

Sunday 29 January 2012 – Arabian Sea 26° Sunny but windy –

clocks forward 30 mins - + 5.5 hours GMT

We met Jeff on the way to Bridge and like us he was thinking of not going. Kevin was not quite so frightening but Jeff was painfully slow. A couple from Tasmania joined our table tonight which put a strain on Rick as he couldn't understand his accent. Hilly and Stu are very impressed with our willpower as we have only been ordering wine on formal nights and yesterday we only drank half a bottle and saved the rest for another day. Tonight's entertainment was a celebration of "Queens" hits, there were fireworks at the grand finale. Getting an internet connection is difficult but we are keeping up with the news through CNN, BBC World News and Sky and there is also a ships newspaper. We had a nice relaxing day, no cinema. Tomorrow we are in Mumbai and are going to share a taxi with Hilly and Stu who have been there before. Lots of the staff will be going ashore to meet their families some of whom may have travelling some way.

Highlight of the day was that Rick made polite conversation with Kate Aide when he found himself alone in the lift with her. Her first lecture is next Tuesday – he used to really fancy her, .

Dubai - Mumbai

1146 nm

Monday 30 January 2012 – Mumbai 30° Sunny



Outside Ghandi's House with Hilly and Stu

First impressions are that the port is not as busy with people as expected and the city is hazy, probably pollution. Taxi negotiations were heated and at one time the police had to intervene. We settled on two taxi's to go in a convoy at \$50 each. We had been warned to expect nothing like we had ever seen before but we have now visited several third world cities and this wasn't too bad. We drove past the harbour and the first stop was Ghandi's house, being an anniversary of his death there was religious singing in the background. Years ago we took Rick's mother to see the Ghandi film but we need to see it again as I can't remember much at all. We passed lots of colonial buildings like the Post Office and the Victoria Terminus Station where India's first train went in 1853 and The Hanging Gardens. Next to the Hanging Gardens are The Towers of Silence (closed to visitors and hidden from view by a wall) where the Parsis, a religious sect, put out their dead to be eaten by the vultures. Between every stop we had to visit a shop, it didn't matter how much we said we didn't want to go shopping the drivers had to go to get their card stamped to get a free watch. We saw a few cows on the pavements with ladies collecting their poo, hopefully not for the chapattis. We had been warned about the beggars but there weren't many, the taxi drivers were much worse, The traffic was something else, they drive on their horn!! The highlight was the open air laundry, mostly done by men. Our photograph doesn't do it justice.



The laundry where we are told nothing gets lost



Jain Temple

We visited the Jain Temple where we had to take off our shoes, we could look in but we couldn't go in and ladies having a period are advised to give it a miss. The Jain religion believe they should not kill any living thing, however small. We ended the taxi tour with a quick look at the Gateway to India and a pit stop at the Taj Mahal hotel that has recovered very well from the terrorist attack. Maybe because of that attack there has been the most stringent security we have seen anywhere in the world. We had a bit of trouble persuading our driver to take us back to the boat without another shopping stop but I was firm and also he was running out of petrol. We left Hilly and Stu in their taxi that was about to conk out at any moment. We enjoyed today but there is a lot to be said for the guided tour as apart from what we have read we don't know any history. On our tour we saw a crowd of people waiting for a star to appear from a building and back at the ship we had a Bollywood send-off. Robert, our cabin steward got a chance to meet his family for a few hours but he won't be going home for another seven months. I was surprised that there weren't any obvious internet cafés so it's back to using the ships system during the night. The majority of the Indian people maybe poor but they are more gentle, friendly, happy and appealing than the Egyptians.



A good way to see the sights



A lady rummaging through the rubbish

Back on board it's Curry Night and Master Australian Guitarist Francis Diatschenko. He played for the Queen on her last visit. I am sure he is very good but as much as we would like to we just don't like Jazz.

Tuesday 31 January 2012 – At Sea on way to Cochin 27° Sunny

Rick's woken up with a cold, the new passengers have brought their colds with them. We're getting a bit more used to Kevin but can't really say it's fun. I had to play most of the games and they all said I have improved – little do they know it was just luck. There are so many activities we would like to do today but they overlap or clash with lunch, so we end up doing nothing different although

Rick did listen to half of the talk of the “History of the Guitar”. Hopefully, the more interesting talks will have been recorded and we can listen to them in our cabin. We've found a new place to hang out. We've always avoided the rear of the ship on deck 9 as it was where the smokers are able to indulge in their habit but if you go to the starboard side and further back it's fine. All the more interesting people are smokers and also there is a holiday atmosphere with more upbeat music. Our time in the sun is rationed just like our alcohol and food intake. I have a little story to tell you about India, some of you will already have heard it. At one time Artetch had an Indian partner who visited us regularly, usually to try and improve our relationship with them after many cock-ups. One day their MD phoned me to say they would like to give me a present, do I like diamonds? I replied that I couldn't possibly accept any gift like that. His response was that it was their custom to give gifts to important people to which I replied it wasn't the same in our country and that I would be embarrassed if he gave me such an expensive gift. He said he would still like to give me a gift. The day arrived when he was due to visit the factory and we were all getting very excited imagining elephants adorned in jewels arriving with treasure chests of gifts – yes we did get carried away. Rick phoned me and would I like to come into his office to receive my gift. I know I had rejected the diamonds but I have to say I was still excited. There was a ceremonial handing over of the gift. It was in a tiny jewellery red plastic box, still I was thinking something good may be inside. I am sorry to say that I and the girls in the office were very disappointed with the tiny, old fashioned gold earrings held down with a paperclip!. As Rick is suffering we're doing our own thing tonight. Looking forward to Cochin tomorrow when we are going to see a traditional Kerala Art Performance then the following day we are at the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage in Sri Lanka.

I expect you are missing my bad taste jokes by now, here's a few to keep you going:

How do they serve alcoholic drinks on an Italian ship – on the rocks

What vegetables do you get with dinner ? - leeks

What's the fastest way to get off the ship? - follow the Captain