

YAP Tour North India

July-August 2018

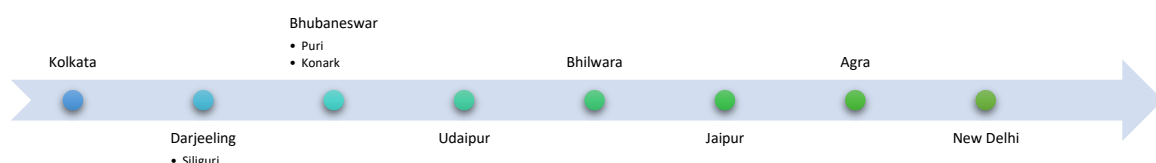
“What is the first thing that comes to mind, when I say ‘India’?” The funny thing is: I never thought I was going to go to India, so I never thought of this question. I went on this trip to challenge myself and meet some new people in an environment entirely different from what I know back from Denmark. And it was nothing like I had imagined – it was way better.

We landed in Kolkata on the morning of the 29th of July. Our host families from the 41’ers Club India had patiently waited for us for a while because of minor inconveniences at the visa office, but it did not seem to bother them – which we quickly found out was one of the Indians most notable and greatest values: the hospitality. Wherever we went, we were always the center of attention and the guests of honor which of course was nice, sometimes even overwhelming.

Our time in Kolkata was spent seeing a few monuments, but perhaps most notable how the Idols were made of straw and clay. Mighty statues portraying Hindi gods made to be honored in an annual festival taking place in fall. Accompanied by the 41’ers, they also showed us The Mother House – residence and now resting place for Mother Teresa, which I found quite interesting.

After a few days in the hectic Kolkata traffic, we went 10 hours by train to Darjeeling (2042 m) in the Northern India, close to the Chinese, Nepali and Bhutan borders. Mountainsides, fog and very narrow streets would probably sum up this city very well. We went with the “toy train”, visited a local school and bought their famous tea. Unfortunately, we didn’t get to see much of Himalaya because of the fog. To do so, you must come in fall, we were told.

After Darjeeling, we went back to Kolkata for one night and then continued down the east coast to Bhubaneswar. Here we went to see Konark Sun Temple – in heavy rain, ironically. We also went to Puri for a swim in the Bay of Bengal. I also recall having a delicious lunch at the Lotus Resort near Konark.



Next stop was Udaipur in the state of Rajasthan on the west coast. Udaipur is home to City Palace, which we had to see. This humongous structure was built over the course of over 400 years and house several temples as well an exclusive hotel and the royal residence. Also known as the “City of Lakes”, we also went sailing in the Fateh Sagar Lake.

From here, we went to Bhilwara, which is well known for their Phad painting techniques only practiced by a single family from Bhilwara. Here, we were taught the artform from a well-known artist, apparently, and because of our background, we even made it to the newspapers. We also visited a school near Gangapur that gave us a warm welcome to show their gratitude to the Round Table for building a new schoolhouse to them. We also gave them toys.

Next stop was Jaipur. Most notable was us witnessing the Teej Festival. Dedicated to the arrival of the monsoon season, it was a very unique experience because of all the different people as well as animals attending the festival. There were cattle, camels and even elephants in the street. We also saw the enormous Amber Fort and rode on elephants.

Next stop was Agra, which had the highlight of the trip in my opinion: The Taj Mahal. And it did not disappoint. Built by Shah Jahan to honor his deceased wife, the entirely symmetrical mausoleum is made entirely out of solid marble and a plentitude of different colored stones imported from many different places in the world. A must-see in my opinion!

Last stop was New Delhi. Here we went to see a few temples before having our last party together as a group.

I want to thank Round Table’s YAP-program for giving me the opportunity to experience a country like India while building relationships across country borders.

Thank you to the other YAP’ers, who attended as well, I won’t forget you anytime soon.

And a huge thanks to the 41’ers Club of India for showing us around and letting us all into their homes. They took care of us in a way that only Indians would do. These people really are the most hospitable on this earth, and I will, without a doubt, recommend anyone else to go with the YAP program to India. Even if India is not on your bucket list, which is wasn’t in my case, you won’t regret it! – *Marcus E. Nielsen, 20, Denmark*

