

INDO ASIA DIARIES

Issue 18 | Oct 2016



INDO ASIA TOURS

Since 1987

FRAMED

CROSSING
CULTURES

TOP
SPOT

NEWS
& VIEWS

IA SAYS



Tony Deemer

*‘Who would think that Uttar Pradesh would throw up such surprises?’ Tony Deemer wondered aloud while talking to locals during his India trip. Trawling the state, doing things beyond the ordinary, is what brought Tony to the erstwhile fortress city of Kalinjar, about 400 km from Agra. After walking around the fort, he reached at the back and peeped down at the steps descending into another structure. What lay there was the best part of the entire hilltop fort – the still operational Neelkanth Shiva temple. From the sculptures on the walls, to the dark sanctum and pillared entrance, everything about this temple was enchanting. **Tony, who has travelled the length and breadth of the country, still finds this temple one of the most memorable structures in India. Even more than the Taj Mahal.***



NUDGE THE STORYTELLER IN YOU
TO SUBMIT A PHOTOGRAPH FROM
YOUR TRAVELS AND WIN A TRIP TO
EXPLORE THE MARVELS OF INDIA.

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT](#)

FRAMED

THE ENTRANCE TO THE NEELKANTH TEMPLE

Photo Location : Kalinjar Fort, Uttar Pradesh



Shahi Fort in Jaunpur

Of India's vast list of things to see and do, the state of Uttar Pradesh seems to grab a top spot on the list of many first time travellers to the country. ***It is the enigmatic marble structure, Taj Mahal and the oldest city in the world, Varanasi that make a definitive space in the itinerary.*** Add to that, a host of other fascinating sights and structures, it is a good place to get a full taste of India and its many accents – a variety of food, culture, festivals, music and monuments never make this a dull route. In this section, we add a generous dose of the offbeat, if you want to see the lesser-known parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Naugarh Fort, Robertsganj

Uttar Pradesh has a number of forgotten forts, which were once the stronghold of royalty in the region. Naugarh, in Sonbhadra is one of them. This erstwhile hunting lodge is tucked away behind acres of green fields, at the edge of a river called Karmnasha. ***The fort, though not in ruins, is a canvas of love-lorn youngsters whose graffitied love is hard to ignore. The tranquil surroundings amidst a rush of green suggest that the fort must have been the perfect low-key base for hunting for the Kings.***

Vindyavasini Temple

Dedicated to Durga, the temple lies in a small town called Vindhyachal. The temple, is a small unassuming one, but packed to the brim with devotees trying to get up close to the main shrine. ***Inside the sanctum, the black stone idol is about 5 feet tall and weighed down by hundreds of bright garlands. What one can see, are her silver eyes – big, bright and benevolent.*** There are other small shrines scattered in the small complex – Hanuman's idol and the gigantic Yagna Kunda with a bell on top of the fire are the most striking. .

Shahi Fort, Jaunpur

The well-maintained Shahi Fort is the prime relic of the Sharqui dynasty that a traveller should visit in the city of Jaunpur. The erstwhile seat of power for the Sharqui Kings and then later Akbar, offers a walk through the history of Tughlaq rulers who built this structure on the north bank of the Gomti River. ***The now towering structure will sturdy stonewalls was constructed over the ruins of Kerar Kot fort. The main highlights that dot the manicured gardens include a Turkish Hamam, a mosque and a Minar dedicated to Ibrahim Naib Barbak, Sultan Feroze Shah's brother.***

Kushinagar



A Stupa in Kushinagar

Kushinagar is an integral part of the Buddha circuit of Uttar Pradesh. Only 100km from the Nepal border, where Gautum Buddh was born, this unassuming town is where Buddha left his mortal body at the age of 80. His leaving the body is known as 'mahaparinirvana' or the freedom from the cycle of birth and death. The Mahaparinirvana Stupa, where he was finally laid to rest is the main travel draw.

CROSSING CULTURES

UTTAR PRADESH

OFFBEAT THINGS TO SEE IN THE GEOGRAPHICAL HEART OF INDIA

Hotel Clarks Shiraz *Emulating Mughal Elegance*

**TOP
SPOT**

FRAMED

CROSSING
CULTURES

**TOP
SPOT**

NEWS
& VIEWS

IA SAYS

INDO ASIA TOURS



Five star luxury is the only way to stay when you're sharing the place that epitomises Mughal exuberance. Overlooking the grandest symbol of love, Taj Mahal, Hotel Clarks Shiraz ensures that it has one of the most coveted addresses in town. Five decades of exceptional hospitality adds to the experience.

Highlights include:

- *Firmly maintained heritage essence*
- *Modern amenities and facilities blended with local aesthetics*
- *An extraordinary view from the Taj facing rooms*
- *An affair with delectable cuisines from all over the world*
- *The Adebha Spa to unwind with rejuvenating treatments*
- *Swimming pool and gymnasium*
- *Proximity to the immortal Taj Mahal in marble in stone*
- *Resonance with Mughal gardens in its acres of manicured lawns*

**TOP
SPOT**

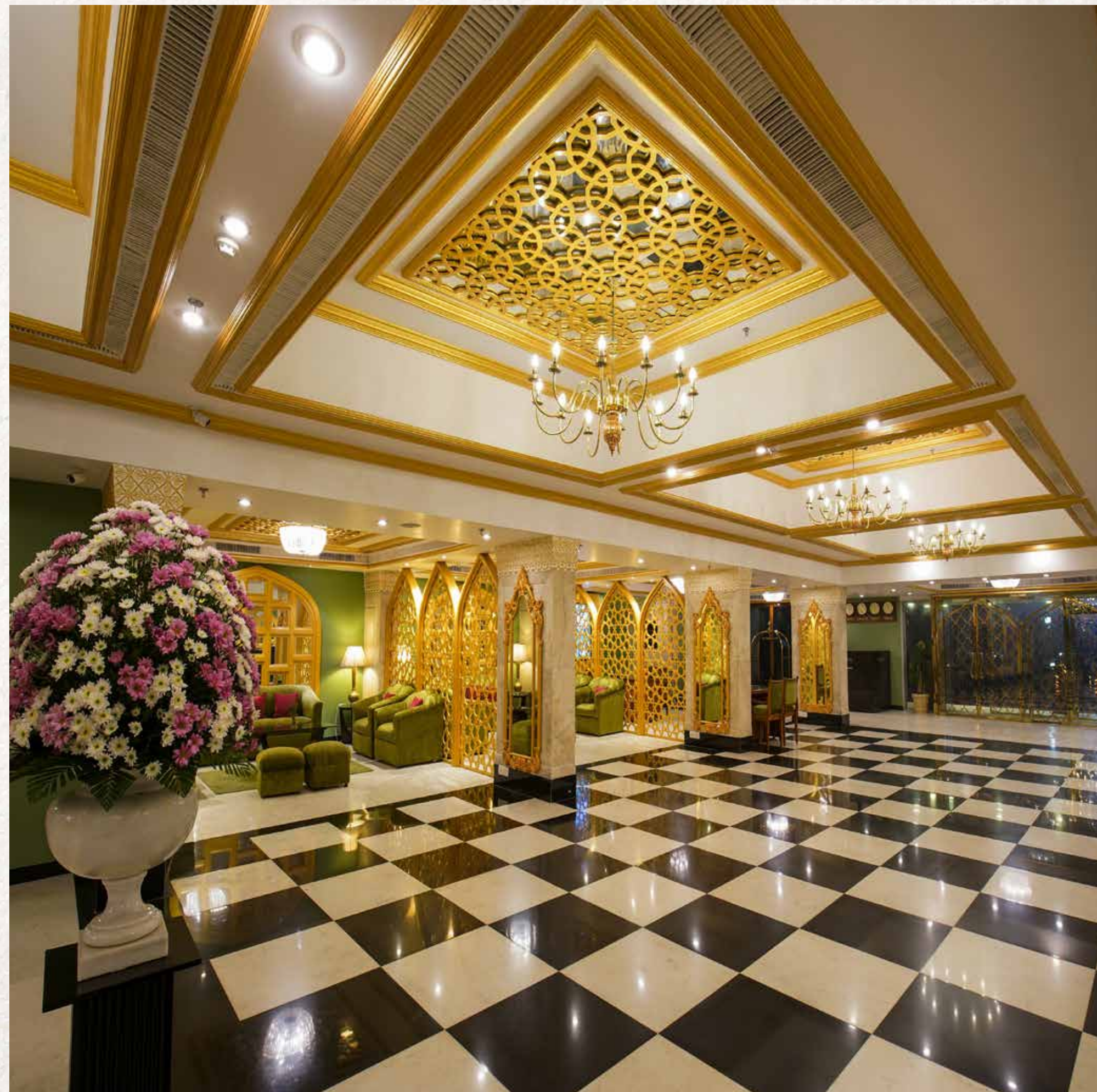
FRAMED

CROSSING
CULTURES

TOP
SPOT

NEWS
& VIEWS

IA SAYS



INDO ASIA TOURS



SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Footloose in Agra

48 hours in Agra's streets

While websites and guidebooks are packed with information on the popular Mughal monuments in Agra, there is much more to discover in the city. *If you were to call yourself an Agra veteran, here's a list of places that you need to include in the itinerary. Veering off the usual itinerary, to include some of the classic spots, adds up to make an authentic India experience.* Here are our top five things to do in Agra, apart from the usual monument trail..

Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary & Keetham

Unplug from the history filled sightseeing days and head out to Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and Keetham Lake just outside Agra (26km). *Drive along a tree flanked forested path to reach the Keetham Lake where winters are a brilliant time to see migratory birds.* On the right of the lake, a small path leads to a temple made in the memory of the blind poet, Sur Das, along the glistening Yamuna that flows next to it. Even though it is difficult to spot many animals here, peacock calls make a constant background score.

Mariam's Tomb



Mariams tomb

Born a Rajput princess, Heer Kunwari was married to Akbar in 1562, and re-christened, Mariam-uz-Zamani. She bore Akbar a son who came to be the future king, Jenhagir. After her death in 1623, Jehangir built a tomb for her, just outside Agra. *A veritable stop for those want to see something different, Mariam's tomb lies just a km from*

Akbar's own tomb in Sikandra. The erstwhile Lodi structure, which was converted into the tomb is surrounded by neatly trimmed gardens. In between stands a grand red sandstone structure on a raised platform.

Taj Ganj



Zari work in Taj Ganj

Wander in the streets of Taj Ganj where you can see the legacy of different crafts alive in local homes. Zari work, whirring machines craving marble curios, carpet work and more can be seen here. But one of the most interesting things is kabootarbazi or the hobby of flying pigeons. The area has over hundred homes, with a bevy of pigeons that fly on demand by the owner. An annual festival on 25th Dec, is one of the most awaited time for these hobbyists.

Church of Pieta (Akbar's Church)

The Mughal King Akbar was well known was his



Akbar's church in Agra

religious tolerance. *A diminutive yellow building at the back of the current Cathedral House packs in substantial history that strikes one as odd for an erstwhile Mughal kingdom.* King Akbar's tolerance towards other religions is immortalized in this church that was built in 1598 by Jesuit Fathers on his order. This is the first Catholic Church of Agra. Even Mughal Emperors themselves came to pray here.

Roman Catholic Cemetery or the Red Taj

The erstwhile 16th century Armenian cemetery (now a Roman Catholic one) houses a marvelous structure in red, inspired by the Taj Mahal. Though much smaller, it is reminiscent of Taj Mahal's aesthetics. *Built by Col John William Hessing who died in 1803 A.D, while serving the Mughals, this is a fascinating addition to an Agra trip.* Roam the cemetery to see other 16th and 17th century tombstones, many of them with Persian inscriptions, as that was the language of use in those times.

TOP SPOT

Indigo expands its destination list



IndiGo is set to introduce its first daily return flights connecting Bengaluru to Patna, Varanasi and Imphal from the end of October. The airline is introducing 47 new

flights on its existing route network. With this the airline's frequency will increase to an impressive 883 flights on a daily basis. Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bhubaneswar, Lucknow, Guwahati and Patna will see more connectivity with these additions. Aditya Ghosh, President and Whole Time Director, IndiGo said "It gives me immense pleasure to announce our plans to further strengthen connectivity in India by offering more flights and increased frequencies to our growing customer base. With the continuously increasing presence and phenomenal customer uptake, we are hopeful that these flights will prove to be popular and convenient for our passengers, across our network."

ITC to have 3 new addresses in India



The Indian hospitality space will see three new addresses from the ITC Group in 2017. "ITC is a rapidly growing chain and we are building new hotels. In 2017, we'll have a second hotel in Hyderabad— ITC Kohinoor. We will also be coming up with a hotel in Coimbatore as well as in Amritsar. In 2018, we'll come up with a hotel in Kolkata. We are going through a very exciting phase," said Dipak Haksar, Chief Executive, ITC Hotels & Welcome Hotels.

Port Blair gets connected to Delhi & Kolkata via Vistara

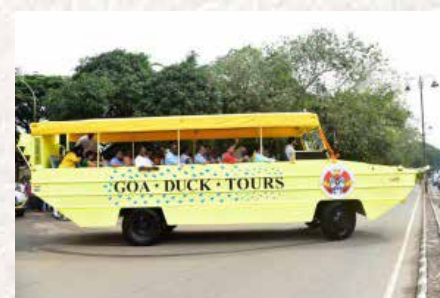


Vistara inaugurated operations to Port Blair, as its flight UK 747 took off from Delhi for Port Blair via Kolkata on Sept 30. Vistara now serves 18 destinations across the country. The new service to Port Blair offers a daily flight from Delhi and Kolkata (same aircraft service via Kolkata), with arrival and departure timings that allow for convenient connections to ferry and catamaran services between Port Blair and Havelock Island. Phee Teik Yeoh, CEO, Vistara, said, "We are delighted to add Port Blair to our

fast-growing network with a daily direct flight from Delhi via Kolkata. The Andamans are a beautiful part of India with rich history and breathtaking natural beauty. We are pleased to offer both the visitors, and the wonderful residents of this region, the chance to experience 'the new feeling' of flying Vistara, an airline that is setting new standards of service excellence, when they travel to and from Port Blair."

Sanjiv Kapoor, Chief Strategy & Commercial Officer, Vistara, added, "Delivering on our brand promise to provide seamless, thoughtful and personalized services, we are pleased to introduce a variety of attractively priced packages in cooperation with top travel entities to offer our customers the most convenient travel in the Andamans. While Port Blair itself offers a lot to see and do, including the historic Cellular Jail and an excursion to the neighboring Ross Island, we have also timed our flights to offer the most convenient connections to and from the most popular inter-island ferries such as to Havelock Island."

A new way to see Goa - duck boats



Goa Tourism has launched amphibious bus service for tourists in the form of duck boats. Goa Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar launched these at the beginning of the tourism

season in the state. The duck boats are bound to be a commercial success given the footfall of family bookings in the state. The duck boats are popular in many countries with water bodies – the bus can operate both on land and water, making it an exciting addition for kids. Goa Tourism is one of the most innovative states in India, and this new initiative is a glowing example of that.

Two new addresses for Lemon Tree



The Lemon Tree Hotel, Candolim in Goa and the Lemon Tree Wildlife Resort, Bandhavgarh in Madhya Pradesh are the two new ventures of the group, that will be launched in the coming year. After seeing the success of the first property, this will be Lemon Tree's second hotel in Goa. The hotel offers 34 rooms, an all-day dining restaurant, a terrace-top bar, a rooftop swimming pool and a conference room of approximately 800 square feet. The Lemon Tree Wildlife Resort, Bandhavgarh is located in close proximity to Tala Gate, the main entry for the Bandhavgarh National Park, and marks the group's entry into the wildlife resort arena. Spread over five acres, the hotel features 11 cottages an all-day dining restaurant, a swimming pool and a conference hall.

NEWS&VIEWS

FRAMED

CROSSING CULTURES

TOP SPOT

NEWS & VIEWS

IA SAYS



MEET US AT



International
Golf Travel
Market®

Indo Asia Tours will have its presence in the below mentioned upcoming fairs in 2016. You can schedule an appointment at marketing@indoasiatours.com to meet us in person at these shows :

- WTM (London) 07 - 09 Nov, 2016
- IGTM (Mallorca, Spain) 14-17 Nov, 2016

IA SAYS

FRAMED

CROSSING
CULTURES

TOP
SPOT

NEWS
& VIEWS

IA SAYS



Dear Partners,

At the onset, I'd like to wish you a Happy Diwali on one of India's largest festivals.

Agra, and its slew of dramatic Mughal monuments hardly needs an introduction or convincing for a traveller to go, but yet, I feel the need to extoll the virtues of this fabulous city. You see, I have a deep connection and a special bond with the town. It gave me my many firsts – a tryst with a coca cola bottle when roaming the Agra Fort in the mid 60's (the original one), a peek into British architecture in its many colleges and

what it felt like to be completely mesmerized by Mughal aesthetics and architectural prowess.

As a young boy, trips to Agra were frequent and sprinkled with rickshaw rides to the old bazaar, the quintessential Taj visit and plenty of afternoons under large leafy trees in my uncle's home. The streets were sparsely populated and a walk down the road to see the St.John's College and Agra College rewarded one with unique architectural features – one that I later identified with on my many trips to London. The Taj visit always left me intrigued about the scale and sheer excellence of the artisans. The sleepy town left an indelible mark on my young mind.

Agra has always been an educational hub and a city that boasts of many luminaries. The fact that British found this to be a conducive base was nothing new. After all, Akbar too found this a great base city, close to the river Yamuna with an easy terrain to build homes and a Kingdom. Under him, the old city had a pulsating vibe with many crafts finding a voice and artisans being employed to renovate or build new structures. Naturally, Taj Mahal became the most significant reminder of their skill.

Even after centuries, Taj Mahal doesn't fail to enthrall visitors from all parts of the world. I have been lucky to see it in all seasons and times of the day, and each vignette of the structure is more stunning than the other. Even the old city, retains a simple charm with its narrow streets that criss-cross behind the main roads. ***All in all, Agra remains a timeless city that has seen burgeoning growth but knows how to keep it's vibe intact. For me, it's a city that I would go to see in a heartbeat.***

Gajendra Singh Panwar

EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH!



Mr. Manish Upraity | Sr. Tour Executive

It's a coincidence that this month's employee of the month happens to be a man right from the heart of Agra. But a fitting one. Manish's journey with us has been for 8 long years, in which he has showcased exemplary professionalism and passion about leading tours.