

# Put on your jodhpurs and go country...

*Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India - January 28, 2008*

Amy:

We woke the next day and went to the hotel breakfast (another large buffet) with all the other tourists. We're different, though, b/c we're much more polite and we speak fluent Hindi.



trip to the country

Our guide and a driver in a jeep picked us up at 8:30. It's scary enough to ride through the streets in a car, let alone a jeep... We drove outside the city to dirt roads outside of Jodhpur.

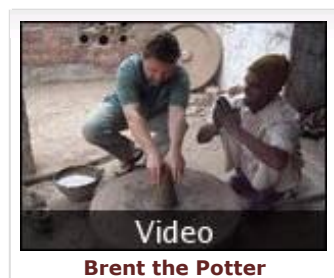
Our first stop was a Muslim potter's house. Our guide told us that one can identify caste and religion by the color of the clothes and the turbans (and the persons'



Video  
spinning pottery wheel

name). Our guide's last name was "Singh" so he's a Rajput. People wearing all white are Muslim, etc. (I don't know if this is true or not...). The potter & his wife (she was painting the pots) showed us

their kiln and wheel, and demonstrated how to make a pot. Brent gave it a try, also, which they really enjoyed.



Video  
Brent the Potter

Next, we went to an opium ceremony, which was in the porch area of a house with 4 men and a little boy sitting with a hookah and some spices and a plant in front of them. [Brent: If I remember our guide correctly, these were tribal members of the Bishnoi, an environmentally friendly sect of Hinduism started long ago by a holy man who engineered some genetic selection to create strong, tall, fighters to protect the villages and the antelope they oversee.] Our guide told us that we would be offered opium mixed with the bottled water that we brought, and that we could drink it or not.

He said that it couldn't be denied that opium is used by a lot of people in the area, as part of certain holidays, sometimes for guides and grannies. After an explanation of the hookah, the herbs, and the plant, the men sang a song to Ganesh. Our guide showed us a palm-sized clump of opium and we sniffed the clump, which didn't smell like anything (or maybe grass clippings?). Next, the main man in charge came over to us and gave us some water from his palm (our bottled water mixed with opium, presumably) to ours, and we drank it.



Video  
Opium, 101

Neither Brent (Naresh) nor I felt



opium offering

anything and we think that maybe there was no opium in the water mixture. But it was an exciting experience, nonetheless.



opium friends

It started to rain for a few minutes, which surprised everyone.

We got back in our jeep and proceeded down the road to a carpet weaver's shop.

We were followed by a group of 9 jeeps with 30 Canadian tourists. They were very nice and I talked with some of the women about the weather and traveling in India. It seems that most people have the same itinerary through Rajasthan, then relaxing on the beaches of Goa. The weaver demonstrated his weaving technique on a loom, and then showed the group his rugs.



weaver

We bought my mom a rug (I hope she likes it!) and said goodbye to our new Canadian friends.

The rest of our "jeep safari" was driving through some village lands and spying deer and antelopes playing under the watchful protection of the Bishnoi people. Our guide was good at spotting them and pointing them out to us (look, a blue cow).

After the jeep safari, we made a quick stop in a textile factory, where we were given a tour and showed the different patterns, threads, and techniques of making the textiles. Most of what they made was a result of recycling bits of fabric from saris, wedding dresses, and any other "costumes" and combining them into beautiful sheets, duvets, etc... After the textile factory, we dropped off our guide (gave him a tip) and were driven to the airport for our trip to Udaipur.



guide pointing out antelope (or blue cow)

At the airport, I chatted with the security guard in broken Hindi, and we ate some snacks and Brent bought a new book. The airport was very small and possibly belonged to the army. We met some American tourists from NY who couldn't wait to get back home! They were sick of India, sick of the food, etc. It's been interesting to get so many different perspectives of India! Our plane was late (surprise, surprise) but we were happy to be flying and not driving. [Brent: The pilots hopefully stick to prescribed air-flight patterns, relying on traffic controllers to help everyone reach their destination in safety, unlike the drivers who pick any pattern they want and rely on fate.]

We were met in Udaipur at the airport and driven to our hotel, Paras Mahal hotel. Almost immediately, Brent and

I walked down the street to an internet café, where a nice man working there gave us a Microsoft recovery disc (b/c our computer wouldn't boot!). We've been amazed at the kindness of people we've met – most have been so nice and generous. After Brent spent a few hours to successfully reboot the computer (yea!) we ordered room service back at the hotel, watched Seinfeld, posted 5 days worth of blogs, and went to bed.

[Brent: I was shocked—shocked!—that the Windows XP CD was not an official copy but had been—gasp!—illegally copied. Shocked I tell you! But I used it. You bet I did. There are no atheists in a foxhole, and no IP moralists when you're computer won't boot.]

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