

Monday 28 October



Before leaving for Udaipur we had a walk around the villages houses. Most were fairly modern but they still tend to sweep their rubbish into the open sewers. Bought two packets of crisps for five pence each. First stop a huge intricately carved, marble 15th century, Jain temple called Sheth Anandji Kalyanji. We were fascinated by the hanging bees nests.



We had left the desert scenery and now have a softer mountainous green topography with palm trees and swaying grasses. This is leopard country, not only do they attack wild dogs but also men and children. It was another knuckle busting ride with Raj overtaking on the high, narrow bends with deep drops either side. He has a certain sly expression when he overtakes. We stopped for him to feed some greedy monkeys. Then quite unexpectedly we came across a man with his buffalo irrigating his fields with a Persian Wheel, quite medieval even primitive. There were some women washing their clothes in the lake and a man and wife ploughing the field using a buffalo. They all smile and wave but I am still a bit apprehensive about taking their photo. First impressions of Udaipur were disappointing as it is meant to be the most romantic city in the



world. As we drove through the city it appeared like most others; colourful, bustling, full of rubbish and a traffic nightmare. Amidst the slow moving, tightly packed traffic was an elephant, men pushing carts, camels pulling carts, bicycles loaded high with boxes, rickshaws, buses and cars packed with people inside, out and on top, camels, goats and of course cows. The continuous hooting of horns adds to this.



Ganesha: The Elephant-Headed God

We are now staying in a former hunting lodge. Not too long ago Shikarbadi was exclusive to the royal family of Mewar. As with the other Palaces after independence in 1947 and the 1971 abolition of the Princely Privileges in order to be able to afford to keep their homes and retain their culture they have been made into hotels. This hotel has a private airstrip, a cricket pitch and a Mareari horse stud farm. Not good news as Rick is allergic to horses. Tonight we have all been sorting India out, first they need loads of skips for the rubbish and perhaps they should have a "Keep India Litter Free/Tidy" campaign. Next, sort out the cows by perhaps keeping them in pens as this would stop them leaving dung everywhere whilst still giving their owners the opportunity to milk and breed them and still use their dung for fuel. Main drainage is a must, especially in the cities. You just can't have people pissing and shitting everywhere, apart from the health implications they are made to look like animals. Build something better and affordable rather than the tents millions are living in at present. How about supplying them proper tents in the meantime, that would be a good start. I am thinking "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". Talking of a Godliness whereas Catholicism is based on guilt, Hinduism appears to be based on superstition. I am told there isn't a shortage of food in India but many Indians are stick-thin. They put so many restrictions upon themselves with their diet. A cow is buried when it dies, what a waste, if they are not starving what about people in other parts of the world. They like to protect the animals, even wild dogs, those with rabies can only be rounded up but not killed. I am ready to go home and eat a juicy steak and a fresh salad.

Tuesday 29 October [View of Palace from the lake](#)



[Inside the Palace](#)



We started the day with a walk around the hotel stud farm and saw the chickens and turkeys that had been very vocal since the early hours of the morning. I enjoyed the Palace Museum with its sun, Ganesh gates and highly decorative rooms. We had a local guide who didn't possess Hari's sense of humour. While standing in a courtyard we spotted some "Ladies" and "Gents" signs so I asked if we had time to use the facilities. The guide said he would show me, to which I sort of enquired if that was necessary. We all started laughing and he got very embarrassed. We didn't realise that the signs were only just brought stored there. He rushed off and then came back and escorted us to the toilets that were in the outer palace grounds. Meanwhile we had lost Eileen and Hari. After that episode we took a relaxing boat ride on Lake Pichola and had a leisurely walk on one of the islands. We keep coming across the French who were at our hotel in the desert.



[The lakes are used for washing clothes and bathing](#)



[View across the lake from a tourist island](#)

After lunch in a marquee we went back to the hotel to worry about our luggage again. Just before we came Jet Air reduced the baggage allowance on internal flights to 7kgs for hand luggage and only 17kgs for the hold whereas we had 23kgs for the international flight. We have all be dumping things along the way but Rick won't get rid of his heavy wooden elephants. Every day there seems to have been a discussion about our weight allowance and who has got rid of what. Rick is always anal about the weight of my suitcase. He usually travels light and wants me to do the same. However, we end up wasting our holiday buying him things that he hasn't brought. A holiday is the only time you get to wear certain clothes. After the many discussions about our weight allowance and after discarding as much as we can we think we decide to pay £2.50 per kilo excess baggage. Just as we think we have got it sorted Hari has given us a wooden box containing tea to add to it. Our luggage problem has now taken a whole paragraph but that is nothing compared to the number of times we gave discussed it. Eileen has a gadget to weigh our cases which has come in handy. We are all going to wear our heaviest clothes to the airport tomorrow. Once we take off all the layers we will look half the size.



Beautiful, colourful palace architecture – they use lots of mosaic and mirrors



The hotel staff feed the deer at 4.30 each day and fortunately it's right outside our room. We had a last city ride with Raj which was rush hour again or perhaps it's always rush hour here. We stopped at another one of the lakes that ran alongside the road. There was a seaside/holiday atmosphere with cafés, camel and horse rides. Everyone is getting prepared for the Diwali festival, even the garages are covered in tinsel.



Feeding time for deer, not much left for the peacocks



Udaipur lake at night

Our first meal in Delhi cost 12 each and it has gradually been reducing at each stop with Udaipur being about 4.5 a head. Of course the drinks bill is always as much, if not more than the food bill. We are using £1 to 100 rupees but we are actually getting an average of 96 to the £. Each stop to use the facilities cost 10.



Cheeky Monkey



Part of the Grounds of our hotel

I am a bit disappointed with Udaipur as it has been hyped up as the most romantic city in the world, which it certainly isn't. The Palace was interesting but only a small part is open to the public and it

was packed with school children. What none of us appreciated at the time was that being a private property there were no street sellers. Other than the three lakes there is not much else to see as the city is much like the others we have seen. Whether it is because of the Diwali or just some initiative we noticed that there is some effort being made to control the litter. We have enjoyed the hotel which was a former Royal Hunting Lodge. Rick especially enjoyed the opportunity to see a little cricket in the hotel grounds where they had a table set up with drinks and bananas for the players. A cheeky monkey stopped play by racing across the course and pinching the bananas.

Wednesday 30 October

We met in reception at 4.45 am all wearing layers of our heaviest clothes and me tottering in my platforms those being my heaviest shoes. The moment had finally arrived when we had the big weigh-in and believe it or not we all got away with no excess luggage charges! We are staying tonight in the 5 star Trident Hotel on Marine Drive. It's back to the real world of constant tipping and expensive meals.



Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station



Gateway of India

Many of the Colonial buildings are being given Indian Names

Mumbai has changed in the 18 months since our last visit, it's much cleaner and there seems to be less traffic and hooting. Whereas Delhi is the political capital Mumbai is the financial capital. I don't remember all the high rise and Art Nouveau buildings. I remember the slums but they are more substantial than those in Delhi where they are mostly homemade tents. During the week some people choose to stay in the slums that have electricity and water rather than having to travel often more than two hours each way into Mumbai to work. Our guide said that she has three children who all have good jobs, especially the married daughter who is in no hurry to have a baby. These days higher castes mostly choose to have one child, middle castes two and the lower castes many more. She would like one of her sons to marry and partners are often found through the social network sites as they can advertise their requirements one of which is usually someone of the same caste. Our guide said that it is not usual to marry up or down caste as everyone is proud of their caste. I personally don't believe this.



The Dabbawallahs



The Laundry next to the railway and amongst the high rise buildings

We visited Gandhi's House, the laundry, drove past The Victoria Terminus and the Gateway of India all of which we remember from our last visit. As we were all flagging after the early start we only paid a fleeting visit to The Prince of Wales Museum now renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya. The Victoria Terminus has also been renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. A first for us was watching the Dabbawallahs who are part of a system of collecting hot, home cooked lunches from over 200,000 suburban homes and delivering to offices in Mumbai. The Dabbawallahs are mostly illiterate but the lunches that are colour coded rarely go astray. The same system happens at the open air laundry. Now that the great weight of the luggage weight has been lifted we all felt liberated enough to buy another load of trash with negotiations taking place through the safety of the minibus window.



Rick found an Antique shop in the hotel and bought a telescope and compass to remember Uncle Eric by. We're missing Hari and Raj. Thinking about Raj we must update our wills when we get home as there were a few times when we didn't think we would make it back. Mumbai traffic seems more organised, no traffic going the other way on your side of the road, no cows, camels, elephants, bullock and hand carts - seems a bit strange really. Our guide recommended a vegetarian restaurant called Status that was within walking distance of the wonderful 5 star Regent Hotel. We felt quite brave but safe making our way there without the back-up of a guide. It was packed but we were probably the only Brits there and Rick was initially disappointed that they didn't serve the usual Kingfisher beer. However, we had a fantastic meal with wonderful, friendly service. We ate so much that we had to take a walk along the beach promenade to help us feel more comfortable.



Last Supper

Thursday 31 October



Mumbai beach



Early morning smog – modern business district in distance



Traffic on way to airport

Forget what I said about the Mumbai traffic not being too bad, it was a slow crawl to the airport. It really has been a brilliant holiday, one of our best ever, but having to live out of a suitcase and with all the travelling we are ready to go home. We've got the bedspreads and scarves arriving tomorrow and our new rug to look forward to. It's also goodbye to our travelling companions, Diana, Penny, Eileen and Peter who have helped make it such a memorable experience.

3 weeks on: Gone are all thoughts of turning veggie, we are now gorging ourselves on luscious, succulent, juicy, blood dripping beef !!!!!