

Due to the fact that I used to work in the hospitality industry, I know how important feedback is to you regarding the very special trip you planned for us. As I mentioned in my text to you earlier this evening, I am sorry for still being indebted to you monetarily but also due to our lack of feedback after our journey. I just spent the last hour filling out your feedback form which turned into 34 pages because I guess I don't have a compatible system. As a result, I am going to attempt to write again what I wrote on the form. You will understand why you have not heard from me prior to now once you read this. I am a tough critic of service but feel that it is important to recognize what needs improvement and more importantly, it's important to reward those who exceed expectations. That said I cannot presume to tell you Joan's feelings on all of these issues, but where I believe I know her feelings and think they are important for you to know, I am going to share them with you. I am copying Joan on this email so that she can correct me in case I misrepresent her impressions.

I will apologize in advance because I am not going to remember every person's name I want to mention. If I cannot name a person I will describe him and hope you or Joan or Bindu can fill in the gaps. Most troublesome for me at the moment is that I cannot remember the name of our driver in Delhi. He stole my heart as he was so caring and conscientious. He would not leave us at the train station and stood on the platform for quite a while until our train departed. That is a memory that I will hold dear forever. I will always remember his face and now I have found his name, he is Joginder. Please give him more business. He was very trustworthy and lovely. I left my reading glasses in his car and days later when we returned to Delhi, he returned them to me. Also, Joan and I were enjoying our breakfast talking with other guests at Lutyens which caused us to be late for the rickshaw tour. That was entirely our fault so please do not hold that against Joginder. He tried to tell us we needed to leave but the breakfast and company compelled us to stay. We did not know that we were meeting a group as everything we had done previously was just the two of us with our guide and driver. Okay, back on track now.

Here's my (our) perspective on our trip: The booking and pre-booking process was excellent. Your insight and planning was spot on for us and I am so pleased to have found you and exceptionally pleased that we were able to meet you in person and have a lovely dinner. The fact that I had Bindu to contact via text was exceptional. She was immediately responsive and extremely helpful. Having access to Bindu made me feel at ease all of the time. What you planned for us was outstanding and unique especially given what I demanded within the time frame I gave you to plan.

We enjoyed all but two of our meals, perhaps too much! Most of our guides were excellent. We did not enjoy eating with Ramanand in Mumbai after the first day

because he ordered exactly what I told him I did not want. I (we) found him interesting on day one and after that a bit annoying because he did not listen to us or respect our desires. For example, I used to be a professional photographer and I told him this. Regardless, he insisted on telling me day after day exactly where I should take a photo and exactly how I should frame every photograph of every subject he suggested. That is just an example of how we experienced him. At first he was helpful but later we found him arrogant and offensive. I'm sorry to tell you that but I think we would have enjoyed Mumbai more with a younger, more liberal guide or perhaps with only a driver.

I cannot say enough good things about the "slum" tour. Riz was an excellent guide and he is an impressive young man. We were torn as to whether or not we wanted to do the tour given the ethical dilemma and exploitation aspect. However, I think Joan and I were both glad for the experience. It raised several interesting discussions between us and I think we will both continue to have questions about what we saw. All good though and I highly encourage you to put it on your guests itineraries. I think Riz touched us both with his story. Given the fact that we are both lawyers and are used to being lied to by our clients, we are probably more skeptical than most about the information he shared with us. Nonetheless, the experience was rare, enriching and unforgettable. I gave my niece Hannah Gasaway information as to how to contact Riz because she wants to do the tour soon after I told her about our unique experience. She is now near Goa doing a teacher training course in order to be certified to teach yoga. She may contact you as well as she has ideas about traveling the far north of India with little time. I told her if anyone can plan that for her, it is likely you.

Before I forget, we LOVED our dinner with Paloma and ??? (Joan would remember our chef's name) ??? in Delhi. That was definitely a highlight for me. I really enjoyed being invited into a home of our younger peers. The food was fantastic and the company even better. They were all delightful and we laughed a lot. That was one of my favorite evenings and the food your friend prepared for us was probably the most spicy of any we were served. Joan and I both loved it and were often upset that although we said we wanted spicy food, we were served only mild dishes. Very rarely were we taken seriously, and not just regarding our food requests.

We also very much enjoyed the homestay at Lutyens. The atmosphere, hosts, guests and food were all delightful. That was a winner although we struggled with hot water. We had several incidents during the trip where we had to shower and wash our hair in two minutes or have cold water. I respect the energy efficiency of Lutyens but I think the communication could be improved on the hot water issue. I had to call and ask to shower and I would be told to wait five minutes but it always seemed to be an issue and it caused us to be late sometimes. That was partly our fault

because we just expect hot water regardless of location or infrastructure. We appreciated the variety of unique accommodations but sometimes we failed to factor in the possibility of lack of timely amenities. I think because of the class of accommodations we wrongly took hot water for granted.

I am looking back at your form: Documentation and overall quality of service in terms of promptness were excellent. I had the itinerary in my ibooks and Bindu was so accessible I was shocked. Transportation was for the most part very comfortable. There were a couple of instances where the guide wanted the A/C on so he could speak but the A/C was not cooling Joan and I so we preferred to open our windows. I can't remember who we had that battle with but it wasn't a big deal.

However, the battle of the wills was an enduring theme in our trip and probably the most inhibiting factor to our enjoyment of India. It seemed almost consistently (but not always) that our male guide believed he was entitled to take control or perhaps believed it was his job to control us and our schedule in spite of our desires or what we expressed we wanted. We are two American women lawyers who (although traveling without men) are used to being respected. We also knew that we are paying our guide's wages and were often shocked that although the guide is aware that we have hired him, he imposed his will upon us and was perhaps even act condescending towards us. I think Joan and I are still shocked that we paid men to "guide" us who felt entitled to be condescending to us, even though we were paying their salary and were later expected to tip them for offending us.

Herein lies the dilemma of our entire journey to India. I am sure we could love India and would love it had we been treated differently. In part, I take responsibility because I think I asked you to plan a rather safe and luxurious trip for us. Due to the fact that I requested that, you hand picked guides which were for the most part very good. However, Joan and I are not used to having guides; we are not used to having random men set our schedules; we are not used to not commanding respect; and we are not used to being treated as second class citizens. I am not going to tell you that we did not enjoy our trip. I think we both would acknowledge that we are glad to have had the experience. However, I think the most powerful impression we returned with is that women should not travel in India without a man but for the South unless they want to feel disrespected. Joan and I, independently and together have traveled all over the world and neither of us expected to return with this feeling. I have traveled to many countries that I have found extremely difficult as a woman alone. I suggested to Joan tonight that perhaps our experience is more profound due to our age and our expectation now of respect.

All that said i want to be perfectly clear that any negative impressions we have of India are due to the error of my planning. Due to the fact that we failed to plan earlier and were a bit concerned about safety due to recent brutal attacks on women, I asked you to plan our trip accordingly. It was my failure to realize that Joan and I are very independent travelers and we are strong women. We are not used to having guides and drivers and an exact schedule to adhere to. Therefore, our experience with a strict itinerary with guides and drivers was alien to us and simply uncomfortable. Our uncomfortable experiences with men and their blatant disrespect may have been lessened had I planned differently.

However, I think I underestimated our independent spirits and love of the unknown adventure. We loved taking the train and should have done more of that. I forced you to take us to far too many destinations in Rajasthan. We did too much driving and saw far too many forts and havelis. I was disappointed with Jaislamer. I don't know if I said this above but one of the highlights for me was Ajanta and Ellora. That part of our journey was exceptional for me. I very much appreciated the education and knowledge of our guide. He was exceptional