

India Part 2. Agra Fort and Taj Mahal

Thursday was a very early start indeed, in fact I can't believe I'm still awake writing this now! We were to meet at 06:30 in reception, the hotel very kindly provided a light breakfast and most importantly coffee and we were on the road for 06:45. The reason for our early start was the 08:00 train to Agra, what an experience!

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We were booked into the first class cabin and told repeatedly it was nearly new service. Wow, if this is the new one, goodness knows what the old ones are like that's all I can say.



Don't get me wrong, it was a fabulous experience and I wouldn't have changed it for the world. Well, I may have just cleaned it a little perhaps. There was grime, hairs, dust, it just

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felt dirty. However positively, there was loads of legroom, big windows (although seeing our wasn't too easy!) and we got breakfast included too.



Keith's toilet experience has ensured that no french toilet will ever daunt him again- he mistook the loo for the western one- it was the Indian one, which was a hole in the train

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carriage and basically your “business” just fell out onto the track! But, he came out happy to have had the experience. And that’s what India is. A truly awesome yet out of this world experience. We did get to poke our head on the three tiered sleeper train, and boy was this an eye opener. Made ours look like a Bentley.



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We arrived at Agra station and was collected by coach and taken to our hotel for the the night, the Tident Agra. Wow, it's AMAZING here. After a quick freshen up we were out again, this time to Agra Fort. I dont think many of us had braced ourselves for this, I certainly hadn't- today's focus for everyone was the Taj Mahal later. How wrong we were. It is simply breathtaking. Absolutely huge and in really great condition, it's a mix between red sandstone and marble and despite it being 42degrees, we couldn't help but be amazed and in awe.



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We had lunch break back at the hotel, which will go down in history as my most favourite lunch break ever. A group of us hit the pool area, which is stunning, and were brought beers into the pool to enjoy. We ordered paneer rolls for lunch, also brought to the pool, and we had the most chilled out (yet 40 degree!) lunch I can remember,

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Soon it was time to head out again, this time to the main feature, the Taj Mahal. Well, I don't even know how to put into words a description of this wonderful experience. All I can say is it's much more beautiful than any photo you will ever see, and so incredibly huge. It's perfectly symmetrical, which given it was constructed before the helping hand of a computer, is amazing. Just make sure you take a pack of tissues, I blubbed like a baby! And so did many others in our tour. Incredible and I'd go as far as saying life changing! Wow

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Back to the coach and our Indian guide, Marvi, had a row of souvenir sellers to show us. An interesting take on buying over here, I must say but – it works. The tourist resorts are teeming with sellers, and apparently trying to rip us off. Marvi haggles for us, getting a fixed low price, then introduces the item in a similar fashion to on QVC, if you like

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it, you pay. A member of our group broke away to buy a fridge magnet. He was charged 500 rupees to start (£5) and haggled to 200 (£2). I was miffed when he got to the coach as I wanted one- then Merv, our guide, brings a fridge magnet seller on board, and says they are 50 rupees (50p!) so it works!

Back to the hotel we went, in time for an evening dip and then dinner. It's another Indian buffet tonight, and it was delicious. We sank a few jars trying to make sense of what we saw today. Absolutely awesome.

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Until next time

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