after passing under the prayer flags, and then right when you meet up with the path that goes around the mountain (3-way junction). Once you get to the cliff face turn left and then take the right fork that leads down. Continue heading down the path until you reach the main track that goes up to Everest's House. Turn left here up to Everest's House.



9. From Everest's House, head up the hill towards the Survey Point (the arched structure). There is a plaque there which marks the bicentenary of the Great Trigonometric Survey of India, which began in 1802, and was led by George Everest. Unfortunately it was vandalised sometime in 2014.
10. After visiting the Survey Point, head back down to the road that you have just been on and turn left. Then head down the path towards some houses beyond a big fence. Aim for the middle of the fence as this is the part where there is a gap. Then continue on to the left of the houses. You will pass very close to the last house, but once you are near it you will see that the path keeps

going. Keep to the main path until it drops to the left to some houses and then turn right onto the road. [Note: if this option is closed (private property), you could instead go back towards the Survey Point and about 100-200 metres after a tea stall (but before the Survey Point), turn right down a path towards the edge of the mountain. This path continues below the tea stall, past some rubbish, but then on to a lovely forest area. You will eventually come out at a road. Turn right at the road.] Look up to the northwest and you will see a house in the distance up on a bluff. This is the general direction that you will be heading once you negotiate the next 200 metres or so. After about 100 metres, turn left into the pine forest (a). The path then veers around to the left behind some houses. After the houses take the right hand path that leads in the direction of the house in the distance up on the bluff. Head up the higher path that goes up the hill. As you pass along the edge of a rather sheer cliff (not too close) you will see a village below which you can visit on Walk 12. Keep to the main path, but if in doubt keep to the high path. The terrain is steep and the path rather narrow, but the views to the left are wonderful. After you have continued along the cliff for a while the track veers to the right up the hill. Head up this hill to the road to Cloud End. When you hit the road, turn left towards Cloud End. About 20 m on the right you will pass the path that will take you up to the summit of Binog (Walks 16 and 21) and the Siya Valley (Walk 17), but instead take the road to Cloud End. If the gate to Cloud End is open, pop in for some chai because the views are fantastic. Other walks in this book use Cloud End as a starting point to explore further to the west (Walks 12 and 22).

11. Once you have had a rest, turn left and head home. As you stroll you will see a great view of Everest's House to the right. At the bottom of the hill you will come to a 3-way intersection. The road to the right would take you back to Everest's House, but keep straight ahead for home. You will then come to the 5-way intersection you passed at Step 3 (Park Toll). You could retrace your footsteps (straight ahead, shown in red on the map) back to the Library via Waverley, or you could take more scenic path above the road (shown in black on the map, b). To do the more scenic path, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> exit up the hill. You will pass a temple

on the right and soon after reach a two-way junction. Take the left path up the hill. At the top of this path there is a driveway that passes from the road below and to the left up to a gate on your right. Beyond the gate is Snowdon Estate (now Acharya Tulsi Chetna Foundation Trust). Cross over this driveway and head on a small path above the driveway (looking down to your left you will see the driveway below you). Keep on this path and meander around the mountain. Continue on the path behind a hotel, past a rubbish dump, and on to the roadway. When you reach a roadway, turn left towards the main Hathipaon Road. Then turn right and continue on until you reach the 5-way intersection at Waverley. Take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit to your right down the hill. At the bottom of the hill, turn right at the main road, and you will come to the Library in no time.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We are very grateful to the management and staff of Hotel Padmini Nivas. Over the years we have spent many a December (and assorted other months) in our favourite Room 10, overlooking the Doon Valley. We have been very lucky to make some great friends in Mussoorie, particularly Mr Vikram Zutshi and Mrs Harshada Worah. They and their families have made Mussoorie really feel like our second home. Vikram has done many of these walks with us, acting as our interpreter, so that we have hopefully got most of the names right (if not the spelling). We also thank Vikram, Praveen and Urmilla for their wonderful cooking. Most of all, we thank Vikram for putting up with us night after night. Many thanks to Stephen Alter and Krishnan Kutty for your enthusiasm for our project and Sejal Worah for putting us in touch with the right people at the right time.

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