



## **THE MUDDLE AND MYSTERY OF INDIA The Strange Rise of Modern India**

**February 25 – March 13, 2011**

In his classic novel, *A Passage to India*, E. M. Forster describes India as both a “muddle” and a “mystery.” The novel suggests that Westerners are always trying to categorize and label things, but that India defies labeling. We’ll explore the dizzying contrasts of the world’s largest democracy.

The throbbing metropolis of Delhi, population close to 14 million, exists in the same space as the rural reality of Narlai, population 6 thousand. The great regal excess of the famous Raj, displayed in the forts and palaces of Rajasthan, exists alongside the restorative calm of the holy city of Varanasi. Prepare to be bewitched by the sensual, spiritual and intellectual riches of India.

Along our route, we’ll sit down with friends to talk about *jugaad*, the Hindi word that describes that spirit of ingenuity and improvisation in the face of adversity on which Delhi prides itself. We’ll visit schools where teachers are managing literacy drives of staggering proportions and we’ll tour the campus of Benares Hindu University where the best of Sanskrit literature is preserved and popularized. We will return with a deep appreciation of the ancient roots that still nourish the flourishing growth of modern India as it moves toward s its new position as one of the major political forces of today’s world order. We will not “make sense” of India’s contradictions but will experience together her mystery through engagement with her culture, her places, her people, her literature.

### **OUR ITINERARY**

#### **Friday, February 25 Arrive Delhi**

We arrive in Delhi late this evening and transfer to our city centre hotel. If you are planning to arrive earlier in Delhi, please let us know so we can arrange your accommodation and for your arrival transfer.

*Overnight: Delhi*

#### **Saturday, February 26 Delhi**

Historically, Delhi is one of the world's great cities, containing an astonishing array of forts, tombs, mosques and government buildings constructed over the past 1,000 years. It is also a brashly intimidating modern megacity, with more than 15 million inhabitants – and many first-time visitors find it all a bit daunting. But it has a gently

addictive quality, and deserves to be explored slowly, and for anybody who is interested in architecture and history it is one of the most remarkable cities in the world. We'll get acquainted with the city today visiting the New Delhi of Edwin Lutyens' sandstone President House, India Gate and the Indira Gandhi Museum. We'll sit down with friends over lunch today to talk about *jugaad*, the Hindi word that describes that spirit of ingenuity and improvisation in the face of adversity on which the city prides itself.

*Overnight: Delhi*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

### **Sunday, February 27      Delhi**

This morning we have our first discussion, helping to situate us in this incredible India. This afternoon, we'll visit Old Delhi, starting at the Masjid Jamal, Asia's largest mosque. By rickshaw, we'll visit the winding streets of Old Delhi, the capital of Muslim India from the 12th through the 19th centuries. Narrating the city's Mughal past, Old Delhi takes us through the labyrinthine streets passing formidable mosques, monuments and forts.

Overlooking the famous Lodhi Gardens (the 90 acre city park that's definitely worth a wander) is Delhi's favourite cultural hotspot, the India International Centre. The Rockefeller Foundation funds this large venue, which offers everything from theatre, dance and film to music and seminars. We'll explore the cultural centre this evening and enjoy dinner together.

*Overnight: Delhi*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Monday, February 28      Fly to Udaipur**

This morning we transfer to Delhi airport for our short flight to Udaipur. The "City of Sunrise" is India's most romantic city, built around four lakes. The blue waters reflect the shimmering white palaces and temples and the whole city exudes a feeling of peace and space. We'll spend three nights here, in a charming hotel in the centre of the old city.

We'll start our city explorations at the lavishly imposing City Palace, the centerpiece of twelve palaces in Rajasthan's largest royal complex. The curator will introduce us the technique of miniature painting, mural-like paintings mostly depicting incidents from Rajput or Mughal history and legends, or stories from the Hindu Puranas. We'll also meet young artists who are keeping the tradition alive. Then from the sublime to the seemingly ridiculous...The Jagdish Temple could be a site of worship or a Disneyland of colour. There's an assortment of gods from the elephant-headed Ganesh to the part eagle Garuda to Hanuman, the monkey God. Imbued with a sense of humour, Hinduism embraces rich panoply of beliefs and turns the seemingly ridiculous into an entire cosmology.

*Overnight: Udaipur*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Tuesday, March 1      Udaipur**

This morning we'll have our second discussion on the rooftop patio of our hotel. In the afternoon we'll visit the Sajjan Niwas Gardens. These were established by the reigning Maharana in the 1850s. The Maharana had a fondness for roses which grow in abundance here. This is the location of the Saraswati Bhawan Library housing volumes related to history, archaeology and Indology dating from the early medieval

period. There's lots of free time to explore the winding streets of the medieval old town.

*Overnight: Udai Kothi, Udaipur*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

### **Wednesday, March 2 Udaipur**

The various developmental and welfare programs of the Continuing Education Centre of Rajasthan have been recognized at the International and National level for their significant contributions towards spreading literacy. The State Literacy Mission Authority, Rajasthan is the First State to be honoured with the prestigious UNESCO Confucius Award 2006. We'll visit a local school to learn about ongoing efforts to eradicate illiteracy. And then we'll travel up to the hills to Fateh Garh for lunch in a restored palace overlooking the Aravalli Hills.

*Overnight: Udai Kothi, Udaipur*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch*

### **Thursday, March 3 Drive to Narlai**

This morning we continue by road to Ranakpur to visit the magnificent Jain temples. This marble complex is noted for the 29 halls supported by 1,444 pillars, each adorned with hundred of carved figures, with no two alike. We'll meet with a Jain priest here to learn more about this fascinating religion which prescribes a path of peace and non-violence towards all living beings. We'll speak with the holy men who worship here and receive blessings from the monks. The end of the day brings us to the 17<sup>th</sup> century village of Narlai for a three night stay. Our accommodation for the night is a magnificent restored hunting lodge, now a delightful heritage hotel.

*Overnight: Rawla Narlai, Narlai*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Friday, March 4 Narlai**

This morning we'll hold our discussion on the ramparts of our palace hotel. Later, we'll stroll in the village to get a feel for village life. Narlai is a small village, still tied agrarian rhythms of the day with farmers going out to work their fields. The village seems empty during the day and fills in the late afternoon with returning labourers. There is a small bazaar here where we can learn to design amulets. Adventurous walkers will want to climb to the top of the hill to admire the colossal statue of the elephant guarding the village. Here modern India seems very far away.

*Overnight: Rawla Narlai, Narlai*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Saturday, March 5 Narlai**

Early this morning, we invite you to join in a visit to the Ayi Mata Temple, a Shiva Temple set high up on the hill. We'll return to our hotel for breakfast and another discussion this morning. In the afternoon we'll visit neighbouring villages and try our hand at Indian cuisine with our chefs at the palace hotel.

*Overnight: Rawla Narlai, Narlai*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Sunday, March 6 Drive to Jaipur**

Today's drive takes us through fascinating rural scenery on the way to Jaipur. On this trip, the drives are half the fun; we share the road with bejeweled camels, sacred cows, cycle rickshaws and fantastically decorated transport trucks. We'll pass through the villages of rural India, with roadside barbershops beside cell phone

towers, brightly sareed women in the mustard fields and pink turbaned gents leading bullock carts

Jaipur is the "Pink City" for the terracotta plaster that coats buildings in the old part of the city. The vibrant culture of the city is on dazzling display on people and in the bazaars. Here people wear bright colours as if to compensate for the surrounding barren desert. This evening we'll take in a Bollywood movie, enjoying the experience with Indian popcorn!

*Overnight: Rambgarh Lodge, Jaipur*

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

### **Monday, March 7                      Jaipur**

This morning we'll take a step back and travel as the Mararajahs did approaching Amber Fort on elephant back. The Fort is a beautiful complex of palaces, halls, pavilions, gardens and temples and is magnificently preserved. Another highlight is our visit to the Jantar Mantar, the largest of the five remarkable observatories built by Jaipur's founder. Its complex instruments, with scientifically designed settings and shapes, represent the high points of medieval Indian astronomy. At an age when Europe was dark, India was glowing with the light of discovery. This evening we are the guests of a Jaipur family to continue our discussions on contemporary India literature.

*Overnight: Rambgarh Lodge, Jaipur*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Tuesday, March 8                      Drive to Agra**

This morning we set off to Agra and the marvel of the Taj Mahal. Near Agra we'll stop at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Fatehpur Sikri, briefly capital of the Mughal Empire, with one of the largest mosques in India within a marvelous complex of monuments and temples. Once in Agra, we'll start capturing the colours with a visit to Dhobi Ghat. In this part of the river washer-folk scrub their laundry; a huge area is carpeted with yards of colourful fabric providing unique photographic opportunities. Dinner this evening introduces the flavours of the rich Mughlai cuisine which originated here.

*Overnight: Taj Gateway Hotel, Agra*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Wednesday, March 9                      Agra**

We'll get up early this morning for a special dawn look at the Taj, glowing white through the early morning fog. It may be a visual cliché, but it is also the one of the few architectural icons that surpasses expectation. Our curator will take us past the perfect symmetry, the wonderful proportion and the sheer scale to inspect the exquisite detailing covering every inch of marble. Later we will visit Agra Fort; today the towering red-sandstone ramparts house a variety of palace apartments, representing the different building styles of Akbar and his grandson Shah Jahan. The mirrored Sheesh Mahal and the Mina Masjid (theGem Mosque) will capture your heart. In the late afternoon, we'll cross the river for a lovely view of the Taj and hold our discussion on an outdoor terrace facing the water.

*Overnight: Agra*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

### **Thursday, March 10                      Drive to Delhi Airport and fly to Varanasi**

Today we make our way back to Delhi Airport for the flight to Varanasi, arriving in the afternoon. The ancient city of Benaras is the most visited pilgrimage destination

in India. It is the most favoured place for Hindus to die and be cremated. Myths and hymns speak of the waters of the Ganges as the fluid medium of Shiva's divine essence and a bath in the river is believed to wash away all of one's sins. We'll spend our last three nights here, gaining a deeper understanding of India's spiritual place.

*Overnight: Hotel Ganges View, Varanasi*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

**Friday, March 11                      Varanasi**

We'll begin our day very early with a boat trip on the Ganges. We will observe the rituals of life and death along the *ghats* (the steps to the river) and watch the sun come up over this holy place. Our boat ride concludes at the offices of World Literacy Canada (WLC) where we will meet senior staff. We have graciously been invited to tour the classes and library here. We'll continue with a walk through the campus of Benares Hindu University. The University was established to promote the study of the Hindu Shastras and of Sanskrit literature generally as a means of preserving and popularizing the best thought and culture of the Hindus and all that was good and great in the ancient civilization of India. This afternoon we'll visit WLC's nearby projects in small groups. We'll gather over dinner with senior staff for a Q&A and debriefing.

*Overnight: Hotel Ganges View, Varanasi*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

**Saturday, March 12                      Varanasi**

This morning we'll have our final discussion together, tying up our thoughts on the literature we have been considering.

This afternoon, we'll visit the holy site of Sarnath, the site of the deer park where Gautama Buddha first taught the Dharma after his enlightenment. Sarnath is one of four holy Buddhist sites sanctioned by the Buddha himself for pilgrimage. Amongst the ruins the Dharmekh Stupa is impressive at 128 feet high, and 93 in diameter. This dates from around 200 BC and is the spot where the Buddha is said to have preached his first sermon. And so our trip has brought us full circle from the frenetic activity of Delhi to the spiritual underpinnings of India society.

*Overnight: Hotel Ganges View, Varanasi*

*Meals: Breakfast, Dinner*

**Sunday, March 13                      Fly Varanasi / Delhi / Toronto**

The morning is at leisure before our transfer to the airport for the flight back to Delhi. Rooms have been arranged to refresh before the flight back to North America.

*Meals: Breakfast*

## **TOUR COSTS AND DETAILS**

**US\$5295 per person, from New Delhi**

### **Deposit**

A non-refundable deposit of US\$500 per person is required to reserve a space on this tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.

### **Single Supplement**

This trip is based on double occupancy. If you wish to have guaranteed single accommodation, the single supplement for this trip is an additional US\$1875. Please note that if you are travelling alone, and we cannot match you with a roommate, you will have to pay the single supplement for this trip. This will be collected at 90 days prior to departure.

### **Cancellation Policy**

All deposits are non-refundable. If you cancel within 90 days prior to trip departure, all associated trip costs are non-refundable. The tour price is quoted as a package. No partial refunds or credits will be given for services not used. In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Worldwide Quest immediately and in writing.

### **Tour Cost includes:**

- Accommodation on twin-share basis in hotels listed or similar
- Meals as specified in itinerary
- Sightseeing with qualified English-speaking guide
- All entrance fees
- All internal transportation by private coach
- Domestic flights within India
- Bottled water on coach
- Airport transfers for passengers arriving and departing as per the group itinerary
- Gratuities
- Fully escorted

### **Tour Cost does not include:**

- Roundtrip international airfare from your home to India
- Airport and departure taxes
- Airport transfers if arriving or departing separately from group itinerary
- Meals and beverages not included in the itinerary
- Items of a personal nature, ie laundry, drinks, phone calls, etc.
- Cancellation and excess medical insurance offered by Worldwide Quest
- Visa fees if applicable
- Additional arrangements due to any emergency situation

### **A note on accommodation**

We'll stay in a selection of modern western style hotels in the larger cities and heritage properties in the villages and smaller towns.

### **Discussion Leader**

**Nora Palmieri** worked for 18 years with the Great Books Foundation, leading adults and children in discussions. She currently lives in Lyon, France. An avid traveler, Nora and her husband backpacked through Asia in 1988-9. They spent five weeks in India. Of all the countries they visited in those seven months, India is the one that she dreams of returning to. India's muddle may be disorienting, but its mystery is so alluring!

### **Host**

Ann Kirkland is the founder of Classical Pursuits.

### **Please note:**

1. The itinerary described in these notes is intended as an example only. In the event of weather changes, logistical arrangements, or special events, we may make changes in the published itinerary or the accommodations.
2. Worldwide Quest is a full service tour operator and will be pleased to arrange your flights for this tour.
3. The tour cost does not include extra expenses incurred because of weather and logistical delays, or delayed departures of chartered or scheduled aircraft.

**For additional information about Worldwide Quest's terms and conditions, please refer to the current Classical Pursuits brochure or website.**



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