



MY TRIP TO INDIA

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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2006**

DAY ONE

Well, 36 hours later, here I am! Flight from LA was actually 23 hours in overall duration! First flight was very empty - every passenger had their own row to lay down in - but from Frankfurt it was crowded.

Amazing though - 24 hours passed quickly - I guess that happens when you don't have a clue what time it really is - or should be!

Haven't left the hotel yet - but this country is even MORE of everything than I imagined - more distressed, more confusing, more frantic, more strange.

School kids in impeccable public school uniforms being dropped off in droves by buses in army-green! Crossing streets with traffic coming from every direction (an American Mom would have croaked!). And walking up weird dirt roads to what I had to assume was a school. While the school buses were double and triple parking, kids walking everywhere and a traffic jam we would never tolerate.

You drive on the left and not in any particular lane - so why am I surprised - but I made it in one piece.

Half mile of buildings that might have been an apartment complex - but couldn't tell if they were abandoned in process of demolition or building!

My brother's story of the bomb scare at the railroad station came back to me in spades.....

Entire traffic in downtown Bombay halted while they evacuated a bomb from the railroad station. First come the police in full bomb gear - Darth-Vadar helmets, full size shields, combat boots, etc. And then comes the guy in a ripped sleeveless tee shirt and flipflops wheeling the bomb.

There wasn't a car for me at the airport as there should have been. So I went looking for a taxi. Of course I was prime material for every solicitation but I kept walking in circles and talking to cops until I got my bearings. I went to the PrePaid Taxi stand. OK - so what do they send me to - a taxi no one can find for 15 minutes because the driver was sleeping - and then the taxi is buried about #15 in line so they have to move this entire line of taxis to he can get me out! Forget about simply giving the fare to someone else!

Hotel is gorgeous - but BOY do you stand out being a woman! And forget being a blond!

Now that the "getting here" is over, I'm really into this and can't wait. Taking a tour of an American plant here later this afternoon after photos etc. Curious as to what time I'll collapse tonight!

Oh - and don't ever fly Air India - they don't take American Express and the planes are left over from the 50's! But the "Bollywood" movies they show, I'm sure you don't see on Delta!



DAY TWO



Well, everything you heard is true - the cows really do roam wild. You'll be on a major highway, pull up to a light and there's bossy and company chowing down in the median! It's a riot. People just ignored them totally.

Some folks have seen elephants and camels - I've only seen monkeys, goats, and of course cows! However, I still haven't left the city!

The poverty here is also exactly as claimed - except it is weird - it fits! Horrible thing to say but it seems completely in context. Therefore you won't see many pictures - out of context it wouldn't make sense. Here it is simply the way of life for the majority of the population and somehow doesn't offend - but I have to think about that for a while since I don't like that remark!

Had an incredible meeting yesterday with the president of GenPact, a offspring of GE and GE Capital. They are the major outsourcing company in the world and bring you all of those telemarketers from India (and China and other places) that call about your credit card in the middle of dinner. Fascinating Indian native - extremely influential as they have 6000+ employees in Delhi alone. Interesting information on the Indian economy and why it is why it is and where it is going. Absolutely explained so many things.

Fabulous Indian food last night for dinner.

Off today to Old Delhi, Imperial Delhi and SHOPPING!

DAY THREE

Please know that I'm writing this after 3 glasses of wine and an exhausting day.....

I am in love with India. We are in perhaps one of the least attractive cities, have seen poverty beyond comprehension, have slept little and gotten up early but there is just something about this place.



Tonight before dinner we went to a saree shop and when we came out, the monkeys had come out. They were scampering over the electric wires, crashing into metal signs, walking the sidewalks - it was like a bad "B" movie! But it was real! Not stray dogs - stray monkeys!

Yesterday is a vague memory - it seems like we've been here forever but we only got here yesterday!

Today we went on a tour of old Delhi. We saw the Red Fort and then in pairs took cycle-rickshaws through Chandi Chowok and Dariba Kalan and the Kinari Bazaar, alley ways separated by product and then religion. So there is the "bread" Muslim section and then the "bread" Hindu section.

The alleys are about 5 feet wide with rickshaws, mopeds and people competing for space. It was HAIRY! and SOOOO much fun. It was weird enough that some of the folks who knew in advance what was coming, didn't want to go. Imagine being perched on the back of a bike with full sized buses literally two feet away competing for roadspace on your way to the market area.

It was AMAZING - about 1 1/2 hours and totally out of mind and place! And this is how an entire culture lives. Wait til you see the pictures. A stall selling raw meat laid out there for the world - next to a reclining rabid dog! But it is what it is.

Guess what - you can't come to India without an open mind. Reminds me of Rick and I going to Macao and being told by a dirty toothless ripped-teeshirt rickshaw driver, "If you are scared, you no come to Macao!" (and then we ran back into the ferry building!).

More cows, more traffic photos, new friends (the kids on the bus next to us at the stop sign who thought a blond woman was a hoot, the cop I took a picture of, the security guards at the fort who had never seen a picture of themselves on a digital camera viewer).

We are staying in the "Diplomatic Enclave" which means we daily drive by every Embassy and the gates and guards and grounds. This is the only part of Delhi I've seen where the "affluent" aren't literally five feet from the poverty-stricken - literally, poverty on the other side of the fence from the rich everywhere except Embassy Row!

Went shopping - oh the things I've seen! (and bought). Saw lots of monuments - we can't conceive of 380+ foot towers being built in the 1200's with manual labor of 36 years! Awesome!

Exhausted, we all went our separate ways for dinner. Had a lovely dinner with my sister-in-law and much too much wine for the family secrets to stay secret!

Tomorrow (way too early) we leave for Agra where the Taj Mahal is located. And more shopping!

Hotels are gorgeous - I realize I've really missed a cosmopolitan atmosphere! Weather has been absolutely perfect - but about to get HOT!



Among the things I saw today that will stay in my memory - sitting in our little bus parked waiting for everyone to re-group - a guy selling fake beards! A male has to have a beard to get into a Sikh temple. So to accomodate the curious male tourist, this guy was selling fake beards! In India - anything to make a buck!

With that image in mind - will send again when a Business Center is available!

DAY FOUR

Don't know where to start.....

To catch up.....

The sign for the "Relax Saloon: Barbar Shop and Dentist" - one of the pictures I wish I had gotten!

We have three Hindi speaking people with us on the tour and that has proven invaluable - my sister-in-law, Shalini, and a Canadian Sikh couple, Amman and Surinda - who are taking us to visit a Sikh temple today.

Yesterday.....

We're having some longggg days - left hotel in Delhi at 8:30, didn't get to our new hotel until 8:30! Playing tourist and/or travelling the whole entire time between.

Drive 4 hours from Delhi to Agra on our little bus. Everyone is settling in - everyone takes the same seat every day! Drove through numerous little villages - Sunday was garbage day - everyone was burning their garbage at the street!

Stop at a tourist way-station for a pit stop - kids with snakes (Rick knows, I really loved that one!), locals etc. What a trip!

Shared the highway with donkey carts and the "out for a Sunday drive vehicles" - long bed carts with about 20 people stuffed on them pulled by a tractor or a vehicle which looked like it was powered by a lawn mower engine!

The Taj Mahal is EVERYTHING you have heard. It is indescribable! Ghostly, huge, breathtaking - you walk around the corner, there it is and you literally lose your breath. Don't know why - the white marble and the enormity of it I suppose - but truly a wonder of the world.

Took tons of pictures - group and otherwise - and used our first true Indian toilet. Definitely not our home plumbing but actually quite efficient once you get the hang of it - and letting it all hang is by trick! Some of us bought our toilet paper (I had mine) which seems to be a major national career - selling toilet paper!



At Akbar's Tomb, had a monkey encounter. Those of you who know me well will not be surprised that I was the one who wanted to feed the monkeys (under the supervision of a local, of course - who also of course demanded to be paid!) and next thing I knew I had a two foot monkey on my shoulder! Hysterical and the pictures Shali took are outrageous! In one, where I trying to get the monkey off my shoulder, looks like he's trying to strangle me. Paws all over the place!

Last night I bought the one thing I really wanted from this trip - a jewelled carpet. About 2x3 on black velvet, completed stitched in gold-dipped thread and encrusted with semi-precious stones - \$175! It's magnificent and I'm going to use it as a wall hanging.

Things here aren't really cheap unless you want cheap quality - but I now own more Kashmiri shawls than any one person will ever use! And I've brought silk scarves home for everyone - even people I haven't met yet!

Best memory of yesterday - meeting a young man outside our bus (which always is surrounded with hawkers whenever we stop) who was selling garnet necklaces. He had to be about 9. He didn't have enough for all of us so Amman told him to come to the hotel at 9:30 (when most American kids are going to bed). He lit up like a lightbulb and went running home to get more. We alerted the doorman that we were expecting him and to not turn him away. He showed up at exactly 9:30 and made about 3000 rupees that night. But the thing we all remember is that he had changed his clothes and combed his hair. He was all of three feet tall and the sweetest boy. That's a real memory!

(All the schoolkids want pictures with the blonde American "Aunties" and it took us forever to get out of the Taj Mahal!)

Today we drive - 6-8 hours - to Jaipur. More tomorrow. Hotels continue to be amazing even this little one. I'd forgotten about international hotel amenities!

Weather has turned hot and humid. Time to shop!

DAY FIVE

Day five, Monday, I think.....

The title of this message is "The Road to Jaipur"!

Left Agra this morning early and went to the large Sikh temple at the initiative of our Sikh friends in the group. What an experience!

Very lovely, somewhat surprised by the lack of pretention but then I think that is the Sikh way. However, what I didn't know is that every Sikh temple in the world, every evening, feeds anyone who wishes. So there is a large hall for that purpose.

There were a number of men around - young and old - and we (blondes in particular) were a major source of entertainment. They all wanted their picture with us and would go around collecting uncles and cousins for more pictures. And then seeing them on the digital camera was just the icing on the cake. They insisted that we have tea with them and almost wouldn't take know for rice as well. Then they had the novices sing for us while everyone stood around and stared. It was fabulous!

Then we hit the road - to Jaipur. Except it really isn't a road most of the time - it is two lanes of traffic on about 1 1/4 lanes of road. Everyone passes everyone and more often than not with little or no room to spare. On one stretch we just started laughing and I finally had tears streaming down my face - it was hysterical. We had one gal sit up front with the driver and film it all - we intend to submit it to Paramount!

Seriously, I was watching this red car come at us head on and literally with a second to spare, pass the guy on the other side. I glanced up. There was a huge bus coming right behind him. "Holy Shit" seemed like the only appropriate thing to say. There is no way you could describe any of it - seriously - it was hoot but the number of times in those 6 hours we could have all been killed is too numerous to count!

Got top Jaipur in the midst of the evening commute - unbelievable! But lest that should deter us - the girls threw their things in the hotel and immediately went out to shop - for Indian clothes.

Picture a huge room with couches and pillows and sheets on the floor. You settle in to your little alcove and three guys start throwing these incredible fabric pieces in front of you - they're all 6 feet long and they just spread them out in front of you. When you see one you like, they drape it on you. Meanwhile you're drinking Kashmiri tea and being waited on hand and foot.

We commandeered a room downstairs as a dressing room and tried on forever. Ended up buying two "suits" - long tunics with pants and an 8 foot scarf.

They will tailor it overnight - no big deal - the tailor simply looks at you, determines what needs to be done and does some cursory measurements! No extra charge!

Have been eating "European" - dinner at 9:30 or 10:00. But have to get up to be on the bus at 7:30!

Hotel is amazing - Indian dances and music in the gardens every night. Not at all humid - pleasantly warm - gorgeous evening - and I think I saw a mosquito once the other day.

And Dale - too late on "don't pet the monkeys"!



DAY SIX

Early morning started another day of playing tourist. However, this was the day that everyone got sick of being a tourist! We didn't want to see another palace!

Had a fabulous guide who listened to us - so after our morning elephant ride (what a hoot!) up to the Amber Fort and yet one more visit to "how they make things" (and yet another request for a hand out!), we told him no more. We wanted lunch, the City Palace, and then home.



However, the City Palace has a government sanctioned and fostered artists colony and it was fabulous! No one hawking at us, pressuring us. Everyone had a certification from either the Maharaj or the government. All were family generational businesses. Shopped til we dropped.

Bought the most gorgeous 5x7 watercolor - the brush is a single squirrel hair - watched the artist work - he signed my painting for me. Every painting is different. \$35!

Bought other goodies - but it was simply a wonderful experience.

Then we went to pick up our clothes from the night before! You really have to see the pictures to understand how chaotic and noisy and colorful this place is! They wait on you hand and foot.

We tried on our altered outfits - additional alterations were done on the spot. Then I had to stop them - they were just stuffing my clothes in a bag. Little did I know they were simply taking them for steaming and ironing and they were returned to me neatly folded around tissue paper! All the while drinking more Kashmiri tea!

Two of got into the saree thing! We each bought jewel encrusted (seriously) silk sarees complete with underskirt and "blouse". Eight feet of embroidered silk complete with jewels and hand done undergarments - completed within three hours and delivered to our hotel that evening - \$300!

And by the way, the guy from the bangle shop is coming to the hotel to show us his entire store in about 15 minutes - so I may have to run!

One of the husbands was commenting on how they waited on us hand and foot "and the next thing you know they'll be bringing us somosas (one of our favorite foods!)" Well, believe it or not, the next you know we were being presented with a bag of somosas. One of the Indian gals said she needed a certain type of pill - they went to the drug store and brought some back to present to her!

What a world!

So tonight we are all dining in the gardens at the hotel decked out in our Indian finery!

Well, it's 11:30 and the bangle man has just left about 20000 rupees richer! We invited every woman we could snag as they walked through the parlor. It was truly a girls' night!

But I forgot to tell - we saw an honest to goodness snake charmer today - cobra and all! Yikes!



DAY SEVEN

Day Seven was probably the most uneventful - most of us slept through it.

Seriously, we've been staying up late (not partying - they simply don't eat dinner here until 10:00!) and getting up early (i.e., on the bus at 7:30!).

Spent the day driving back from Jaipur to Delhi.

Delhi was even more brown/gray than we had remembered! Really are anxious to get on to Mumbai.

HOWEVER, the airports are on strike! So none of us will sleep well tonight wondering what tomorrow may bring. And this hotel, although good, is not up to our "expectations"!

Did have an adventure, however. Eight of us went out to dinner outside the hotel after shopping in one of the bazaars. Picture a huge bus backing up in alleys, driving the wrong way down one way alleys, etc etc - all to find a restaurant we'd been told about.

Finally found it - great Italian food - good change from Indian!

We get out and decide to walk home - at 10:00 in Delhi! We think we're about two blocks away. So Amman (female) and I start trotting towards what we think is the main drag.

A mini-cab driver pulls alongside. Now I haven't said much about the mini cabs. They are 3 wheeled little vehicles with canvas tops and seat about 1 1/2 people. They are different colors depending on the state you are in - Delhi's are green and yellow. They are definitely not limousines!

The driver takes two of us who don't want to walk and informs Amman and I that we're going in the wrong direction. Another cab pulls up behind. So we get in. We are now piled on top of one another, laughing hysterically (and no, the restaurant, as typical of many, did not serve alcohol). We drive and drive and drive.

We get dropped off at a hotel which we quickly realize is a Taj but not our Taj! The driver is praying for us, wishing us well - he is SO impressed that he transported the Americans!

We start up the drive and break into hysterics - we have no idea where we are! So we all pile in to the lobby to use the rest room only to discover we're in the premier hotel in the city! Meanwhile, we lose one another - some get a cab and the rest of us spend twenty minutes trying to find the missing group. We finally connect by cell phone, get a cab and realize we're driving by the very place we started out - and two blocks later we're at our correct hotel!

But now we can say we rode in a mini cab - something most Americans can't!



DAY EIGHT

By the way, did I forget to mention that, as a Sikh, Surinder carries a curved dagger which at home he has to wear under his shirt but here he wears publicly and proudly. I don't think we have anything to worry about.

Flew to Mumbai today - airport issues cleared up - airport filthy but we flew on an upstart airlines, Kingfisher Air, owned by the local beer king - two hour flight, fabulous full meal, free headsets, little bags etc. Wonderful experience.

And then there's Mumbai (Bombay)!!!!

New York with trees!

We are staying one night in the \$450/night Taj Mahal Palace - where countries' presidents stay when they visit. Indescribable - everything you've ever seen or read about "Old India".

We had lunch and met our host, Cheetan Narasin, whose family owns most of Bombay. Thirty-three, totally unprepossessing, gorgeous charming wife (Parul) and warm lovely assistant, Monica, who is at our disposal for our entire trip.

The ladies adjourned to our suite (I'm rooming with Heidi Burose at this point) and had "mendi" done on our hands. That is the henna dye that is painted on in unbelievably detailed designs. We conducted this ritual to the tune of a bottle of Moet Chandon - there's nothing like champagne at 3:00pm!



Meanwhile, Monica did palm readings for each of us. This is a certifiable educational accomplishment in India and frighteningly accurate. She told me my age - no one even in the group knew my age! She told me I would live to be 89 or 90 but would have a serious road accident in two years from which I will be saved. Really cool - she told me that so far in my life, I had been living out my karma and that my "fate" line (continued fulfillment) was growing by the minute!

What an afternoon - we can't wash our hand until tomorrow but it is amazing work!



We met Cheetan and Parul for drinks at the Royal Bombay Yacht Club - imagine a circular table for 16! - and then adjourned across the street for the most amazing haute cuisine Indo-Chinese meal in the most gorgeous red room! I've NEVER had food like that and when you see pictures of the dessert, you will faint!

In between "girl time" and "business time", Monica took some of us shopping in our neighborhood. Imagine a store with about 1000 pairs of shoes - all great design and quality - all \$18 - \$20 US! When they determine what you want and the size you want, they holler up into a hole in the ceiling and someone on the second floor warehouse throws them back down the hole!

Can't wait to go back tomorrow - found an Indian perfumier that we want to check out and the jewelry on the street corner is awesome!

Tomorrow we have the morning free - unless Cheetan can connect with his "connections" and get us into a private haute coutoure showing that will be presented to the public the next day. We then drive via sights to see to our more appropriately priced (but about which an entire section in the local tabloids was written because of a huge hottsy-totts party given there) hotel

Monica insists that I don't worry about my non-working cell phone. If I leave it for her, she will have one of "their" people arrange to determine the problem and have it corrected for me - no charge of course!

This is living at its finest - and we are here! None of use can quite believe it.

I'm off to joining the group at "Insomnia", the club here in the hotel so I'll say goodnight. Oh, we'll be having an Ayurvedic massage therapist at our disposal on Sunday so don't expect to hear much from me that day. Cheetan has here available to any of us who wish all day!!!! After all, why should we pay hotel prices!

Needless to say, this doesn't suck!

P. S. We're all planning a reunion in two years and we'll be staying at one of Amman and Surinder's homes in Punjab - they will arrange for us each to have a servant!

DAY NINE

Day Nine WONDERFUL!

As I mentioned, Mumbai is a very cosmopolitan city - reminds me so much of New York but with huge trees. Very hot and muggy - finally what we had been told to expect! But the difference is staggering.

Our organizers wanted us to experience the upscale side of Mumbai so we stayed one night at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel on Bombay Harbor! This is where heads of state stay when they visit Mumbai and it was such a taste of the old gracious India. Room was \$450 but we were all sharing so it wasn't that bad - and definitely worth the experience.

I spent an hour yesterday morning sitting in a velvet chair being fed Kashmiri tea and testing perfumes! The day before I had passed an Indian perfume shop and decided that was something I could not leave without! Everyone else was wanting to power shop so I shooed them out, settled in and for an hour I pretended I was a Maharanee!

The shop had an entire wall of these incredible vintage glass heavy bottles with ornate stoppers each filled with a different pure oil. It was heavenly. I chose one for myself and few as gifts. I wore my new fragrance that evening and got numerous unsolicited compliments! (Sorry, Rick - I'll go back to my old Amarige when I get home - or both you and the dog will freak! But for now I'm playing Indian Lady!)

It was a lovely experience and will be one of my favorite memories.

We did some other power shopping but that was the highlight.

Today the heavy business stuff starts but that's Ok - that's what we're here for. And we actually get some free time over the next day or two - that will be most welcome! Sleeping til 7:00 is now categorized as a luxury!

Oh, yesterday we ate at a McDonalds! Except they don't serve hamburgers - no beef here! I had a Veggie Burger that was incredible - actual veggies instead of our usual "grain burger".



We're at the seaside in a different area of Mumbai - I've never seen a brown sea! It's the Arabian Sea which is weird to think about - I'm looking out at the Arabian Sea!

From here we go to two different seacoast cities - resort cities - and that will be a welcome change. However, we have to go through the Mumbai airport to get there and from what we hear, with the strike still on, it is way past gross! But we shall deal with it.

Almost everyone is nursing a cold but me. We think it's a result of the pollution which is awful. And about half everyone has had stomach issues but not me, knock wood. You never know where it comes from so I'm still a candidate but so far so good - not even a tweak.

Forgot to tell you about "rent a cow" (as I've chosen to call it).

In India, as you know, the reason the cows roam free is that they are sacred. However, the cows that roam free are the ones that no longer produce milk and they are turned loose.

It is considered a blessing to feed a cow. But people in the big cities like Mumbai have no cows to turn free and therefore there aren't any to feed.

So farmers bring their cows in to designated areas and for a fee, you can "rent" a cow to feed!

One more thing...



Yesterday we saw the Dobhi complex where thousands (literally) of family organizations do other peoples' laundry for a fee. But it is organized into thousands of concrete tubs and shed where they hang to the clothes on the roof to dry. Believe me, this was one of the "you had to have been there" moments - defies description.

DAY TEN



Saturday was all business - met with about 50 agents from Mumbai and discussed with them how we do business and the value of organizing their profession. Many amazing things about the way they do business here but I won't bore the non-real estate folks.

However, you are now "speaking" with an Honorary Member of the India Institute of Realty (their equivalent of our Natl Assoc of Realtors) and the one and only agent in NM with a certification in Transnational Referral (which is actually a certification under our NAR)! So more initials after my name!

Our meeting was held at "The Club" which is literally both the name and the status. It was interesting to see what an Indian "cocktail party" was all about - no alcohol! And dinner was amazing - about 30 dishes and a number of servants equal to the attendees.

Later when we walked out there was an Indian wedding starting at the banquet hall. We went to look and the next thing, we had been dragged into the circle and were the focus of numerous photo shots! Then they were escorting us in to meet the bride but our bus came. That was a heartbreak. I had been warned about that sort of thing and it really was real!

As I mentioned before, we are continually the source of fascination and photo particularly from children.

The people here are amazing - everything you've ever read about warmth and hospitality. We truly are being treated like royalty. Our hosts' staffs are at our disposal and have been doing all sorts of "housekeeping" tasks for us without batting an eye.

In fact one day Monica and I were sitting on the bus with she on the aisle. I got up, crossed over her and opened the curtains on the other side. She commented as to why did I not ask her to do it! She is fascinated by Americans' desire to do things themselves.

More later - I have a masseuse coming to my room in a bit and want to send Day Eleven before I need to go.

DAY ELEVEN



Shop til you drop day! We had a totally free day today - morning was "housekeeping" stuff - my roommate came down with The Crud (not stomach) and I decided to get my own room for the night. Major expense but less expensive than getting sick! She's better now and we're tucked in together once again! Really neat German gal who presently lives in Denver - definitely a new friend!

Sunday a bunch of the Ladies struck off on our own. New experience in taking cabs in Mumbai - it took as long to negotiate with the drivers as it did to get there! Thank goodness (once again) we have Hindi speaking folks in the group!

We went to one of the street bazaars but we're all kind of played out on street quality stuff. So we went to a "shopping mall" - not exactly what we think of, I promise you! Ate Indian fast food! Quite an experience but soooo good!

Have been raiding a store called Ritu Kamar - the clothes here are so gorgeous but they don't fit me - isn't that great! But believe me, I've compensated!

Went to a Bollywood movie! What a hoot! But it was well done - good cinematography - and actually could understand the plot! But it wasn't done until midnight and we hadn't eaten so it was a very late night (again!).

The theatre was gorgeous - reclining seats and you sat in a reserved seat - different seats have different prices - and you get food service to your seat! You order at the counter and then they deliver it to your seat! Pretty cool.

Still having a fabulous time. Will take time soon to write about impressions rather than "goings on".



DAY TWELVE

Lots of stuff to write about today.....

Visited what \$550,000 will buy you in India! EVERYTHING is marble - floors, walls, ceilings - breathtaking - and with all the latest fixtures (bath, light, etc). But the building is decrepit!

They pay cash for everything so there's no incentive to build in a timeframe to start recouping your money - so by the time anything gets built, it's grimey and old looking.

You could make a fortune here with a power wash system!

Then had tea at Chetan and Parul's house - more incredible home made food - with 5 servants/cooks of course!

Then more shopping - back to Ritu Kamar at a different shopping center.

The out to dinner - all the women wore Indian garb (as we have taken to doing) and even the men wore kurtas (long linen or silk shirts).

It was Southern Indian and very different. I think I like Northern Indian better. Southern you eat with your hands and I'm just not into that. But of course, when dinner's over you get your finger bowl of rose water and lemon so I guess I can tolerate it! (Hope you recognize sarcasm!)

Flying to Goa tomorrow and very much looking forward to being by the "sea" - it's supposed to be absolutely gorgeous.

I hope it's better than the "sea" is here - ever seen a gray brown sea when it's sunny! Well, I have! And the aroma - oh, the aroma!



DAY THIRTEEN

We're definitely at the beach! Ate dinner tonight yards from the water.

Goa is quite beautiful by India standards - but it definitely isn't Hawaii!

This place is magnificent - very old, HUGE lawns and verandas, right on the beach.

You get to pick your dinner from a display of today's catch! Had a local fish called "pomfret" - flat white fish - fabulous!

Very tired tonight and need to "talk" to Ann about an offer on one of my listings.

But before I forget - this beach reminds me a lot of Hilton Head - long, flat, goes forever, hard sand near water, extremely soft sand otherwise - yes, it reminded me a lot of Hilton Head - until the water buffalo came walking by!



DAY FOURTEEN



Goa is gorgeous! Reminds me a lot of parts of Mexico - not exactly lush but definitely green and lots of lakes, rivers and, of course, the Arabian Sea.

The hotel is amazing! Typical European resort.

Had a facial today at the Spa and tomorrow I'm having a morning of Ayurvedic treatments. Can't wait - it seems so exotic. There's a temple-like building remote on the property which is where they have the Ayurvedic Spa. Quiet, meditative and very structured - it should be an interesting experience.

Today we hung out in the morning and then took a 4 hour tour of Goa and the capital, Panaji. The buildings are beautiful, very colorful and definitely Portugese. And the area is so clean - after Northern India, that is a major relief!

Lots of universities here - lots of medical colleges - and an enormous pride in the area. It was a Portugese colony as recently as 1961! I had no idea it was that recent that it became an Indian State.

Tomorrow simply hanging out on the beach, at the pool and at the restaurants! What a life!



DAY FIFTEEN

Well, there's not much to say about a day where you sleep late, have tea, go to the Ayurvedic Spa, swim in the Arabian Sea, go to the "traditional" Spa, swim in the Arabian Sea, have lunch, watch water buffaloes parade on the beach, swim in the Arabian Sea, sleep and read on the beach, have a marguerita (the worst!) while watching the sunset!

So I'll tell you about Gluba Jamon - pronounced Globjaamon (one word). We all are addicted - balls of something, sweet, fried and marinated in a honey syrup! Heaven!

Tonight we're eating at the "Lobster Shack" again - have already picked out my prawns which were caught a few hours ago. Oh the stress of it all!

Leave tomorrow for Mumbai - most of the group heads home from there but some of us have one more stop in Chennai (Madras). Part of me wishes I was going home and part of me couldn't stand not seeing that just one more city! Each city is SO different!

But as only travel in India will have it, there was a US Embassy warning out this afternoon regarding demonstrations in Old Delhi on Friday.

First - I smoked a Huukah last night - the Egyptian water pipe - they use only flavored tobacco and for 1/2 hour you get less nicotine than 1/2 a cigarette. I had apple and I sat overlooking the beach reclining in my pillows and smoking my exotic pipe. SOOO COOL! Of course, I couldn't get anyone else to do it so I sat there alone - but that was half the fun!

Second - I forgot to give you the details of the Ayurvedic Spa.

It is in a small temple in the corner grounds of the hotel. You remove your shoes. Your feet are washed with oil and brushed with herbs and rinsed in cold water. Then you have a consultation with the doctor and decide on your treatment. I chose the most unusual thing I could find - and boy was it.

I chose the treatment for The Five Senses.

You are taken to a pool and given an oil lamp which you float in a bowl of flowers and petals. They say a prayer over you. Then you sit on a marble slab next to the same pool and are given a head massage. Then you meditate.

They then take you to a private room. You undress. They give you a loin cloth! They give you powder with which to brush your teeth and massage your gums. Then they put drops in your eyes which really sting and make your eyes tear forever! However, it was interesting to see the smudges of gray and black in the tears as your eyes are cleaned. Then they put oil drops in your nose which eventually go down your throat. It's pretty icky but I have to tell you, my sinuses have never felt this clear nor my throat this soothed! Then they take a cloth stick which has been soaked in ghee (clarified butter) and tamarind. They light it so it smokes. They stick it inside a metal cone so the smoke comes out the hole and you breathe it in through your nose and exhale (smoke!) through your mouth.

Then they set you on a wooden table and you have a massage. To say they use oil is an understatement. You slide around the table like a greased pig! Then they rub you with "green paste" which cuts the oil. Then you are led to a private bath (drawn for each person) with rose petals floating in it and you soak surrounded by foliage for 15 minutes. I don't know whether the water was salted or it's the oil but you float - it was difficult to stay submerged. It was heaven!

Then you are taken to a steam room for ten minutes at which time the steam turns off and you find you are in a shower room. You shower and shampoo. Then you are led to a small table where you have herb tea prepared specifically for you. Then they take you to a smaller temple area and show you how to shut out your senses with your hands and you do that while meditating.

Then you pay your bill! It is a two hour session and costs less than \$100!

It was an incredible experience!

More tomorrow - flying to Mumbai today to fly to Chennai tomorrow!

DAY SIXTEEN

There's not a lot to say about the events of Day Sixteen except that it gives a really good overview of life here and travelling here.

We basically just hung out at the hotel waiting to leave for the airport. Our flight was delayed about an hour.

So we load up - four in two taxis and the rest on the bus. We get to the airport and discover that two of the four have decided to take an earlier flight and want us to follow suit. What followed, however, was total chaos as only travel in India can do. (By the way this was for want of one half hour.)

We suddenly find ourselves in mental and physical combat with a group of 12 young Indian men - whose luggage will get on the plane first! Much pushing and shoving and resorting to being those assertive American woman we had left at the Delhi airport!

I, of course, am in more of a mess - as only can happen to me. Everyone on the trip is paired off or with friends - and then there's me. So our bus arrives at the airport and everyone has someone to watch their luggage while someone else gets a porter.

So there I am, standing at the bus, everyone has walked off. I have no porter and have no idea where to go or what to do since with everything delayed there are a hundred people milling about at the entrance. So I lug my own luggage - forget a luggage cart, they come with the porter I can't find - and wend my way through security. However, what I don't know is that I've had my hand luggage tied as well. They have these indestructible, unremovable plastic ties they use at Indian security - you literally have to cut them off your bags - with the scissors you are not allowed to carry and which are buried in the luggage which is now secured with the tie! (You get the picture).

So now I finally figure out where I'm supposed to be - but now I get a demonstrative lecture from the desk agent about my secured hand luggage and they have to get scissors and they are still chastizing me - and I'm hot and being jostled and still have no idea what flight I'm on - or anyone is on.

We finally get on the earlier flight - 10 minutes after it is supposed to leave. OK - nice flight - but there's one problem. Our hotel in Mumbai has been tracking our delayed flight and scheduled our transport accordingly. HOWEVER, remember, we are no longer on that flight! So now we are in Mumbai - about 1000 people milling about (or it seems that way) trying to find transport to our hotel. Of course, no one's cell phone works. Finally a total stranger - as only will happen in India, which is why I love it - lends us their phone. Except we have no number for the hotel - we never did have it! So about 45 minutes later we've contacted our hotel and our bus is on the way - remember, we saved 30 minutes by boarding the earlier flight!

And 45 minutes after that we get to our "10 minutes from the airport" hotel! Which is very nice - very interesting modern style - quite the combination of modern, minimalist and Indian. Extremely interesting and quite attractive - except this is our first stay in something other than a "continental" hotel. There is no hair dryer, no wash rags and no tissues! Again, nothing that cannot be compensated for but obviously things that are not important to the Indian lifestyle.

Anyway, it's a hoot! And travelling here is always this much of an adventure.

This morning I went outside the hotel and saw a sight I hadn't discussed previously. Squalid shacks next to high rise buildings! What happens is the workers camp outside their job - bring the family and there they live. I watched women washing the dishes, doing laundry, kids playing - all within feet of the traffic! It is a wonder!

I've given a lot of thought to our next trip (Rick's and mine) - because there WILL be a next trip! We had three Hindi-speaking people with us and it still was awkward, if not difficult, at times. I know you cannot travel here without a guide - and yet the guides love to take you to the shops where they get the best commission. So it will be interesting to think through.

RICK: We will definitely be coming back in 2008. They are planning to conduct a week-long CIPS (Certified International Property Specialist) here, probably in Goa. Those classes are given all over the world but Shali has made a casual commitment to Chetan to offer a class here - and I will be taking it! - and you will be with me!

Shali has also told me that she recommended to Chetan that I would be an excellent contact ongoing, that I would be one of the ones willing to invest the time and energy to work with him - which I definitely would. So not only was that EXTREMELY flattering but also exciting!

MRS. BRADY: I've brought you a lot more than "something pink and silk". You've been the excuse for a lot of shopping! I hope you like what I'm bringing you - and I haven't even encountered the silks yet! Kashmiri shawls, painted silk shawls, gorgeous fine cotton heavily embroidered shirts and long dresses. No earrings - they have no concept of "clip" earrings!

MY ANN: We will definitely need an entire morning to go through everything I've bought for you! Many many surprises!

Speaking of shopping....

This was definitely the group for me to be with! Shop til you drop has taken on new dimensions and people (including me) ship boxes of stuff home!

Yesterday we thought we were shopped out and then someone discovered these fabulous canvas beach bags in the Sweet Shoppe. They are put together by local blind children and carry a tag to that affect. They are actually quite beautiful and were \$8.50 each. Needless to say, we flooded the place and they very few left when we left. I bought three - one for me, one for Margaret and one for my manicurist - but some folks bought 12 or more and then were dividing them up among other people's suitcases because they had no room in their own. Now that's Power Shopping at its finest.

Things here can be cheap - but you really do get what you pay for - except for shoes which are about \$18 a pair and very nice. The clothes are made for the Indian woman's figure - narrow frame and small bust. Therefore, it was difficult for me to find things - but somehow, just somehow, I have succeeded.

I bought a number of beautiful things in one of the hotel boutiques - but paid about 50% of what I would have at home - if I could have ever found things like that.

I've completely lost track of what I've bought - about a million silk scarves, Kashmiri shawls, a puppet, bangles, a jewelled wall hanging, an elephant carving from each city, some street bazaar stuff (which is useful in the hot weather but which will probably fall apart on first washing), street earrings (and, yes, the gold color has already cracked off the hook - but the earrings survive!), etc etc etc etc. And I finally found tee shirts for Rick at the resort! They do not sell tee shirts in India!

Anyway - time to go!

More tomorrow.....



DAY SEVENTEEN

Before I get into Day 18, here's a great India story.....

I decided to drink dinner tonight as I can't face one more piece of food - although ice cream may be on the menu - they have FABULOUS ice cream here!

Last night at the Bayview restaurant on the hotel property, I ordered a "Vodkatini". Why it was named a "Vodkatini" no one could figure because it was vodka, lime cordial (which I am buying a bottle of if I can find), and lime juice. It was wonderful - very light and refreshing.

So tonight I go to the veranda bar and order a "Vodkatini". I get straight vodka with a few olives. I explain that what I wanted was vodka, lime cordial and lime juice. "No problem, Madam" and I get a martini glass of warm vodka with straight lime juice. MMMM, just a bit tart. So I ask for lime cordial, I get it, I mix my own drink. No problem.

So I order another one - I tell my waiter I want one just like the first one - vodka, lime cordial and lime juice. This time I get a martini glass of straight warm vodka (no lime juice), lime cordial on the side and no lime juice to be seen. I mention that I'd like lime and when each of the two other waiters asks how my drink was, I mention I had asked for lime. Guess what - three plates of lime slices later, my drink is perfect. They are soooo amazingly anxious to please even when they don't have a clue what it is you want!

Today started out a bit chaotic - and I hope you recognize the sarcasm in all of this. We were asked to change rooms. They needed a group of Sea View Cottages and wanted to know if we would accept a free upgrade to Sea Front Villas! I guess I misspoke myself yesterday - we didn't have villas, we just had cottages! So now I have a villa right on the beach with my own covered patio, french doors to the sea and chaise lounges and hammock. Oh dear, I guess I can suffer!

Took a tour to Kanchipuram today and Julie and I significantly improved the local economy. I finally succumbed to "saree fever" when I realized I could have these incredible 7 yards of \$30 and \$60 hand embroidered silk and cotton pieces converted to skirts and tops even if I never wore a saree again - although, ladies, I have to tell you - if you ever want to feel like a princess, don a saree.

(MS. BRADY: Your "something pink and silk" is 7 yards of hand embroidered pink and gold saree silk which is reversible (as in jaquard) to the opposite color combination!)

Got back around mid afternoon - went swimming, laid around, went to a yoga class (now I can say I've taken yoga in India). Everyone else has gone to dinner but I'm opting for booze and ice cream! Followed by a turn in my private hammock!

Side story = Airport security in India. First, if you're a female, you have to go through a private booth - of course, your purse, your passport, your money and your bag(s) are laying in a pile on the ground after having been through the screening machine with everyone else's while you are stuck out of sight in the booth! Oh, and by the way, they secure your bags with these impenetrable plastic ties (mentioned that before) but not once do they ask for any ID!

This hotel is the first where I've encountered a lot of American businessmen. Had an interesting conversation with a man from Tucson who lives here most of the time! Interesting that all my reactions have been in sync with his experiences.

Oh, and when we were touring the temples today we experienced the Taj Mahal all over again - blond American ladies are the equivalent of movie stars to the young Indian girls - and I had a ball!

Tamil Nadu is the most beautiful region we've visited. Lush lush green. Rural with charming villages - clean, obviously prosperous, and the towns are fascinating - at least on Sunday when everyone goes into town! The 90 minute trip to Kanchipuram was one of the prettiest and most interesting we've had. So, Shali, we now have a third movie to put on the market - the "Road to Kanchipuram" joins our soon to be famous features, "Road to Jaipur" and "Road to Mumbai"!

Have been constructing a list of miscellaneous things I've remembered but haven't written about - hopefully will find time tomorrow morning!

Good night from Fisherman's Cove!

So many thoughts about today surfaced over dinner.....

At least 5 waiters - only one of which was servicing my table at dinner - came by to make sure I liked my Biryana! Everyone here is sooooo concerned that the Americans like their country - little do they know they should have no concern!

When shopping in an Indian shop (as opposed to the bazaars which is a battle of the wills!), you need to be prepared to spend time. First, they will not accept "no", you must have a cold drink or tea or coffee. So you shop while you're drinking your libation.

And today, they wouldn't accept "no" until you had your Madras coffee - which is strong! and incredibly delicious. They are so concerned about your having the best experience - Madras coffee is served in metal tumblers, hot hot hot. Then they serve a second tumbler and you are supposed to pass the coffee from one tumbler to the other until it is cooled to your liking! They were sooooo patient with me today until I FINALLY got the jest of it! (And tonight, my waiter was sooooo concerned that I wasn't using enough raita (yogurt/cucumber sauce) with my meal that he showed me how to put it on my plate!)

At the end of our saree shop shopping, they offered our purchases to their god asking for a blessing on us and what we had bought, wished us "God Bless You" and then took a dozen pictures with us - and us with them! Then they insisted that their "boy" carry our packages to the car and everyone stood outside and waved as we drove away.

This country can make you feel amazing!

Everyone is so curious about our "given" names! And then they giggle (at least the girls do) at how foreign they sound. And they truly giggle - just like young girls ought to! They often wear their hair in plaits with "school uniform" ribbons in bows. To say it is charming is an absolute understatement.



The men in South India (or at least in this area) wear "dhotis". It is a male sarong with the hem picked up, tucked in at the waste and then gathered from behind and tucked in at the waist in front. No insult intended (truly) but it looks like a huge baggy diaper - and I mean it when I say no insult intended, that really is the best description. They ride bicycles, motor scooters, etc. that way and it is perfectly functional.



We saw the motor scooter of all times today - a family of 6 (yes, 6) on a motor scooter - dad driving with two on the fender, one between he and mom behind, mom behind with a baby in her arms! Quite a sight! (Shali, it reminded me of Taiwan!)

The Indian women ride around behind their male partners sitting side saddle on the motor bikes. We've not yet been able to figure out how their sarees don't get tangled - but after nearly three weeks, we finally figured out it was Isadora Duncan (and her famous scarf tangled in the roadster death) that we've been trying to recall all this time.



The Sight of All Times (this week!): A woman in Chennai riding her own motorbike (a VERY infrequent sight in spite of the billboard ads to the contrary) wearing a green and yellow saree - and a green and yellow baseball cap! And yes, I got a picture.



Other miscellaneous thought - you absolutely do NOT have to carry toilet paper with you in India - they will be happy to sell a few sheets to you outside every women's toilet. It may be a tissue, it may be a paper napkin, it actually might even be stiff scratchy toilet paper - but toilet paper sales are a major occupation in the rural areas!

And the women in the group have agreed that the most important lesson they have learned on this trip is How to Pee in the Woods without Getting Wet! Because that is how you have to pee in an Indian toilet!

The Indians squat for everything - work, card playing, toilet - everything. And I don't mean squat like we do - I mean knees up to your nose. And it is extremely effective and appropriate for toilet functions.

So here are the Americans - trying to keep your pants legs off the floor at the same time as you are trying to get the waist band down and forward! Try it sometime - it isn't easy! At least one time I had to put my leg up into the sink to wash the bottom of my pants legs off! But you do learn and we all now have it down pat.

There have been, however, only one or two times we had no choice but to use our newfound talent - most of the places have "WC"s and "EWC"s. (WC for those of you never having left the States, means Water Closet.) "EWC" means European Water Closet - and boy, have we learned how to search those out!!!!!!

Interesting thing today - this region just finished their major annual festival and all the bulls' horns are painted bright colors. Turns out the first day of the festival is for the humans, the second day is for the animals! Isn't that cool! And they dress the animals up just as they dress up - so just having been on the calendar, the water buffalo and the working cows still have green and red and blue and yellow horns! A definite sight to see!

We've encountered our first Indian mosquitos here! We've all been diligently wearing our repellent and getting VERY sick of smelling like chemicals! But we've finally encountered the mosquitos! And the flies!

Can't wait to see and/or talk to you all in person again - but needless to say - this has been the trip of (as Rick has put it) "numerous lifetimes" - and you haven't even heard all the "little" things I've been wanting to write about!

But I will - even if I have to go through the list after I get home!

This is THE most wonderful country. You definitely have to have an open mind - but as Parul told me - the Indians are such a happy people (except in Delhi!) that what we would view as their "plight" in life, to them, is what life is supposed to be - and they rejoice in it, they celebrate it, they are thrilled that we are the slightest bit interested in it and, believe me, it rubs off on you!



We had some wonderful conversation last evening about what we could do to help our colleagues here - hopefully we'll be able to have SOME impact! They are so enthusiastic and so very much looking to us for help!

"Talk" to you tomorrow!

DAY NINETEEN & TWENTY

Yesterday we hung out at the hotel until time to leave. Had my last \$15 pedicure - not really necessary but couldn't resist justifying not having to have a \$45 one when I got home!

Drove back to Chennai - about an hour. Left a bag of "goodies" at the UNICEF relief camp (shampoo, etc "stolen" from various hotels).

Forgot to mention the other day - this part of the country was hit by the tsunami. There are numerous refugee camps in the fields between the water and the road. They are built in the style familiar to the residents and are clean and organized. Not a bit of debris to be seen! And the country has rebuilt the fishermen's homes in the same area - just farther from the water.



And the villa where I had stayed was underwater during the tsunami - that was kind of a freakish thought! The swimming pool where I was swimming had been full of mud!

Chennai is by far the most beautiful city we've been in - and the most European looking - wide boulevards, tons of trees, not as many honking horns.



Met the wife of one of my brother's business colleagues mid-afternoon and she took us out to run various errands. It was extremely interesting as some of them were in residential neighborhoods (ie., the tailor) so we got to see parts of the city we wouldn't have otherwise.

Later that evening, we went to their home by the sea and then out to dinner - in a tree house! Wonderful food - incredible fish! Lots of beer!

Got home around midnight. Our hotel is old and stately and just beautiful. We almost didn't get here, however. Our travel agent changed our hotel and didn't tell us! It was the same chain and had a name which sounded and looked similar - so none of us realized it until the gentleman who met us at the airport mentioned picking us up today for our return flight at a hotel we'd never heard of. It wasn't until then that we checked our vouchers and realized we were going to be somewhere different! Thank goodness he met us because we would have been demanding rooms at the wrong hotel! Ah, the joys and surprises of travelling.

This will be my last message. We've had breakfast and my colleagues are going up to re-pack (again). I'm going to take off by myself and explore. This is the first city where I've felt I could do that. I've never ever felt unsafe but most of the time the cities have been too confusing, too dusty, etc. to make independent wandering feasible.

We travel to Mumbai later today - I'll be going to sleep immediately as I have to get up at 4:00am to catch my 8:30am flight. If things work out OK, I'll be home tomorrow night. If not, I'll be stuck in LA until I can get a flight out!

Someone asked if I was ready to go home.....

I'm SOOO ready to go home - but I'm just as much NOT ready to leave!

Talk to you all live and person soon. Wish me luck!

POSTSCRIPT

Home at last - and the memories of Air India only increased!

Left my hotel room in Mumbai after 6 hours sleep (having flown in on a delayed flight from Chennai the night before) at 5:00am.

Arrived in Albuquerque at 12:00 MIDNIGHT the next day - about 30 hours of flying.

Slept 19 hours today - completed lost February 16! And I mean slept - didn't wake until 2:00pm and then just roled over.

OK now - no jet lag to speak of just dehydration and hunger!

Where oh where is my Paneer and my pomegranate seeds!

Glad to be home. And thanks for all your comments on my emails - I'm glad you enjoyed them.

Namaste,

BARB



MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES

Everything in Northern India is covered in a fine brown dust. They don't even bother - the monsoons wash it away every year! We were standing outside a restaurant and a large truck passed, hitting a tree as it went. The cloud of dust from that tree half a block away was stifling!

Northern India is one huge smog cloud. Remember waking up the first morning and realizing my "morning breath" smelled like pollution!

A single bright saree in a huge brown field.

Fields of yellow mustard flowers as far as the eye can see.

Being called "madam" all the time - I will miss that!

Total traffic gridlock at an intersection with about 50 cars within eyesight. Finally something moves and traffic starts again. Two blocks later - totally unrelated to the gridlock but an amazing contrast - two huge elephants trucking down the street carrying cargo!

Indian food - breakfast, lunch and dinner - can't get enough - and not one tummy problem!

Having someone come to your room and do 1 1/2 hours of massage, body, face and head - for \$11!

Slippers beside your bed every night and a little mat so your bare feet don't have to touch the floor.

Doorbells on hotel rooms.

The oranges and the orange juice! I will miss that!

Watching five Indian men try to figure out how to get all our luggage on the bus. They put down a single row of mismatched bags, turn around and declare that nothing else will fit! It took two Americans and a lot of hand signals to correct that one!

A herd of little black auto-rickshaws - about 50 of them - in an intersection one evening - looked like a mass of cockroaches!

Menus area always Vegetarian or Non-Vegetarian! Notice the priorities!

Pomegranate seeds for breakfast every morning!

The tea! And Masala tea and Kashmiri tea! If I only knew how to make them!

The electricity - sometimes on, sometimes off!

The constant background scent of incense - I will miss that!

Not having a single dream for fourteen nights!

The Indian version of English: "You want be light dimmer?" "scenic" mountains" and I'll probably remember a lot more!

The people, the people, the people! They are the warmest, the friendliest, the most hospitable - and everyone of them is so worried that we like their country and that we tell everyone to come visit!

And I will again for sure!