



Safari Bar



Rang Mahal Restaurant



Presidential Suite

# Waking up in a New City EVERY DAY!

Indulge in the immersive charm of a train journey through India, where luxurious cabins, cultural delights, and culinary treats converge to create a captivating experience. Elevate the adventure with the thrill of waking up in a new city every single day. The result? The sheer joy of experiencing the essence of India.

By: Ami Bhat



Photo Courtesy : Maharajas' Express (Images of the train's interiors)

Mayur Mahal



A gentle knock stirs you out of the cosy duvet and you open the door to an ever-smiling butler. “Good morning and welcome to Udaipur,” he chimes as he hands over a steaming cup of tea with the itinerary of the day. This is your wake-up call to start your new day in a new city in India.

Did you know that Udaipur is known as the City of Lakes or the Venice of India? —reads the card as it adds intrigue to this city of the day. The mood created by the itinerary is further elevated to pampering by the luxurious morning bath routine on board. The butler then takes charge and leads the way through the chugging train right into a frescoes-laden Rang Mahal—the place where breakfast aboard the Maharajas' Express awaits its royal guests.

Winner of World Travel Awards, for seven consecutive years, the Maharajas' Express is one of the many luxury trains that run across India. These trains offer an experience akin to checking into a high-end hotel on land. With comfortable cabins, impeccable services including a dedicated butler, exceptional cuisine, and amenities such as lounges and wi-fi, guests are thoroughly indulged throughout their journey. Every carriage in these trains



is designed with elements that reflect the traditional architecture of the region that they run in. What makes them even more attractive is that these heritage resorts on wheels promise you a new city every single day. Packed with sightseeing activities and cultural experiences, these trains offer a perfect way of discovering India during a short visit.

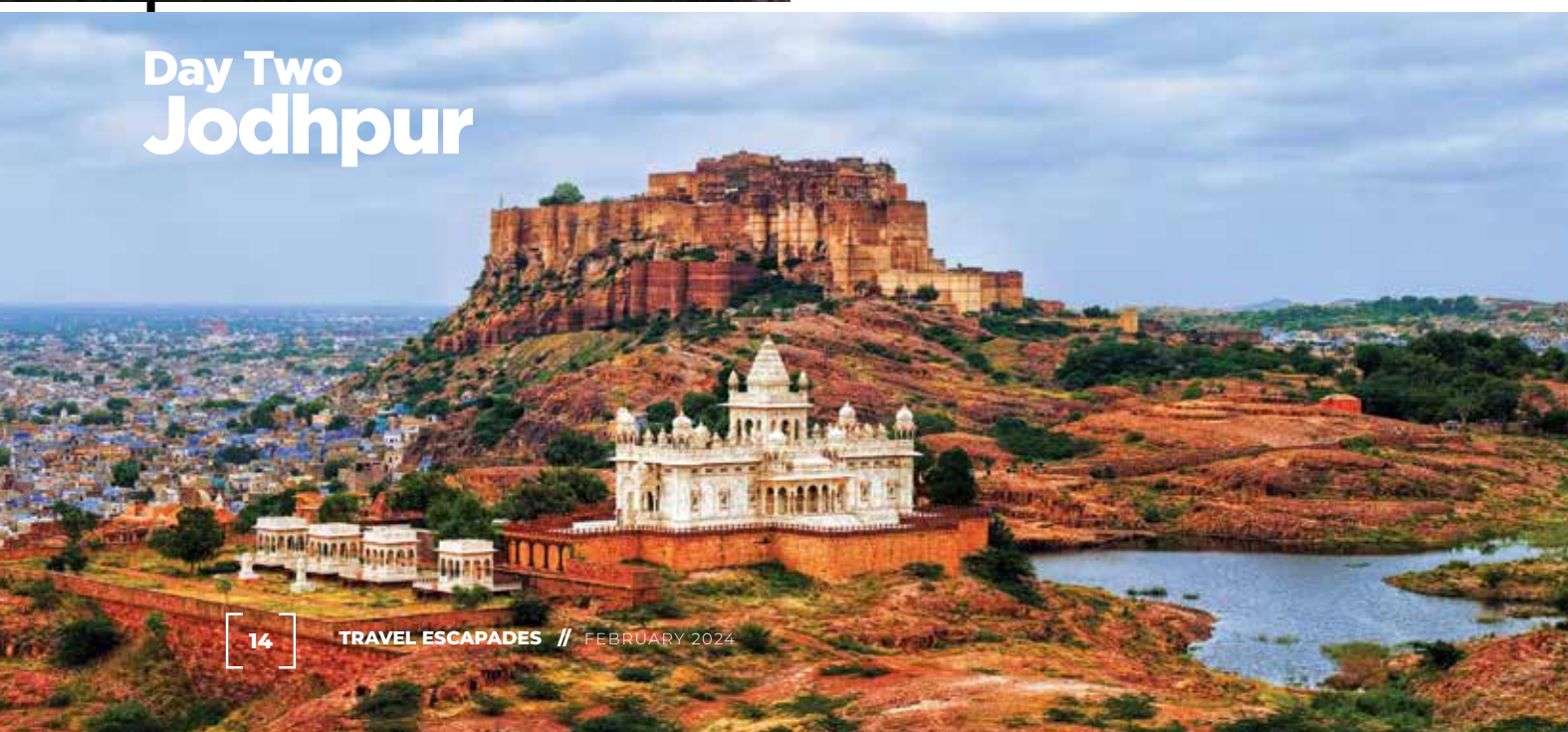
The welcome ceremony at the origin in Mumbai is a red-carpet affair complete with live folk music and dance. Every guest is greeted with the traditional *tilak* on the forehead and a garland of fresh flowers. The rest of the journey is all about exploring the magnificent train and its offerings.

The royal treatment continues throughout the journey. On Day One at Udaipur, the guests experience a boat ride on the famous Lake Pichola and relive the tales of Maharana Pratap in the 400-year-old City Palace. After a hearty lunch, the guests can choose to saunter off and discover the other attractions of this Lake City or return to enjoy the bar and lounge on the Maharajas' Express.

## Day One Udaipur



## Day Two Jodhpur



The culinary treats aboard these luxury trains add a touch of culture to the journey through India. The guests are treated to fresh meals made with traditional spices, native to the city that they are visiting. Be it the authentic Rajasthani cuisine on the Maharajas' Express or the flavours of Chettinad on the Golden Chariot that originates from Bengaluru and has multiple itineraries to discover South India. One of the leisure evenings on the Golden Chariot involves a live cooking show by the chef on board—creating an immersive experience for the guests on board.

The grand train moves slowly towards the next destination as the guests retire to the comfort of their cabins. In the case of Maharajas' Express, Day Two begins with the quintessential blue city of Jodhpur. The excursion through the city starts at the mighty Mehrangarh Fort which was constructed over 500 years ago. The citadel engages its visitors with stories involving a human sacrifice to chilling mass-immolation tales and the reason why homes in this city are painted blue. A journey to the famous Ghanta Ghar is an opportunity to shop for colourful lac bangles and wooden handicrafts. One can opt for additional walks through the Mandore Gardens or Umaid Bhawan or turn in for the day at the luxurious hotel-on-wheels.

The amenities on the luxury train are apt for unwinding after a day of exploration. The guests can settle down with a drink and a book from the lounge library or seek some fun with the board games available there. Trains like the Golden Chariot even offer spa services onboard as well as fun activities like a live *mehendi* session. Guests who wish to retire to their cabin can just switch on their TVs and enjoy their OTT or satellite channels. Time just flies by as the train heads to the next destination—which on Day Three is Bikaner.

Established by Rao Bika, a cousin to the Maharaja of Jodhpur, this small city rose to fame when it became a trading stop on the famous Asian Silk Route. Even today, one can visit the opulent *havelis* of the merchants or hop over to the Junagarh Fort, which has



## Day Three Bikaner



## Day Four Jaipur

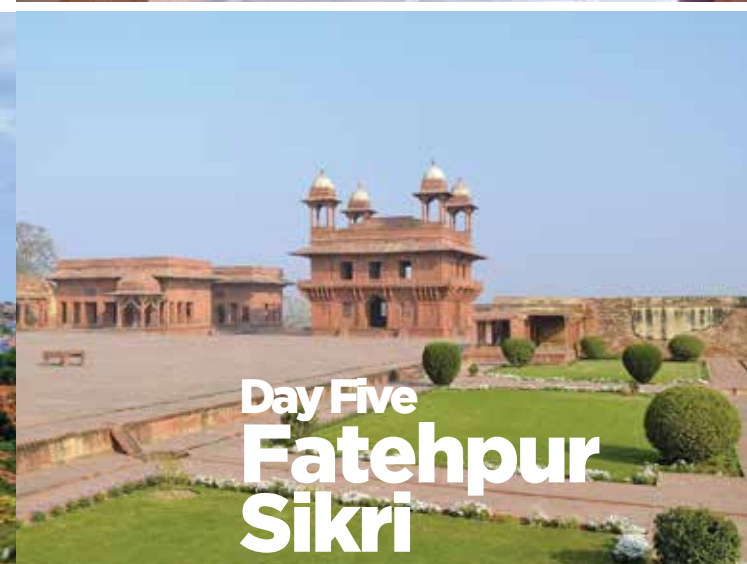
been made famous by Bollywood. The sundowner event organised by the Maharajas' Express whisks the guests to the dunes of the Thar where the cocktails continue over a colourful cultural evening of Rajasthani folk dance and music.

Day Four dawns in the heritage city of Jaipur. Passing through the city, with its beautiful Hawa Mahal, bustling markets and old buildings, it becomes evident why Jaipur has been dubbed as the pink city. A walk through the mighty Amber Fort is a must-do as is shopping for gorgeous Jaipur handicrafts, Pashmina shawls, blue pottery and metal handicrafts. With any additional time left, it would be good to hop over to the biggest sundial in the world at the Jantar Mantar or take a tour of the City Palace beside it.

It isn't just heritage that forms the bulk of the train itinerary. The itineraries of all the Indian luxury trains are quite versatile and offer glimpses of heritage, culture, food, nature, and wildlife. In the case of Deccan Odyssey, which runs between Delhi and Mumbai through central India, you



## Day Five Fatehpur Sikri



## Ranthambore





can choose the trail through Pench and Tadoba National Parks. On the Maharajas' Express, you find yourself at Ranthambore on Day Five.

The breakfast conversation that morning is all about the sights and sounds of the early morning wildlife safari. The meal might seem extra scrumptious with the moving vistas outside as the train heads forward. It is one of those days where you find yourself having breakfast at one place—Ranthambore and lunch on board close to another city in India—Fatehpur Sikri. This town introduces the Mughal era of Akbar—a befitting

prequel to Day Six when you wake up in Agra.

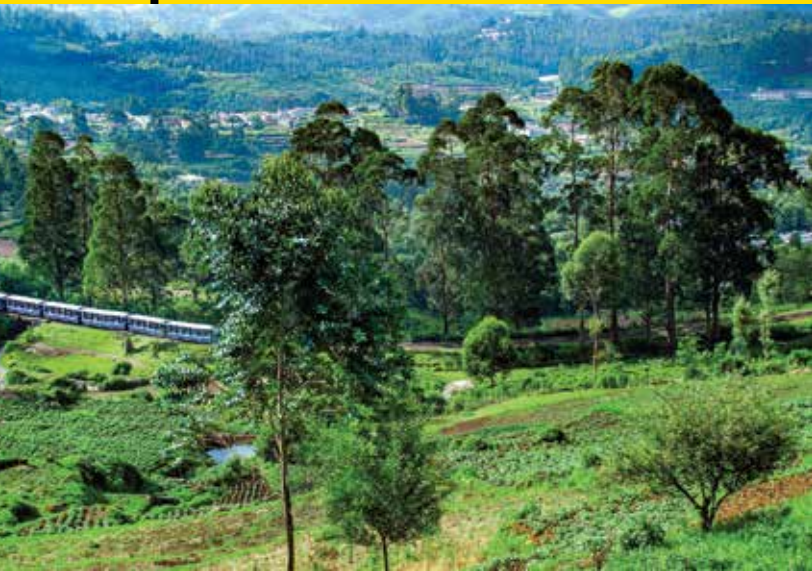
The sunrise tour of the Taj Mahal is a befitting finale to this train sojourn. The sight of the changing colours of this Wonder of the World leaves one wonderstruck for the rest of the day. One would still be revelling in the beauty of this monument of love while enjoying one's last lunch on board.

Your butler enters your cabin for one

last call. "Would you need anything else? – he asks. We will arrive soon in Delhi. The announcements sweep in an air of wistfulness. Packed and ready, you give a once-over through the now-familiar palatial cabin and its thoughtful embellishments. When the train finally halts, you farewell to your regal home on wheels. The journey that started in Mumbai has finally culminated in Delhi. ♦



## The UNESCO World Heritage Train Journeys in India



The history of passenger trains in India goes back to the year 1853. This is when the first train from Bori Bunder in Mumbai chugged off towards Thane. With the success of that, several tracks sprung up across the length and breadth of the country. A lot of these are still operational and among them are three railways recognised by the UNESCO as World Heritage Sites.

Termed as the mountain railways of India, these are not only historically significant but are renowned for their engineering prowess. The tracks do not just connect two cities but offer a magical experience through the hills—making them ideal to capture a unique part of India.

The Kalka Shimla toy train takes you through the mystical mountains and valleys of Shivalik Range—most enjoyable

during winters when the landscape turns into a winter wonderland with its snowcapped peaks. The 96 km long stretch was built by the British between 1898 and 1903 and includes 103 tunnels and 969 bridges.

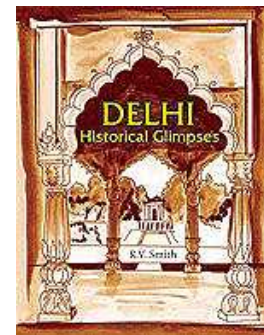
The Ooty toy train offers a similar experience as it traverses from Mettupalayam to Ooty through the verdant Nilgiri hills. Not only is the landscape gorgeous but what makes this journey special is that it is one of the steepest in Asia. The captivating journey spans 46 kms and offers captivating vistas of tea gardens, rocky hills and stunning forests.

The third of these heritage journeys is the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway that is around 88 km long. It connects New Jalpaiguri to Darjeeling through a series of tunnels, wavy tracks and hairpin turns. Referred to as a 'Toy Train', this is a small gauge journey that was built in 1881.

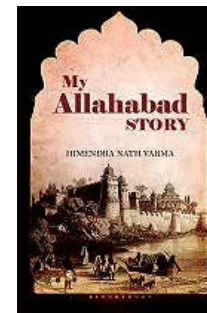
There are two other journeys in India that await their UNESCO World Heritage Status. This tentative list includes Kangra Valley Railway through the Himalayas from Pathankot to Joginder Nagar and the Matheran Hill Railway from Neral to Matheran in the Western Ghats.

## 5 BOOKS ABOUT INDIAN Cities

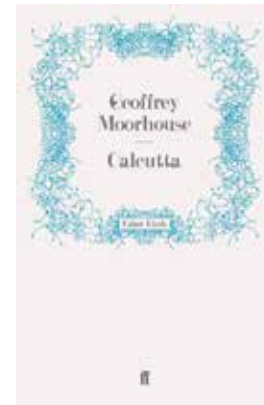
Exploring the vibrancy of India through a literary journey that takes us across different Indian cities.



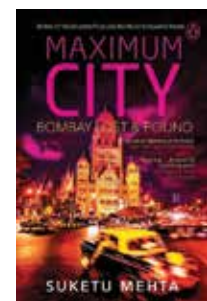
R.V. Smith's *Delhi: Historical Glimpses* unfolds as a tapestry of the capital city's past, weaving together narratives of its historical monuments and the legends intertwined with them. The book serves as a captivating journey through Delhi's rich heritage and the transformative forces that have shaped its identity.



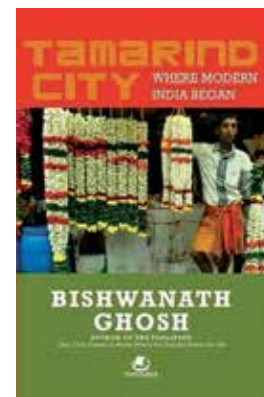
In *My Allahabad Story*, Himendra Nath Varma reminisces about his childhood in Allahabad, offering a poignant reflection on the city's evolution over the years. The narrative delves into the author's memories of a bygone era, contrasting them with the contemporary state of the city, marked by a palpable sense of despair.



Geoffrey Moorhouse's *Calcutta* explores the imperial residue left on the city during the empire's inception and its aftermath. The narrative captures the essence of Calcutta's history, shedding light on the enduring impact of imperial rule on its cultural and societal fabric.



Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City: Mumbai Lost and Found* provides readers with an insider's perspective on life in Mumbai. As a native of the city, Mehta skillfully navigates the bustling streets and intricacies of Mumbai, offering a vivid portrayal of its dynamic and ever-changing landscape.



Bishwanath Ghosh's *Tamarind City: Where Modern India Began* intricately unveils the dual facets of Chennai, encompassing both the mystical charm of Madras and the bustling energy of contemporary Chennai. The book navigates through the city's split personality, capturing its essence as it transforms from a moody, magical enclave to a tech-savvy metropolis.

So, which city tour are you ready to take within the pages of these glorious books?