

# HLM™

LUXURY • LIFESTYLE

VANCOUVER • MAY/JUNE 2017

## NELLY FURTADO

THE COLD  
HARD RIDE

## JOHN GALLIANO

SHREDDING CHIC

## MASERATI

ART IN MOTION

## LAILA BIALI

VANCOUVER TO  
CARNEGIE HALL

## PASSAGE TO INDIA

MAHARAJAS'  
EXPRESS





## BY HELEN SIWAK

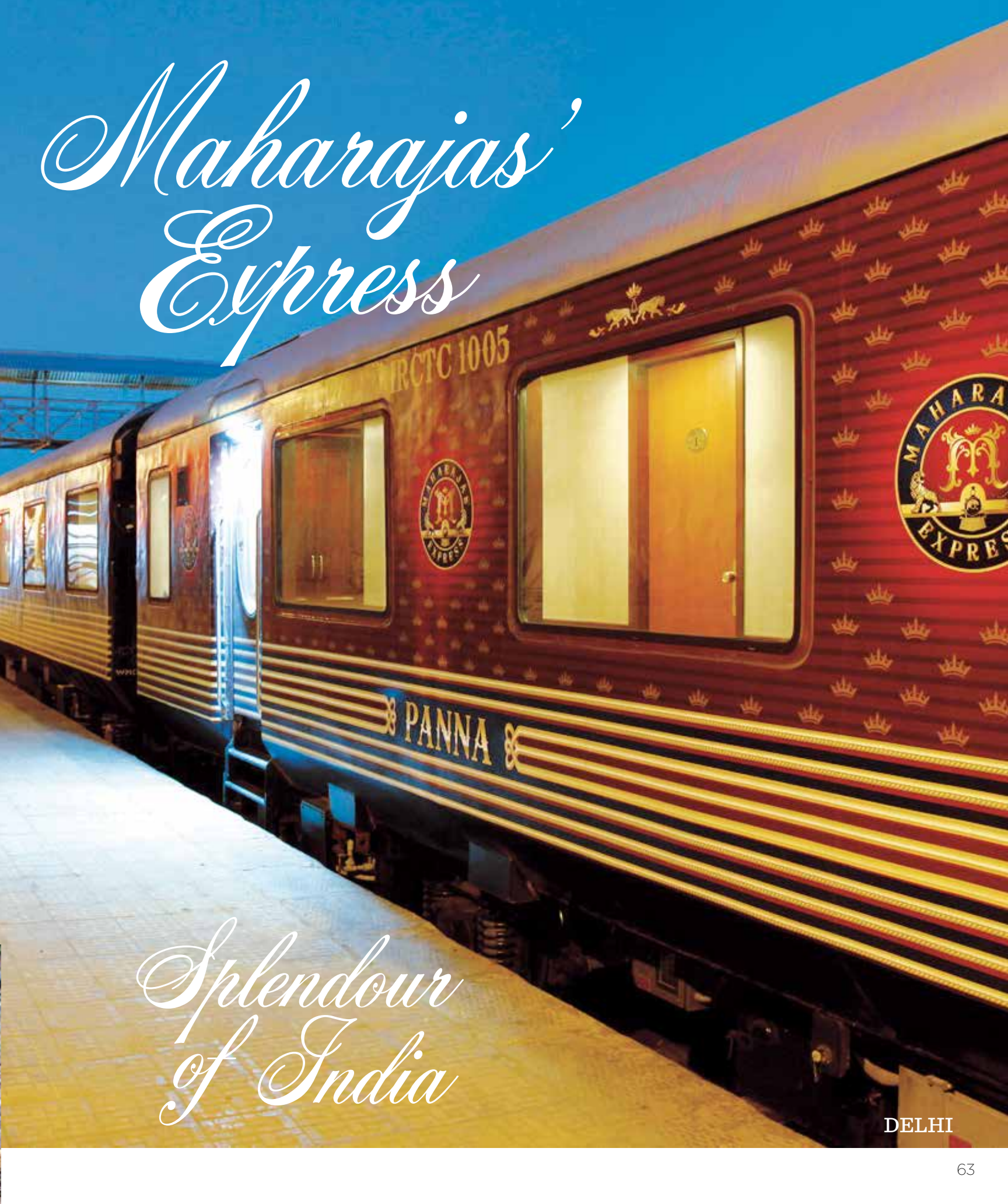
Enjoying a resurgence in popularity, excursion travel by luxury train is on everyone's radar this year. Far from intimidating, travel by train offers the traveler a fresh angle to view the passing world. From the air, one experiences the topographical view of the landscape. From the sea, one experiences only the dramatic coastlines and but a day in port, perhaps

shopping or embarking upon a foot tour. We decided our first odyssey would be aboard the Maharajas' Express, repeatedly cited as the leading luxury train journey in the world, year after year.

From October to April, the award-winning Maharajas' Express transports 88 guests per trip in 20 Deluxe Cabins, 18 Junior Suites,



# *Maharajas' Express*



*Splendour  
of India*

DELHI

# Maharajas' Express

4 Suites, and a single carriage consisting of a Presidential Suite. Amenities aboard the train include climate control, ensuite washrooms, and all the electronic and digital perks of a hotel suite. A personal valet for each suite is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the experience. Our valet was Parveen, and like the others, he is professionally trained, available around the clock to ensure all questions are answered and guests' whims fulfilled.

We enjoyed the finest of dining in the bronze peacock-adorned Mayur Mahal, with its lush emerald and gold décor, and the Rang Mahal with its embroidered ruby brocades. The daily menu (created anew each morning) reflected the region, and if



not satisfied, guests could request a tête-à-tête with complaisant Chef John Stone, who devised dishes to suit all palates.

There is no need to worry about dietary preferences. The kitchen practices inclusionary dining, and culinary prowess extends far beyond the anticipated Indian cuisine. Each day, the freshest fruits and vegetables, fragrant spices, and requested specialty items are gleaned from local markets and prepared in the tiny, but extremely efficient, bustling kitchen car.

While aboard, diners enjoyed multi-course meals with bottomless beverages. Appetizers included 'Smoked Salmon Exotique,' deviled eggs with caviar, or a chilled puree of mango and mint soup.





Lobster Thermidor, Caribbean Chicken, and classically prepared roast leg of lamb were just a few of the signature entrées. Sweet cravings were satisfied with simple palate-cleansing desserts such as fresh vanilla bean ice cream with dark chocolate sauce, tiramisu, to hot gulab jamun. Where vegan and vegetarian versions of dishes were not possible, Chef Stone created bespoke haute cuisine meals with gusto. When off the train, sumptuous buffets were prepared by catering teams and palace kitchens, with full bars of local wines and top-shelf spirits to please all.

Guests on the journey arrived from all over the world. This run of the Maharajas' Express attracted a well-heeled eclectic group that included three Saudi princesses, an Egyptian hotelier, an Israeli orthopedic surgeon, a young family from Vancouver, the sister of a Lebanese fashion icon, and an American retiree traveling to escape the next four years.



The Maharajas' Express is a structured adventure trip that includes many of India's famous destinations, which are arranged during non-peaks hours to provide a kaleidoscope of stunning archaeological, religious and historical sites, as well as markets dedicated to gemstone and marble. Guided tours include an early morning visit to the shimmering Taj Mahal, exhaustive explorations of Jaipur's Amber Fort and the Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur, a refreshingly languid boat ride on Lake Pichola to Udaipur's

# Maharajas' Express

City Palace, and a rocky excursion through Balasinor's Dinosaur Fossil Park led by Indian Princess Aaliya.

Sprinkled throughout the journey are numerous opportunities to venture off on a private jaunt, accompanied by an escort in a chauffeur driven, air-conditioned Mercedes. If you wish to skip a day's architectural wonders and head off for shopping, golf, or a luxurious spa visits, the Guest Manager made it so.

Once-in-a-lifetime experiences abounded. Putting aside the magnificently romantic Taj Mahal, and the Jai Mahal's painted elephant 'meet and greet' with sugarcane and greens, it is doubtful that I will ever cradle in my hands, an extremely rare intact dinosaur egg again.

On a rough early morning open-air truck safari through Jaipur's Ranthambore National Park, our group encountered families of Langur monkeys with infants, a sunbathing marsh crocodile, family packs of wild boar, species of deer including spotted Chital, the Nilgai antelope, the bearded Sambar, and a gorgeously aloof Bengal tiger. The free-roaming animals are not tagged, and much of the adventures excitement is the wild ride the conservationist guides take their guests on, all the while communicating frenetically through walkie-talkies.





BIKANER

The final night onboard is dedicated to fun and frivolity. When we arrived back from visiting with the royal family of Balasinor, Parveen had laid-out traditional his and her Indian outfits, to wear for dinner. Barthi, our female tour guide, arrived and assisted with draping my sari and once it was secured with pins, sent us off to the Safari bar. Guests enjoyed the final night on the Maharajas' Express, indulging in canapés, desserts, overflowing gold-rimmed champagne flutes, all the while learning the latest Bollywood dance moves from members of the kitchen staff.

The journey concluded at Mumbai's Lokmanya Tilak Station. Arranged luxury vehicle transportation whisked guests away from one final floral red carpet to the Taj Lands End, a spectacular 5-star oasis by the sea. After a delectably light lunch at 'Wasabi by Morimoto', many engaged in one last act of indulgence with afternoon shopping in the Taj's luxury retail arcade. The selection includes

classic brands such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Montblanc, as well as ultra-luxury brand Stefano Ricci, who opened this boutique in person in 2015, with Guest of Honour philanthropist Ratan Tata and Bollywood superstar Sridevi.



SIDDIS DANCERS, BALASINOR



As one of the most luxurious trains in India, the Maharajas' Express is designed to satisfy the romance, curiosity, and intrigue, historically associated with train travel. All the packages are created for those who appreciate the creature comforts of a luxury lifestyle: spacious cabins, fine dining, excellent excursions with knowledgeable congenial guides, and an ambiance of opulence and sophistication.



Traveling by train provides the modern excursionist the opportunity to traverse long distances overnight and each morning taken in a new vista, which is ideal for those with limited time for immersive adventure.