For Students, Visitors, Professionals, Family

Welcome to the United States of America. Whether you are a student, parent (visiting to help your son or daughter have their first child), on a temporary work assignment, or just visiting this country for vacation, it is very easy to maintain your Jain Way of Life practices. In fact, in North America you will experience new and innovative Jain practices and expand your understanding of this healthy and compassionate way of life.

North American Jains are dynamic and active with more than 68 Jain organizations and more than 30 Jain temples. All major Jain festivals are celebrated, and conventions are held every year for youths and families.

The following are some recommendations and guidelines

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<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>At restaurants, ask the server, “What vegetarian items do you have on your menu. We don’t eat meat, fish, eggs...” Check the menu. Indian food: Naans have eggs in them. If you are eating a buffet, ask them to make roti for you. Thai: watch out for oyster or fish sauce in curry, eggs in pad thai. Italian: eggs in some types of pastas. Mexican: sometimes the beans are cooked in lard. Ice cream and dessert: watch out for eggs and gelatin.</th>
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<td>Fast food</td>
<td>Always politely request them to change gloves, wipe the counter, and use a fresh knife at places like Subway, Quiznos, Pizza, Deli, Blimpies (and explain your reason ... “I am a vegetarian”).</td>
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Caution: Jains in North America strive for unity among the various sects (Shvetämbar, Digambar, Sthanakvasi, etc.). Please bring your best practices from India and do not create sectarianism. Know that Jain traditions are rich and varied, and conducted in different languages with different idol images. Only by embracing these will you be practicing true Non-Absolutism (Anekantvad – multifacetedness). We want North American Jains now and in the future to practice and maintain their respective traditions and live as unified Jains practicing JWOL.
Drinking | There is absolutely no stigma in refraining from drinking alcohol. Even taking a sip or two is not necessary when making a toast. If you do want a nice tasty drink from the bar, you can always ask for virgin (non-alcoholic) drinks (such as Pina Colada, Strawberry Daquri, Margarita, etc.). Ask the waiter, “What non-alcoholic drinks do you have?” Do not give in to peer pressure.

Take a sip | When someone is asking you to take a sip, let them know “I don’t drink alcohol” (and if it requires further explanation, “I believe in Non-Violence in thoughts, words, and actions; and by drinking this drink my thinking will be impaired and I may say hurtful words or drive while drunk”).

Tipping | 15%-20%. This is a must (even if you are a student) for service as the waiting staff expects this for part of their income. Thank them if they went out of their way to help you select delicious vegetarian options.

Indian Stores | Most cities have Indian stores. These stores carry a great variety of vegetarian foods and prepacked curries, sabjies and roti. Read the ingredients and know what they mean.

Jain Temple | Almost every major city has a temple. As you visit sites of major cities, take the time to visit Jain temples. All Jain temples have their web sites, locating them is easy (see Appendix on Jain Centers and Organization on page 178).

Driving | Politeness and safe defensive driving is key. Always be cautious. If in doubt to who has the right of way, let others through. Avoid using cell phone irresponsibly.

Purchasing | North America has liberal laws for returning purchases. If you discover any food item has an animal product in it, don’t hesitate to return it. Also, please don’t abuse this right by using a product and then returning it.

Honesty | Almost every person in North America is honest, respectful, and sincere.

Religious Celebrations | Every Jain center has a web site. Most Jain festivals celebrated in India are celebrated in temples across North America. Every Jain center conducts Pooja (prayers) and Pathshala (religious school) on a weekly or bi-weekly basis; detailed schedules can be found on the web site.

Fitness | Join a yoga or meditation group, exercise and stay healthy. Some university fitness centers are free.

Politeness | People are extremely polite. Sorry, Please, and Thank You are commonly used words. Excuse me can be used to get someone’s attention if you are looking for help.

4th of July | Each 4th of July there are large gatherings of Jains. There is a JAINA convention every other year and YJA (Young Jains of America) every other year as well. There is also YJP organization for professionals.

**JAINA** (Federation of Jain Association of North America) is an umbrella organization for all Jain Centers. It has many projects that you can be part of and has a convention once every two years during the July 4th week.

**Vegetarian Group:** Join the local vegetarian group. You will learn about new and innovative healthy food. See Resources chapter for web links.

Contributor: Metri Jain