

## India Part 4. Jaipur

Following our camel cart ride on Badel the camel around Sawai Madhopur and then a big laze around the beautiful swimming pool area, we had an early lunch and waved farewell to the staff at the lodge. We had a four hour coach journey towards Jaipur, where we were to be based for 3 nights.

During the coach journey, our Indian guide, Mavi was on form, talking to us for the majority of the journey about all aspects of Indian life. I was totally gripped, his stories were so personal, but highly interesting – he explained the cast system and talked to us about his experiences of life as the oldest

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brother and the responsibilities that brought. He explained about the school infrastructure, taxes, and told us some historical stories local to the area we were traveling through. Before we knew it we were cruising into Jaipur-but not before the house bottle of gin had been opened for a sundowner. That's right-our wonderful hosts had organised an on board bar for us beer guzzling brits. And what a fabulous idea it was.

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On arrival at the Trident Jaipur we were given a bindi and welcomed in. Keith and I whizzed off to change into our swimwear – our top tip would be to pack your swim wear in your hand luggage – it sometimes takes a few minutes for the luggage to be unloaded and distributed, wasting valuable pool time! We had a quiet evening which was ideal as tomorrow

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was another big day!

Monday dawned and with it came another fairly early start. We all met at 08:30 and were bundled onto our coach towards the Palace of the Winds. This is one of Jaipur's most iconic images and it really is beautiful.





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After a token photo with a snake charmer (bucket list, tick!) we moved on to the Jantar Mantar, which houses a collection of 19 architectural astronomical instruments built in the 1700s, which was just staggering. It's now a UNESCO World Heritage site, and I can cer-

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tainly see why. The largest sun dial was absolutely ginormous. All of the instruments on display had been hand built and were designed to enable observation of astronomical positions with the naked eye.



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After an hour or so guided tour we continued on to the City Palace, which is still a Royal Residency. It was, as we had come to expect, another fabulous display of courtyards, gardens and buildings. Many of the buildings now house mini museums, and we got to see a large collection of Royal clothes and weapons.

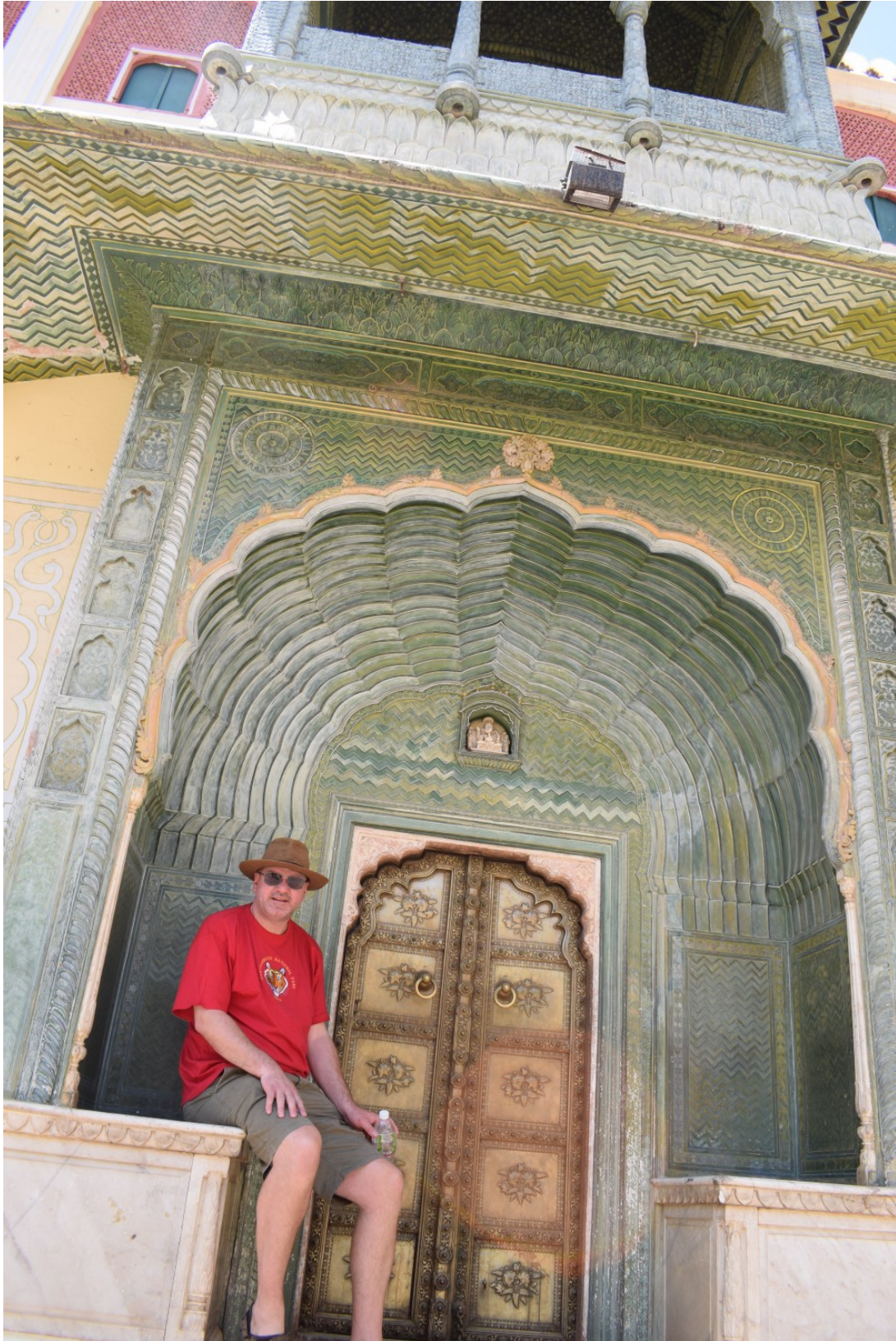


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As part of this there was an opportunity to meet some artists who use natural colour (taken from rock colours mixed with water) to paint the most beautiful paintings, on rice paper and silk. Naturally we had a little spend, still excited from our Tiger experience we purchased a hand drawn tiger and an elephant on silk.

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Next stop was a gem shop/jewellers where we got to see how gem stones are cleaned up and made into specialist jewellery. Let's just say this particular stop added a little dent to someone's credit card. Ahem!



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*□handmade to measure, fire opal (my birthstone) #justsaying #boydidgood*

We nipped back to the hotel for a bite to eat – we tried the chicken tikka pizza! Which was yum, before a quick swim and then it was time for another highlight of the trip, a trip to a local elephant sanctuary.



This trip actually came about after I enquired to the lovely Ian, our tour manager, whether we may be able to go and see some elephants somewhere. He worked on it specially for us, and then the next thing was that we



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got told it was happening and he was opening it out to the group (if we didn't mind, which of course we didn't). The coach, all the tour guides and driver's assistant were assembled and 17 of us headed off towards Elephantastic for an afternoon of one to one time with some rescued elephants. Oh they were ADORABLE! So incredibly gentle. We got to bond with our elephant, which on my part meant LOTS of cuddles with Carly the Elephant, we got to feed them tons and tons of sugar cane, then we got to paint them with natural non chemical paint (apparently this is a tradition) then bath and scrub them down, which they LOVED. Then we all went for a walk with our elephants. Absolutely marvelous and something that neither of us will ever EVER forget.

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After our time with the elephants, Keith and I were absolutely drained, so opted for a quiet dinner and an early night. You know when you just literally can't take another thing in - this holiday was fast becoming a trip of a lifetime, every single day was producing the most incredible sights and experiences. We needed some time out! Needless to say, the minute our heads hit the pillow at 8.30pm we were sound asleep for 10 whole hours.

Tuesday arrived and it was another fairly early start. This time we were heading to The Amber Fort, another well known Jaipur landmark. Those who visited the elephants were still in awe (us too!). At the fort it was a little bit upsetting as there are lots of elephants who work doing elephant rides all day up and



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down the hill here. It was boiling hot, and although it's apparently much better than it used to be, after yesterday's experience, I think we will always be upset seeing elephants being worked in this manner.



The fort was spectacular. We had an interesting Jeep ride up the hill to the fort- our driver got out and punched another one's driver,

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right on the nose! – goodness knows why, but good old Marvi sorted it out and we were soon on our way. It was probably the most chaotic of all the places we visited, there were loads of sellers, and even more selfie sticks! (including mine, lol!) The highlight for me was the beautiful marble gates and also the mirrored walls. Apparently back then mirrors were extremely difficult to come by, so displaying lots of mirrors on the walls was a sign of wealth.



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After a few hours it was time to board our jeeps and travel back down to the coach.



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We were dropped back at the hotel and a man came and gave henna tattoos to those who were interested. Me of course!

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We then re grouped at 4.30 (those who wanted to) for a trip to the local market. Wow,



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what a great experience that was! Chaotic yes, but we so enjoyed having some free time and being set loose to do our own haggling, which we did with enjoyment! We got some right bargains too! It happened to be the Monkey God festival too so we enjoyed some music and a parade.

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All too soon, we were packing our cases again, and the realisation that our trip was coming to an end hit us. Still, we had one more loca-



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tion to visit, a heritage hotel, so we headed for an early night dreaming of tigers, elephants and Ruby the camper van's MOT next week!! Haha

Until next time

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