



# Voilà!

A monthly newsletter from  
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*serving company, leadership and individual staff*



## Voilà! - Holiday 2015 Edition

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Greetings, all!

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support this year. There have been many ups and downs, but I'm ending 2015 on a high note, having just returned from an incredible trip to India. Read on for more about my adventures there.

For 2016 I am recommitting myself to spreading civility throughout the community. I have included The Parks Image Group's Civility Counts Commitment pledge below should you want to learn more or are curious as to how your everyday actions can make the world a better place.

I hope you all have an incredible holiday season. Use this time for some much-needed relaxation and reflection.

Happy holidays!

Peggy

*"I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life and I've never let it keep*

## A Reminder About Civility



If you are in the market for a new year's resolution you can actually keep, choose civility. It is not measured in pounds or BMI; nor does it require a membership fee or expensive special equipment. Choosing civility is a low-cost, high-reward resolution that is guaranteed to enhance and improve the quality of your life. And isn't that what resolutions are all about: self-improvement?

Make yourself accountable by pledging to follow this Civility Counts Commitment.

- I will be aware of others and be sensitive to the immediate context of my actions.
- I will listen closely and give my best efforts to understand other points of view.
- I will be inclusive and welcoming to all.
- I will not gossip and remind others of the importance of refraining from doing so.
- I will show respect to, and honor, others especially in disagreement.
- I will find opportunities to agree.
- I will apologize sincerely, and repair damage relationships.
- I will give constructive comments, suggestions and feedback only when asked.
- I will focus on the issues in a discussion and refrain from personal attacks.
- I will accept responsibility for my actions and refrain from blaming others.

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## Etiquette Corner: Spreading Some Kindness

A reader shared this nice story with me, and I wanted to pass it along, in her own words.

"My niece, who is 23 and lives in NYC, told me she is making a point to smile at every Muslim woman she sees on the street because she thought they might be afraid in public because of all the vitriol these days. I am proud of her for thinking that way."

Isn't that a nice gesture? I've been dismayed at how negatively people have reacted to Muslims who have nothing to do with the actions of extremists. We don't treat every gun owner as a potential terrorist, so why don't Muslims get the same

courtesy? Kudos to this young woman for taking the time to act rationally and with civility.

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## My Holiday in India



As one of my India travelers said, this was more an education than a vacation. I had preconceptions of what India would be like: poverty (26% of Indians live in poverty), cows in the streets (they are revered and sacred), exotic spicy food, streets mobbed with people (India's population is 1.2B people), and unpleasant smells. India is a country of contrasts. Although I grew up in a third-world country, I wasn't ready for the juxtaposition of poverty and wealth I witnessed in India. After riding on our orange Tauck bus and looking at the scenery on the streets for hours, we would go through a guarded gate and be in a palace. The hotels were some of the most coveted in the world. The properties were absolutely beautiful, with fountains, peacocks outside of our suites, beautiful flowers, colorful gardens, and floating lotus ponds, and the staff was all young, tall, and gorgeous, wearing brocade sherwanis and turbans.

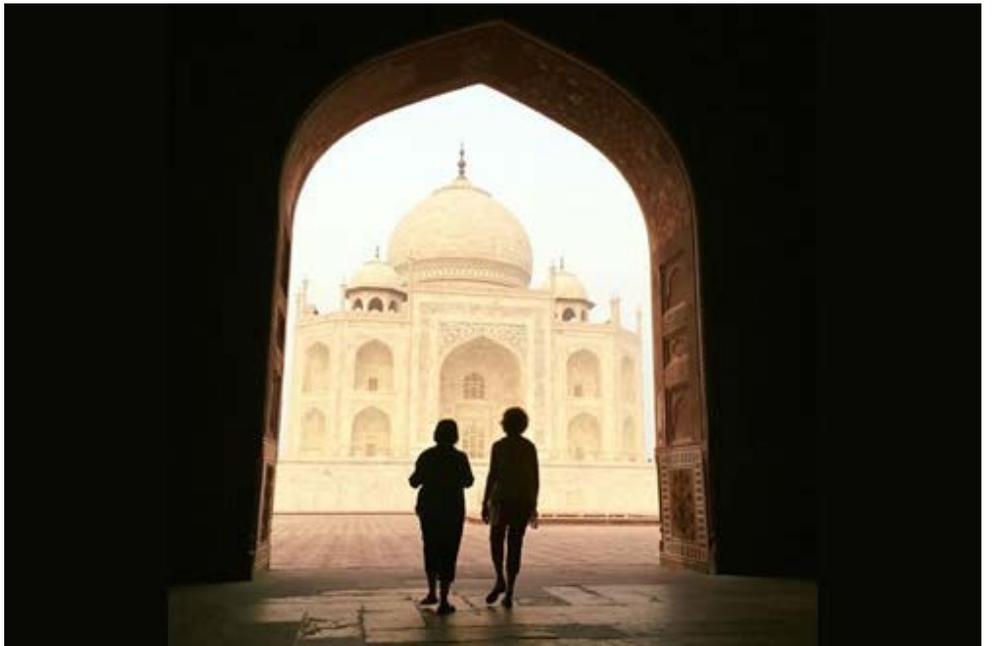
To see such poverty alongside some of the most expensive real estate in the world can be daunting. And yet, the Indian people are friendly, nice, pleasant, helpful, and always smiling. India is a very colorful country due to the saris most women wear, the flowers, the markets, and the people's happy disposition.

The traffic in India is nothing you've ever witnessed. You can have up to four vehicles in a one-lane road but you never see accidents. Drivers honk their horn 24/7 not in anger but to help other drivers not run into each other. Now, that's civility! I felt like I was on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride at times.

I saw men bathing on the sidewalks; boars, water buffalo, camels, donkeys, monkeys, elephants, pigs, and dogs wandering in the streets; cows sitting in the middle of the road and preventing our bus from going any further; women beggars holding babies that had been drugged to stay still; baby goats nursing; and women in beautiful colorful saris kneeling in gardens and weeding the grounds of the palaces. And we rode an elephant on the way up to Amber Fort in Jaipur.



We drove into Jaipur, the pink city, as they were getting ready for Diwali, the festival of lights. All the buildings were decorated and marigolds were everywhere, including the Marigold Girls from our tour.



And yes, I saw the Taj Mahal. I could see it from my hotel window in Agra. Although the Taj is the highlight of a visit to India, what got me the most was in Varanasi, the most sacred of cities, witnessing from a boat along the river Ganges the nightly ceremonies of Hindu cremating the dead. (No, it did not smell.) One of the most beautiful sights was the cruise on Lake Pichola to reach our hotel in Udaipur, the most romantic city in India. I felt like I was in Switzerland for a minute.

I met some wonderful people on this Tauck tour and our guide, Peter, made the tour so much more interesting with his anecdotes and past experiences. If you want to travel in style, go Tauck! (No, I am not paid to sponsor them!)

Namaste.

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### 3 Great Pieces To Buy Right Now

Looking to give your closet a jolt of energy?

Consider these white-hot trends.

1. Velvet: Velvet blazers, suits, dresses, and bags are proving popular with the holiday party circuit. This sensual fabric is the perfect way to jazz up a basic black piece.
2. Rose-gold jewelry: If you can bear to take a break from your go-to gold or silver, consider rose-gold to be a strong contender. A pair of warm, pinkish-gold hoops or a bangle can give your jewelry box a fresh, on-trend spin.
3. Blanket scarf: Mix up your winter wardrobe by swapping your standard slim scarf for an oversized blanket scarf. I've seen some women belt theirs over a coat for an extra-chic twist.

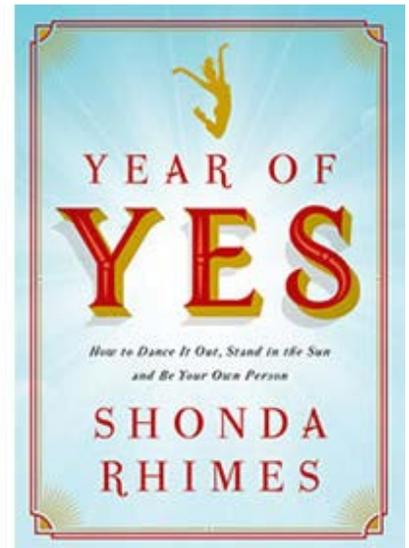


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### Book Corner: *Year of Yes*

If you own a TV, you're no doubt familiar with Shonda Rhimes. She's the creator behind hit shows like *Scandal* and *Grey's Anatomy*, and considered to be one of the most powerful women in Hollywood. She's now written a book, called *Year of Yes: How to Dance It Out, Stand in the Sun, and Be Your Own Person*. I picked up a copy during my holiday shopping and I can't wait to read it! The buzz is that it's a truly empowering read for women, and I can't think of a better read to get excited for the year ahead. If you're still hunting for presents for the Olivia Pope fan or career gal in your life, consider this.

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### Tech Corner: *Accompany*



One of my fellow travelers mentioned that her son runs an e-tailer called *Accompany*. When I saw the site, [Accompanyus.com](http://Accompanyus.com), I was immediately hooked. The premise is a great one. The site only sells products that are ethically made, fair-trade, or part of a philanthropic project. You can buy items made by artisans all over the world, from handcrafted jewelry to blankets woven in Mexico. Everything is stylish and unique, and I've bought several presents already. It's nice to find an online boutique that gives back!

Just a reminder: You've got a passport to travel, not to be obnoxious. Everyone is watching!

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### Men's Corner: *Face Facts*



The other day I stumbled upon an interesting study. According to researchers from University College London's School of Management, being a handsome man could hurt one's career opportunities. While attractive men are seen as competent and professional, their looks could also be seen as threatening by colleagues, putting their chances of promotion at risk. This may be especially true in fields like sales and investment banking, where individual effort is rewarded over team performance. Researchers explained that bosses don't want to be "shown up" by employees who may be able to use their good looks to get ahead. It all boils down to jealousy, basically. I'm curious to see if anyone has experienced this first-hand. Have your looks hindered your prospects?

*"Be passionate and move forward with gusto every single hour of every single day until you reach your goal." - Ava DuVernay*

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