

Greetings, Shilpa and Bindu, from Rabat. I'm sorry to be late responding to your invitation for comments on our wonderful experience, but (a) I've had a week of respiratory problems here in Morocco (after perfect health in India) and (b) I have a slow/clumsy Internet interface that makes filling out the form unwieldy. So here, in discursive form, is my report.

Given our friend Susan Weltman's recommendation we had the highest expectations of [Break-Away](#). These were equaled and exceeded. We could not have asked for a better experience. The advance advice and detailed responses to our many requests were answered promptly and thoroughly, and all details of air travel, airport pickup, and local guiding went off splendidly. The Delhi and Jaipur hotels were comfortable and charming in different ways, and while Agra's luxury Taj was not the sort of place we'd have picked it was certainly comfortable.

Each of the scheduled meals with families was a pleasure, and the conversations were perfectly timed given our local experience the previous day. I've been in touch with the talented photographer we met in Delhi, and I hope to be with the Jaipur businessman -- and perhaps to stay in *his* hotel when/if we have more time in Rajasthan.

The really outstanding aspect of our experience with Break-Away, though, was the local guides and driver. *Each* of the six guides brought not just a wealth of experience with the details of the respective cities -- answering and expanding on all this retired prof's interests in dynastic history, religion, and today's cultural scene -- but they did so in ways that involved frank and open expression of *their own* personal and spiritual involvement with what we were seeing.

I have a rich and nuanced feeling for Mughal history in relation to both its background and its British colonial overlay, thanks to J.K. Sharma. This after ten days of re-experiencing Hyderabad through my friends of 50 years ago and reading Wm. Dalrymple's "White Moghuls."

We'd have barely glimpsed Chandni Chok without that beautifully orchestrated bicycle rickshaw ride. Just right, given constraints of time and the pressure of crowds.

Asif Khan gave us both a sunset and a morning experience of the Taj Mahal and its context that set it in relation to the Mughal history -- and allowed an elderly couple the quiet romantic moments hoped-for with one of the world's signature settings.

The several hours we spent exploring the planned core of Jaipur with Anoush (sic., I think Susan has her card) were a gem. We stopped at shops, stepped into the entrances of havelis, and chatted with the Muslim bangle maker -- all without feeling like intruders and while sharing this pious young woman's appreciation of her beautiful neighborhood.

The following day, Abhimanyu shepherded us through all the grand sites of Jaipur and its environs, *and* got us through a whirlwind array of Susan's shopping with success ... and fine prices. Someone else I hope to see again.

Mumbai was yet another wonderful surprise. Ramanand will be hard to fully describe to US friends, but the pictures tell the story. He's guide and guru and impassioned environmentalist, and from watching masalas prepared to lunching on some of the finest South Indian food I've ever tasted to the wonders of the Gandhi museum (especially important for us as Quakers) to farewell at Victoria Station ("Britain's Taj Mahal") he made every moment count.

I know India has a vast tourist industry and that there are many guides from which to choose, but each of these is excellent (and "Excellent" is what I'd be giving each aspect of the trip, had I been able to complete the form.)

I can't see how any of this could have been better... but of course it could have been a lot worse, had we not had "Riju," the Zen driver. For someone who recalls the India of 50 years ago as a place of bikes and 3rd class trains, modern city traffic had me cowering in the back seat -- until I realized we'd *always* be that crucial centimeter away from disaster. Even when construction of the new Jaipur rail put us into a hour's detours and the need for questions every hundred meters, he never lost his cool; and the realization that we could completely leave the driving to him freed us for all the other delights. Don't lose this fine man.

I believe Susan will share a feeling about the tourist trap pit stop restaurant on the Agra-Jaipur road, but it's trivial in the larger scheme of things.

This was a wonderful experience from start to finish, and we'll be recommending it to all who are headed to India. Please feel free to quote any of this you find useful, and to refer clients to us.

Thanks, and namaste!

Doug Davis, India trip , March 2015