

The lure of India is her changing face

Last week's travel seminar in Victoria, hosted jointly by Air India and the Government of India Department of Tourism, offered all the right answers. I had the privilege of attending as a guest of Eaton's Travel in Duncan. The information was so well presented I was ready to leave for the airport immediately when it ended. Any of the qualms a prospective tourist might harbour were quickly put to rest.

Why then should a traveler go to India? Tourism in India is the fastest growing industry in the world. Whatever you would like to see, including anything out of the ordinary, India can deliver. Wildlife, hiking, mountaineering, beautiful beach resorts. Festivals, monuments and the performing arts. Also deserts, flower gardens, formal terraced gardens, bargain shopping and much much more.

The hotels range from luxurious modern first class hotels and Maharajas Palaces to budget hotels and youth hostels at \$2 - \$10 per day. In Srinager, the Capital of Kashmir, the choice of hotels includes the world famous house boats.

India is the world's largest democracy with a civilization over 5000 years old covering an area larger than all Europe. Because of it's size when it is hot in the south it is cool in the hills. If it is too cold in the north it will be quite pleasant in the south. If the monsoons pelt the east coast one can move to the west.

Language, customs, food and dress change every 10 miles. The basic foods are the same but cooked differently. In the northern states the people are very fair, whereas in the south their stature is small and their complexion darker.

English is spoken everywhere - in the hotels, shops, taxis and by tour guides. In fact, guides will be supplied in any language.

The country is so vast it takes 5½-6 hours to travel by air from north to south. Indian airlines offers a host of different travel schemes. The range of schemes include the Discover India Fare at

\$375 U.S. for 21 days anywhere in India or 14 days for \$300 and 7 days for only \$200.

India's train system is the largest in the world. Gone are the days of the British system of 1st, 2nd and 3rd class. They are now classed as air conditioned or not. There are also "Travel as you like" passes. For example, a 7 day pass in an air conditioned coach would be \$190 U.S. or \$95 first class.

The romantic 'Palace on Wheels Maharajah Train', commenced Oct. 1. It's 11 coaches used by former Maharajahs and British Viceroy's have been kept as original as possible.

Tourist cars are available at \$30 - \$80 Can. per day with trained and

licensed guides driving either American, Japanese or Indian cars. Tell your driver exactly what you would like to see, including weddings, engagements and baptisms. The two families will be so honored they will probably quarrel over

Indo Canadian

Joan Mayo



OVER THE HUMP . . . Visitors to India jump aboard camels for one view of India, a country rich in diversity from Himalayan mountains to thick forests and warm beaches.

whose guest you are.

There are convention facilities all over India where they can cope with up to 5000 guests and will arrange unique and exciting tours for your free time.

A brochure entitled 'The Gods Must Be Calling', describes temples carved out of solid rock by Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu monks between the 7th and 13th centuries. Overall, the most fascinating is probably the Kailasa Temple, where it is estimated the monks chiseled away approximately 3 million cu. ft. of stone, leaving behind a temple of monolithic proportions, yet sculptured as intricately as a miniature ivory carving.

India boasts the highest golf course in the world as well as the highest cricket field.

Another plus is superb shopping; with excellent buying power. One Canadian dollar is worth 10 rupes. Bargains include semi-precious stones, handmade jewelry, brass, paper mache, hand loom fabrics

and carpets, to name a few.

For the adventurous a camel-safari should fit the bill. The state of Rajasthan in the mid west is one huge desert. Camels abound here as well as wild animal and bird sanctuaries.

What better reason to visit India than for sun bathing, a few idyllic days at an Indian beach resort combine the best features of several exciting holidays. The many beautiful resorts at Goa on the west coast have earned it the title of the 'Hawaii of India'.

You can soak up the sun on a secluded beach in the morning and spend the afternoon exploring the baroque churches of old Goa. Go surf-riding one day at Puri and temple-touring at Konarak the next. Take yoga lessons at Kovalam Beach Resort and round off the day watching a spectacular performance of Kathakali dance-drama.

Indian sunshine almost never lets you down. Mr. Yog Kholi from the Government of India Tourist Bureau aptly described the India most outsiders do not know. The snow-fed mountain rivers from the Himalayas have given impetus to the sport of river running. The awesome might of these rivers and their apparent navigation invincibility makes Indian rivers among the best in the world for white water rafting.

Rock climbing - the aravalli hills skirt Delhi and these are pocketed by naked rockfaces that test the

capabilities of experienced rock climbers. Trekking - trekking routes sometimes trace the footsteps of millions of pilgrims who for hundreds of years have journeyed these trails to pay homage at religious shrines located high in the Himalayas. The area around Srinager is rich in forests, lakes with houseboats, flowers, gardens and hills. This is a trekker's paradise. The ideal time to be trekking is between April and November. Motor Rally - the one rally that is a cut above all others, and attracts international attention, is the Himalayan car rally, now vying for championship status. Rallyists from round the world gather for this premier event.

Hang Gliding - in the hills of the lower Himalayas has become another popular sport in India. The lower Himalayas are well populated, but well forested too, and the countryside holds appeal for everyone.

Ballooning - the Balloon Club of India is located at New Delhi's Safdarjang airport, and has 3 balloons and 50 members.

When you travel to India try to work your visit around one of the exciting festivals such as Republic Day in January, the festival of Holi in March, or Diwali, the festival of lights in October.

Don't worry about the food or water. All hotels serve boiled water & most offer continental and Chinese food as well as the delicious Indian food.