

By the seat of my jodhpurs

Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India - January 29, 2008

Amy:

We slept late and had a relaxing morning at the hotel. The hotel, we realized in the morning, was huge and had a pool, badminton court, tennis court, 2 restaurants, gift shop, bar, Ayurvedic massage parlor & spa. We think, based on our numerous tours of forts and palaces, that



Hotel doorman

the hotel was built in the Mughal style, with a mughal garden in the center and the arches and colors of the Mughal empire (?). Maybe.

Anyhoo, Brent wandered around the ground and took pictures of peacocks around the hotel, which were many. We didn't realize until then that peacocks could fly (not very well, but they can fly). Brent, who was feeling restless in the confines of a five-star palace, also left the grounds of the hotel and wandered around for a mile or so and found that we were outside the city of Jodhpur and that no one spoke English or Hindi. Our guide told us later that we were in gypsy country, and one can tell a gypsy by their bangles.

Our guide, who was a distinguished looking gentleman, very nice and knowledgeable, picked us up at 2:00. He was in the Rajput caste (warrior caste) but told us that castes are only for marriage and not for jobs anymore. The people we've met in Rajasthan have a great deal of pride in their caste and their cities, and each guide and person has told us that their city had the strongest Maharajah (or Maharajas or Maharani or Raja) and that they have the best in the world (textiles, carpets, tiny printing), and that the Taj Mahal was partly patterned after something in their city.



Jaswant Thada with guide

Our guide (we can't remember his name even though he was a very very

excellent source of entertainment and information, something like Kapela Singh) took us to a place called "Jaswant Thada" which is a marble memorial (from which the Taj Mahal's designer took some elements) to Maharajah Jaswant Singh II. Brent and I walked around inside the memorial and saw 1000 years worth of Maharajah's pictures in profile. All of the pictures looked exactly alike, and we were reminded of the movie Kind Hearts and Coronets. The grounds had a fountain and a beautiful view of the city and the palace.



maharaja family resemblance

We spent the next few hours at the Meherangh, which is a "majestic fort" and is the largest in Rajasthan (although every fort/castle we've been to is allegedly the largest and oldest!).

The fort is still operated by the Maharajah of Jodhpur, who lives with his wife and 2 grown children in a palace in the city (which is also a fancy hotel). The Maharajah has done a good job of taking you're-not-a-king-anymore lemons and turning it into turn- you're-palace-into-hotel-and-tourist-destination lemonade. The Meherangh was huge, though, and we took an elevator up 12 floors to the top, which was a beautiful view of the city . Our guide was great and told us about the history and every single inch of the fort. We went through the Maharajah's part of the palace and the women's part . The fort has a tragic history, shown by clay handprints of the "sati" marks of the Maharaj Man Singh's widows before they committed suicide by throwing themselves on his funeral pyre. Our



Jaswant Thada with us



the city from the fort

guide told us that the widows did not want to become the invading Muslim ruler's concubines, so they committed "sati".



handprints

The Meherangh also has an amazing museum with "howdah" which are seats for royalty that are carried on an elephant's back. We were told that one of the pictures shows a Mughal ruler, b/c it has the head with slanty eyes and a flat nose.



baby carrier

After the fort, we went to the Umaid gardens, where we saw about 4000 monkeys. It was like a scene from a

horror movie, I thought. So many monkeys running around wild, fighting amongst themselves, possibly biting the foreigners. Not good [Brent: but Hanuman the monkey god did



monkeypark



Monkey Park Movie

a lot to help Rama in an epic battle for his wife, so the least we can do is let the monkeys have the park]. We walked farther and saw many painted reliefs of the gods – our guide explained more about Hinduism and the various gods and goddesses, which is still completely confusing to me. There are so many gods and so many incarnations of various gods with so many arms. The reliefs were beautiful, though, and reminded me of a deck of cards.

A small wedding procession was coming through and they obligingly let us take their picture. They all looked at the image on our digital camera and were pleased with the result.

After the garden, we were dropped at our hotel, where we ordered way too much room service b/c we wanted to try many dishes. [Brent: way way way too much, both in quantity and in price, and it was mostly my fault.] The

food here is spicy! We love Indian food, but our stomachs haven't really adjusted to all the spices....



[Brent: Here's the real reason I ordered so much food. That evening our computer broke. It wouldn't boot. The boot drive was unmountable. All was lost (where "all" == six days of pictures and blogging). After a couple hours of failure to boot I was feeling really miserable, and stupid that I hadn't brought any recovery disk. I guess I thought food what make me feel better, if I ordered enough of it. It didn't.]

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