

Subject: Dispatches from the Subcontinent III

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The Spiti Valley



Hands down the most dramatic creation of nature and man that I have ever witnessed. The valley is carved out from a river flow causing incredible shapes and colors along the walls. Man has blasted roads into the mountains where none should ever be. In many places there are two-track, C-shaped slots in the sides of steep cliffs that only birds should see. We rode these cliff roads for miles.



After one stretch we all pulled off to an overlook for a break. Sue stopped and before she could get her helmet off she started sobbing out of fear, she said. After she retained her composure, she asked when the last time was we cried because we were scared. I said it had happened 5 minutes earlier for me. Phil said it was before his last date. After a few hugs she found her mojo and was ready for more.

On Thursday we camped at Nako. This a small tent village above the city with a gathering area and a dining tent. Woody and I shared a stand-up tent with two raised beds, chairs, a hard floor, and a separate water closet with a flushing toilet and shower. OK, it's glamping, but there is no heat. After dinner we gathered around the fire pit and traded lies while passing around a bottle of Indian-distilled Royal Stag whiskey. There may have been leaping over the flames.

Angus is running like a champ, in no small part to the nightly maintenance by Anu's crew. Labor is very inexpensive by western standards in India, and Anu has 6 or 8 crew members following us in the luggage truck and the chase jeep. Manoosh and a couple others were from my last visit. They check there bikes, distribute bottled water, help shelp the luggage and the like. New

this time is Suju the doctor and her husband. She has been checking out blood / oxygen levels periodically and tending to scrapes and bruises. While only about 90 lbs, her smile can light up a room.

There's also the retired Belgian trekking couple Phil met while in line for the Inter-Line Permits that allows us to travel close to the Tibetan boarder (not Nepal as previously reported). Instead of taking one of those nasty Indian busses, Phil made room for them in the luggage truck for a few days, so they're with us. And the circus rolls on.



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