

Trip to India/Nepal – Oct. 27 – Nov. 11

10/27/08- (Mon) We left El Paso 1 hour late due to an air traffic issue in Chicago associated with the weather. We finally arrived in Chicago about ½ hour prior to boarding our plane to India. Our New Delhi flight took us north over Canada, then west over the tip of Greenland, then south over Moscow, Russia and further south over Kabul, Afghanistan. We arrived approximately one hour early in New Delhi. Total flying time from Chicago was 13 -1/2 hours and 7,500 miles. Within two hours of our flight, we were served a nice dinner as we watched a movie (Mamma Mia). Each seat had an individual movie screen and you could select any of 10 or so different movies and TV shows. We also spent time reading, and sleeping as best we could.

10/28/08 – (Tue) Upon arrival (8:15pm – Tuesday) we met our Gate 1 travel guide, (“Gate 1” is the name of our travel company), and several more people from our group. We boarded our travel bus to The Park hotel where we checked in and went to our room for the night.

10/29/08 – (Wed) We woke up early and had a very good breakfast at the hotel. At 9:00am we had a briefing by our tour guide, Taj, before loading the bus for our first day of touring. Our first stop was the Jama Masjid mosque, the largest Muslim mosque in India. Only 10% of India is Muslim; 80% is Hindu. They had to outfit us in special dress to enter the mosque. See below:



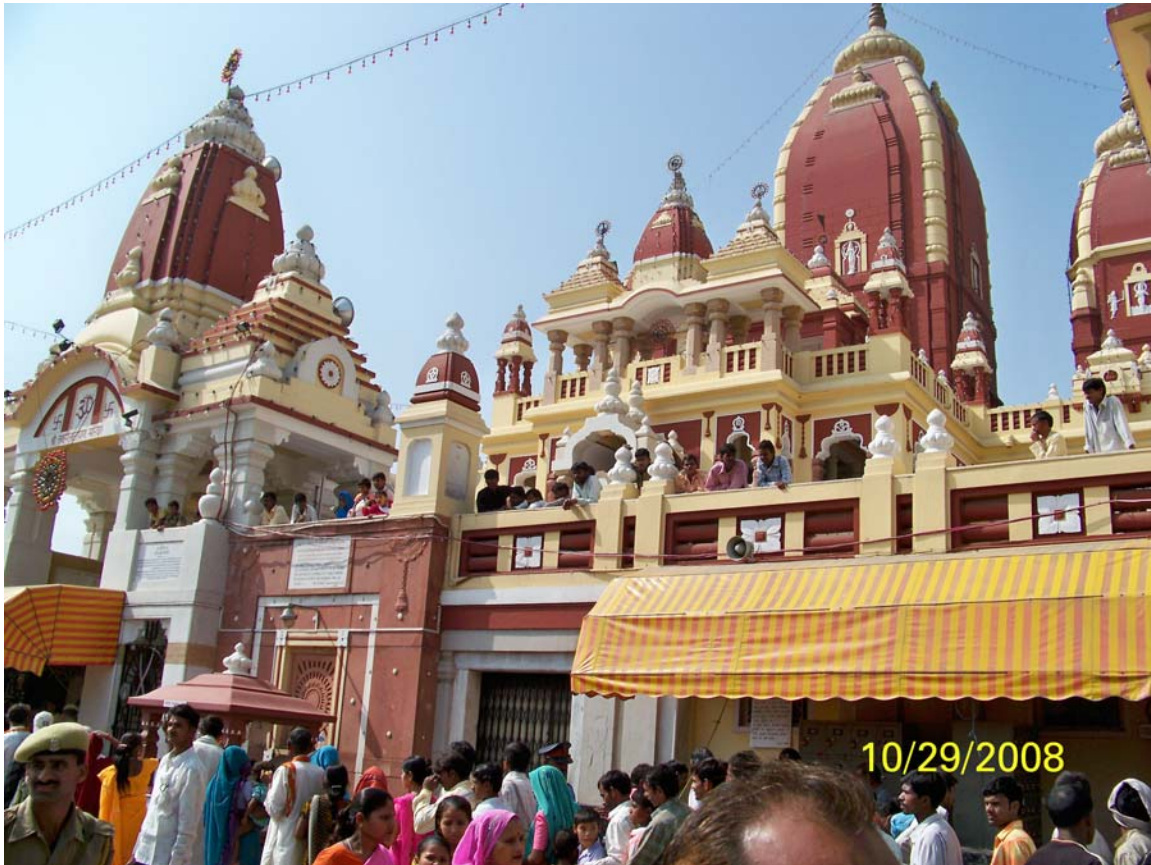
Dehli is divided into New Dehli and Old Dehli. This mosque is in Old Dehli and the balance of our trip in this morning was in Old Dehli. There are a total of 15 million people who live in this town. There are buses, cars, rickshaws, auto-shaws, bicycles and people constantly moving in every direction. It's so crowded here, and most people live in the poorest of conditions. Poverty is evident everywhere you look. There are people bathing in wash buckets in the streets, and living on the sidewalk. Begging is a way of life.



Our next stop was the tomb/memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, considered by many to be the father of this country.



Before heading back to the hotel for lunch, we stopped at one of the largest Hindu temples in this area. Hindu's worship over 33 million different gods (idols) and believe in reincarnation. Here is a picture of the temple we visited:



In the afternoon we were off again, this time heading for the Mausoleum of Humayun. This building was used as a blueprint for the famous Taj Mahal, located in the city of Agra, which we will visit in a few days. This mausoleum was built as a tomb for Humayun.



10/30/08 – (Thu) We had an early breakfast then left our hotel at 7:30am, heading for Jaipur, the famous pink city of India. We made a quick “photo” stop at the India Gate in New Delhi. This is a memorial to the British and Indian soldiers who died in WW 1. Here is a picture of it. It’s very similar to the Arch de Triumph in Paris.



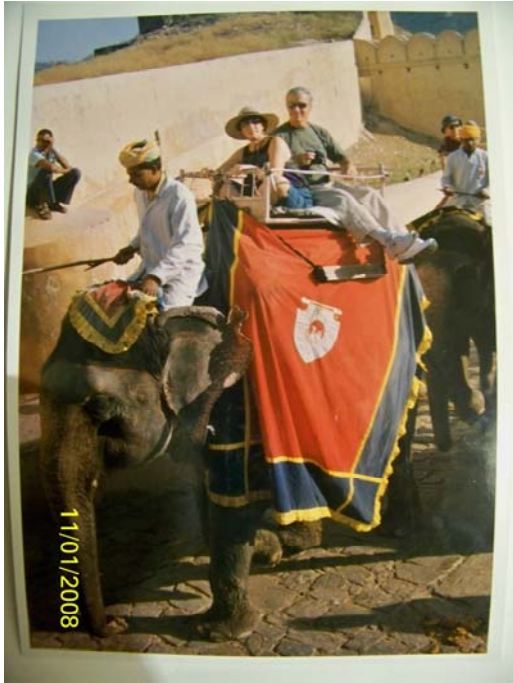
Our bus trip from New Delhi to Jaipur took about 5 hour, so we stopped for lunch at a local hotel about midway through the trip. Our guide, Kaj, gave us an overview of the geography, culture and religions of India throughout the journey. He was very knowledgeable and presented it in a way that was easy to understand. Here is a picture of him lecturing as we were driving down the road:



We arrived at our hotel about 3:30pm (Country Inn) and had about a one hour break before boarding the bus again to tour the Pink City, which is located in the old part of Jaipur. It's a walled in area with massive entrance gates on all four sides, and encompasses about 5 square miles of the most congested, busy local markets we've ever seen. Every building, and all the walls and gates are painted pink. This was done over 100 years ago by one of the local maharajahs (kings) to welcome and honor a visiting British commander. Pink was considered a sign of hospitality to guests, so the maharajah wanted to welcome him in a very big way. The shuffling and noise of the market inside the Pink City is so intense it's hard to describe in words. You need to be here and experience this for yourself to believe it. There are vendors, beggars, animals, rickshaws, bicycles & vehicles everywhere. Here are some pictures:



10/31/08 – (Fri) Today we woke up early and headed for amber fort to ride an elephant to the entrance to the fort. Needless to say this was one of the highlights of the whole trip.



After the ride we visited the fort and returned to the bus on a jeep.

