

Maharajas' Express: Luxury, nostalgia, fascinating destinations



SAT Correspondent Rajeev Sharma enjoying the Maharaja Express (PHOTO: Supplied)

By Rajeev Sharma in New Delhi & Neeraj Nanda in Melbourne

If you care for nostalgia of a bygone era with a modern luxurious train journey deep into the soul of India, then Maharaja Express is your natural choice. Visiting India can become a new experience with this royal experience laced with world famous destinations that will defy your expectations.

Redefining luxury train travel since 2010, Maharajas' Express is the latest and most luxurious train in India. Offering 5 fascinating journeys crisscrossing some of the most vibrant destinations, significant attractions and offering a vista of breathtaking landscape, culture and heritage with which India is blessed; Maharajas' Express offers journeys to the very depth of the soul of India in sheer opulence.

Designed to recreate the elegance and pageantry of the personal carriages of erstwhile maharajas', the interiors of this luxury train in India is suffused with nostalgia. Elegance of a bygone era and state of the art amenities coalesce seamlessly to offer 5 Star living in the quaint interiors of the Maharajas' Express.

Talking to SAT India correspondent Rajiv Sharma, Mr. Vineet Singh, Group General Manager (services) Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd said, "The Maharaja Express is the first in the world to have four categories of accommodation, online water filtration system, individual climate control in cabins, largest passenger cabins, largest window sizes, live TV, CCTV cameras etc."

There are 14 guest carriages which constitute plush accommodation for guests. 20 deluxe cabins, 18 junior suites, 4 suites and a truly classy Presidential Suite spanning over entire carriage exude finesse previously unseen in train carriages. All cabins have their individual climate control and are equipped with amenities such as bathroom, Wi-Fi internet, electronic safe, live TV with satellite channels and direct dial phones. Dining facilities aboard Maharajas' Express train offered in 2 suave restaurants each with a seating capacity of 44 guests at a time. Dining experience during Maharajas' Express is a gourmet's delight with menu including authentic Indian, Chinese and Continental cuisine among others. Food prepared from fresh ingredients by top chefs is tastefully presented for the platter of the guests. Besides on board restaurants, dining at some of the top 5 star heritage hotels during the journey ensure that guests get to savor the best of Indian and international cuisines.

Other on board facilities include a well stocked bar with refined interiors and laid back ambience, a observation lounge with library and personal bar and a high-end boutique with exquisite creations.

Mr Vineet said, "Our major clients are from the US, UK, Spain, Australia, Latin America, Germany, Russia, Japan and many Indians."

"Top Microsoft people, Russian oil barons, stars from the Harry Potter movie etc. have been some of our big shot clients," he said.

With world class amenities, exquisitely designed interiors, gastronomic dining and vibrant on board ambience, Maharajas' Express journeys are invariably suffused with romance, adventure and style. Chugging along some of the most scenic landscapes, most alluring cities and offering an insight of India like no other journey, Maharajas' Express unravels the confounding Kaleidoscope of India bringing out the million images of tigers, snake charmers, spirituality, mountains, jungles, deserts, forts, palaces, dances, cuisines, romance and dreams. Welcome aboard for a rediscovery of India on a journey like no other on earth in a train like no other.

History

Way before Indian royalty fell in love with the motor car; they were enthralled by Sir James Watt's creation. An object of perennial fascination and amusement – the steam engine has been a part of the lives of kings and queens in various avatars. Over here, we list a few that tell the tale of a more genteel era that has gone by.

With the passage of time, all the princes vied with each other to display their ostentatious carriages. Maharaja Gaekwad of Vadodara not content with gifting his son a toy train, went on to install a royal throne in his personal coach. As a matter of fact, the Nizam of Hyderabad's private railway car was covered with thin strips of ivory and had solid gold hardware. As a child, yuvraj or prince Madhav Rao Scindia was fascinated by the railway train. Seeing this, his father the Maharaja built a two mile rail track on his palace grounds. One would often see the little prince taking his friends on a joy ride on the palace grounds on his special locomotive that ran on a two feet gauge track. The palace grounds on his special locomotive that ran on a two feet gauge track.

It was around 1880, that the princely states in India took the initiative to lay their own railway lines with contributions from their own exchequers. But Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur had his own little railway, a year in advance. The Raika Bagh Palace was probably the first railway station in India! Even when it came to the state of Vadodara, the passion for the railway was intense. As a birthday gift, Maharaja Pratapsinh Gaekwad gifted his five year old son, Ranjit Singh Gaekwad (the present Maharaja of Vadodara), a fully functional toy train that ran on ten inch gauge rails !

Current salons of the Maharajahs Express are designed to recreate the same old panache of the personal carriages of Indian Maharajahs. Each of the cabins including the dining coupes is suffused with nostalgia of past grandeur. Quaint décor fused together with the contemporary amenities create an aura of sheer opulence and 5 Star pampering inside the cabins of Maharaja Express. Maharajas' Express train consists of 23 coaches and has a total passenger capacity of 88. Plush facilities such as 2 restaurants, spa salon, bar, lounge, fitness center and business center redefine the art of luxury train travel on board Maharajas' Express.

Journeys

The Maharajas' train comes with 5 pan-India itineraries, each offering a peek into a unique aspect of the Kaleidoscope that is India. The itineraries which are referred to as the Indian Panorama, Heritage of India, Indian Splendor, Treasures of India and Gems of India, traverse across mesmerizing landscapes, some of the most alluring destinations and illumine the eclectic mélange of intricate tapestry connecting this incredible country, the true essence of India. The journeys:

Heritage of India

Mumbai – Ajanta – Udaipur – Jodhpur – Bikaner – Jaipur – Ranthambore – Agra – Delhi -
(Covering 3285 Kms)

Discover the bustling commercial city of Mumbai and the national Capital Delhi. Admire the beautiful cave paintings at Ajanta, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Visit the shimmering Lake City of Udaipur and the majestic fort at Jodhpur and enjoy sundowner on the sand dunes at Bikaner. Soak in the colorful Pink City of Jaipur. See from close quarters the legendary tigers at Ranthambore and one of the Seven Wonders of the World 'The Taj mahal' all this and more in utmost luxury.

Treasures of India

Delhi – Agra – Ranthambore – Jaipur – Delhi -(Covering 859 Kms)

On these journeys visit the world's greatest monument of love- The Taj Mahal, spot the elusive tiger in Ranthambore National Park, soak up the spectacular regal heritage of Rajasthan at Jaipur.

Gems of India

Delhi – Agra – Ranthambore – Jaipur – Delhi

This whirlwind tour itinerary spanning over 96 hours brings out the best of the Mughal and Rajputana. Attractions include some of the most stunning marvels of Indo-Islamic architecture including the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra.

The Indian Panorama

Delhi – Jaipur – Ranthambore – Fatehpur Sikri – Agra – Gwalior – Orchha – Khajuraho – Varanasi – Lucknow – Delhi -(Covering 2307 Kms)

Explore the hidden treasures of India! Embark on an unforgettable escapade that starts off with the capital city of Delhi. Make your way through the sacred city of Varanasi and cruise on the River Ganges to observe ancient spiritual rites. Witness the immortal beauty of the Taj Mahal in Agra, the sensuous moods of the temples of Khajuraho, the elegance and imperial splendour in Lucknow and the wilderness of the Ranthambore National Park.

The Indian Splendor

Delhi – Agra – Ranthambore – Jaipur – Bikaner – Jodhpur – Udaipur – Balasinor – Mumbai -
(Covering 2767 Kms)

In this journey visit the world's greatest monument of love the Taj Mahal, spot the elusive tiger in Ranthambore National Park, soak up the spectacular regal heritage of Rajasthan in its magnificent forts, vibrant Bazaars and the Royal cuisine. The journey will leave you with everlasting memories of a unique mix of Culture, History and Folklore.

Booking, Terms & Conditions @ <http://the-maharajas.com>

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