

## Maharajas' Express – The Heritage of India

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I had heard of the Maharajas' Express when it was voted the world's most luxurious train in 2012, and I was recently lucky enough to experience it on a 7 night journey from Mumbai to Delhi, called 'The Heritage of India'. This was my first visit to India so I had high expectations and I must say, a few presumptions. But more about that later.

After a short stay in Mumbai, we were driven to the stunning Chhatrapati Shivaji train station with its wonderful Victorian architecture. Once we came to board the train we were greeted with a glorious welcome that included a live band. Unfortunately for us, we didn't have time to savour this welcome, so a quick hand towel, flower garland and welcome drink later, we boarded the train and started trundling along towards our first stop. Luckily for us, this (slightly) OTT welcome was a familiar sight at every disembarkation and embarkation throughout our week long journey. If at first you may feel a bit embarrassed that so much effort (by effort I mean camels, dancers, a live band and a red carpet) has been made for you, you need not worry as you soon learn to immerse yourself in such extravagance! Hailing from Istanbul, I'm quite used to traffic, horns and a lack of lane discipline, but I soon came to realise that even Istanbul isn't quite up to par with the chaos on Indian streets. Most other presumptions I had; great food, stunning architecture and friendly locals, were all of course true.



The 'Heritage of India' journey takes a week to get from Mumbai to Delhi and stops off at many wonderful spots along the way, Ajanta Caves, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Ranthambore National Park to name but a few. Aside from these fascinating destinations, one of the lasting memories I will take from the journey belong to the staff on board the train. They would bend over backwards to make sure we had everything we needed and really made us feel like royalty. What's more, the sincerity which we felt from the staff was something all my fellow passengers agreed on and it really made a difference to our experience. My personal porter, (yes it sounds ridiculous but you soon get used to it), would wait up for me if I was having a drink with my fellow travellers at night. Why? Because he wanted to ask me if I wanted a wake up call and a cup of coffee in the morning!

It is hard to sum up India, it is a country full of diverse cultures at every corner (or train station), so doing an all-encompassing journey like this really helps you to witness as much as possible... Until next time, India.

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Maharajas' Express - Heritage of India from £5,529

Take a spectacular journey through western India aboard the luxurious the Maharajas' Express

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