

In the Beginning...

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | January 30, 2010

...was the blooger, I mean blogger, who begot the blog.

Prep Phase

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | January 30, 2010

So far, we've made it real. We bought the tickets! It's about \$900 pp round trip.

We have an appt on December 15 to get physical exams for the kids, update the vaccinations. We have an appt with the Travel Medicine clinic at Miriam Hospital to get all the required shots and pills to protect us from malaria and other nasty illnesses. Matt and I are "discussing" just how much to pack...we might have to duke it out.

I'm still working out the itinerary. So far...

We are set to leave on February 3, 2010 and still have soooo much to do. We'll be in India for about 7 weeks and leaving for Nantes, France on March 23, 2010 for about 8 weeks and returning on Memorial Day weekend.

Our first fail...

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | January 30, 2010

Our first fail when dropping of the cats.



Farewell gatherings

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 1, 2010

Achina's last day at work was on January 29th. Her friend Judy hosted a farewell party for her. Achina had to leave her job to go on this trip. She plans to home school the kids and be a fulltime mom for the duration of the trip. The kids are NOT excited about that. Who knows what will happen after that.

Alex and Markus also had farewell partys during the week given by Utkarsh and Noah respectively. They have such great friends who are so caring and thoughtful.

We've been spending the last couple days shopping for last minute things, organizing, and packing. There is so much to do! We also gave Tara a birthday party with all her friends. She turned 11 today.

THIS IS THE BAR THAT SIGNALS A CHANGE IN DATE AT THE MIDDLE OF A PAGE! We are now at Ganga's house on February 2

Coffee Cup Yoga

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 2, 2010

I have been developing a new form of yoga to help me prepare for the trip.

This is video loaded directly from the Flip without editing. Does it work?



Logan Airport...

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 3, 2010

•Day1

We are in the Logan Airport an hour and a half before the flight and we are stabbing it hard(killing time). We foolishly put the charging wires for the laptops in the luggage so this laptop and the other one are both running on battery power. Tara accidentally left her backpack untended and the police were called, luckily we did not get in trouble. I'm sure playing cards will soon lose its merit on this long journey.♣♥♦(insert spades symbol here)

Alex's first couple of days

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 12, 2010

Hello everyone! where to start...?

### Day-1 Wednesday

packing up until the last minute, we left the house at around 12oclock and drove in a car to the Logan Airport. We eventually got through security and went into a small seating area in the airport at around 2 oclock with 3 hours to go till our flight. Looking for a table near a plug to charge our laptops. We got a table, only to find that we packed the power cords in our checked bags. DUH! They ran only on battery power. We played cards until 5 and got onto our Air France plane. On the plane we found to our delight the coolest way to spend the time during our flight! On the back of each seat, we had our own individual screen that allowed us to watch our own movies or listen to music or even play games! During the entire flights, I watched: Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs, G-Force, The Invention of Lying (I highly recommend it), Catch Me If You Can, Ice Age 3, GI Joe, and Galatica. During the flight, we had a stop over in France for 3 hours, during which I obtained my only hour of sleep in a 31 hour period. We eventually arrived in Mumbai.

### Day 2- Friday

Having skipped Thursday on the plane, we arrived in Mumbai at 12:30ish AM. After passing through security we met Utkarsh's father. He drove us to his bungalow where we would be staying as guests for 3-4 days. Eating a short breakfast we finally went to sleep 3:00AM. being awakened by my at 9AM, we ate another breakfast finally got together at 12:00PM. Utkarsh's dad and grandfather showed us around the city.

We first visited a fancy hotel called the Imperial Palace that was newly built and got a free tour. After that, we drove around a golf course and visited a buffalo farm where they gave us some fresh milk to taste – very creamy. Next, we took a tour of the streets of Mumbai and tried to haggle with some of the vendors. Our first experience! Later, we visited a temple and Utkarsh's dad and grandfather told us about their beliefs and showed us the different Gods. We then picked up Utkarsh's grandmother and went to a restaurant called Radhani that was VERY good. It was a thali dinner place where we were continuously served from numerous



at  
dad  
and

waiters at a quick pace to our heart's content. We went home and straight to sleep and jet lagging.



### Day 3- Saturday

Getting tired...I'm going to make this quick. We went to Mumbai and visited the Gate of India and visited the VERY VERY fancy hotel called the Taj Mahal Hotel which was bombed by terrorists last year. We had snacks and ate ice cream ^^ . Later we visited 3 different art museums, one of which contained a collection of paintings donated by the Tata family. Another museum was called the Jehinger Museum which contained Akbar the Great's personal armor. In the evening, we went to a block party at Utkarsh's family neighborhood – the Gujurati Society. They had games setup sort of like the Octoberfest at Sowams School. I won 40 rupees 46 rupees equals a dollar) in a game of gambling. However, my dad and I spent most of the time calculating the chances of winning. All of the games actually had under 50% chance of winning. At the party I meet some of Utkarsh's Indian friends, though it was kind of awkward with Utkarsh not being there. Still it was fun. We are having a great time right now.

Ellora Caves

Posted



by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 12, 2010

The Ellora Caves were full of bats and sqips (mix between a squirrel and a chipmunk. we gave them the name). People cared statue temples and shrines into the face the mountain. The temple shown below was the best. Most of the statues were of the gods. Inside was a two level structure in the shape of a house cared from the stone. The details of the statues were very good. There were two Jain temples which we explored. A tour guide took us through (though he started touring without our asking. he was enjoying himself though.) On the way back we took a rickshaw for the first time, and it was very fun.

of

us



Giant reclining Buddha, below him (not visible) are people mourning because Buddha has died. Above him are angels rejoicing because he is going to heaven

Entrance to the biggest of the Ellora



Caves:#16

This is a Monolith you see soon after entering the temple.

Carvings of elephants and other beasts form a ring around the temple.

and other beasts form a ring around the temple.

This is a picture we took just outside a restaurant where we ate near the caves. The monkey is being fed by one of the employees and if you look closely there is a baby monkey there too!



Tour

Tour

We are now in Mumbai around February 11



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9Qj\\_IAHe3Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9Qj_IAHe3Y)



We are now in a car on the road from Ellora to Ajanta 10

These are pictures taken with Mommy's new camera



We are now in Ellora. The path is one of the paths going to a cave.

Scorpions???








Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 14, 2010



We encountered open packets of these along the path in Ellora. We presumed that it was scorpion poison and began to step gingerly to avoid the scorpions that might be lurking around our open toed sandals. Due to the volume of them scattered everywhere, we began to question our original assumptions. Upon closer examination, we determined that the packets contained chewing tobacco. Whether the scorpion is a trademark or an indication that tobacco is poisonous to your health is a mystery to us? Anyone know?

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 14, 2010  
Beautiful Ajanta

		Gorgeous pillara allow you to view beautiful ancient frescoes
		Ajanta caves

	<p>Close up of one of the paintings</p>
	<p>If you don't want to walk the 2 km, you can be carried like royalty to the different sites by four men</p>
	<p>Entering Ajanta – look at that Banyan Tree!</p>
	<p>More ancient paintings</p>
	<p>Panorama of the caves</p>
	<p>Gods behind a pillar</p>
	<p>Buddhist guards</p>



This gives you a sense of the size of these pieces

**Gap in Posts**  
2010

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 17,

At noon(here) we are going to leave to go to a farm where we will not be able to post anything so this morning is the last time we have as at the farm there is no internet connection. Sorry!

Last night we went to a sort of Fair that showed all kinds of indian culture. We got to ride camels and an elephant but I don't know what happened to the elephant video.



Mumbai Posted by:

[steinfamilytrip](#) | February 17, 2010

Day 4- We spent this day visiting relatives – the Vengurlekar family. In the morning we loafed around, playing games. We left at around 11, having Namdev drive us over to their house in the Sion area of Mumbai. We met relatives that I had never met before. My mother hadn't seen them in 12 years. The relatives included my mother's cousin, Usha, her husband Sharad, their daughter-in-law and grandson, Yash. Their son, Yogesh, was traveling for work. My mother's cousin Kranti also met us there. My parents talked while we sat around and added comments that fit into the conversation. We had a delicious lunch.

Afterwards, we decided to go shopping with Bai (my name for Kranti). Bai actually lives in California half the year and in Goa half the year, and had been in Mumbai around the same time we were. When we arrive at the vendor covered sidewalks, my mom, Bai, and Tara went into stores looking for clothes, while Markus, my dad and I walked around for chuppals, Hindi for sandals.

After crossing the street of death, we encountered a shoe store. I didn't really want to buy some because I wanted to save money and I didn't want to waste my time, but we ended up walking out with three pairs of chappals, one pair for each of us. My dad also ended up buying two shirts and my brother some popcorn. After regrouping with the ladies, we walked into a couple stores, looking for a shirt that my father wanted called a jhaba, but none of the stores had them and he couldn't explain what it looked like. Giving up we walked around a bit, looking for other shops. Eventually, Bai had to go and we decided to end our shopping experience. We said our goodbyes to her and got back into the car with Namdev. On the way back in the car, we stopped shortly at a field to see a cricket game. Correction: several cricket games. There were several different cricket matches in this one field, each overlapping each other. After a half an hour with no change in the game pace, we decided to move on. Instead of going straight home, we went over to a place to do one thing that Markus and I dreaded: get a haircut. For 45 rupees (equivalent to 90 cents), we were able to get both of our hair cuts better than any other time in America. Instead of using the electric clipper, they used knives and oil that cut with better precision. Having great haircuts, we went to an Indian fast food restaurant called Aditi, a vegetarian restaurant that was recommended by the Shahs. They had great South Indian food but Markus didn't care for the Chinese dish he ordered. Translating a need for a plate of white rice proved to be quite difficult. We learned later that we should have asked for "plain rice." After the exhausting day, everyone went straight to sleep when we got home.

Day 5- The next day was a rather relaxing day compared to the previous ones. After sleeping in, we worked on the blog for a couple of hours. Yatin, my mother's cousin once removed, came over for a couple of hours to visit briefly and pick up a bag for us to take to Goa for us. We were trying to lighten the load for our trek across parts of India – less to haul. The entire morning we packed and left a whole suitcase of stuff plus three day packs behind in Mumbai in the care of the Shahs. Snehal took us to the Royal Palms Hotel where they had a membership to use the facilities. We were the only ones swimming in the pool that others treated as a visual delight until we got there. A very uneventful day, but my mom was delighted in the camera she bought in the US, finally figuring out how it works. In the evening, we freshened up, briefly stopped at the Shah's office to make copies of our passports and store them on Google. Snehal said that we would be able to access our passports from anywhere that had internet access if we ever lost our passports. We met at The Hare Krishna Temple Utkarsh's maternal grandparents and maternal uncle for dinner. We feel like we are having the eating tour of India. The food is just too good! We've been so pampered by the Shahs; the real challenging part begins with Aurangabad.

We are now on our way out off Mumbai

Leaving Mumbai

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 17, 2010

Having packed everything we had into the backpacks for the move last night, except for Markus who failed to do this, we woke up at around 6:00 ready to go. Inconveniently, at that point in time there was a power outage,

which left the house dark in the night light. Using flashlights and some candles that would work for about a minute, we packed the car with our luggage. After getting in the car and saying out goodbyes, Namdev drove us to the train station. Having slept a great last night, the family was wide awake in the morning, and we had no trouble with tiredness. After a trip through the city, we eventually arrived at the station. Namdev parked the car and helped us to get to the right train station, since we had no idea where we were going. At the train station I was on full alert, watching everything that moved within a ten foot radius of us, and tried to keep Markus and Tara near us. Having heard reports on people being drugged on trains to fall asleep and many thefts, this was the time where we would have to be the most careful. Maybe I shouldn't have been worried, because everything went as planned. We got on the train, and departed from Mumbai, saying goodbye to Namdev. It would be the last time we would see him for a while.

The train was rundown, with some of the seats broken. All of the seats were orientated towards the center of the car, and an aisle ran down the middle. We sat in the near back of our car, occupying two rows on the right side. The seats designated by our ticket weren't mandatory, so because our family wanted to stay together we did a lot of seat hopping whenever someone came looking for a seat. The entire train ride took about 2 hours. At each stop people would walk up and down the aisle with a basket in their hand, trying to sell food. Markus spent that time reading *Catching Fire* the sequel to the *Hunger Games* by some dude whose name I don't remember. Tara and I did random things such as reading to eating. Sometime during the trip, Dad told us to come one at a time to the front of the car. Tara went first, but when she came back with a smile on her face she told me to go up. At the front of the car was the open door. Wind was blowing through and you can see the countryside flying past. During most of the train ride, we just sat there and watched people go flying by. Eventually the train arrived in Aurangabad. Packing up all of our stuff, we headed off the train and got swarmed by a mob of taxi cab drivers. Reaching one person in the back of the crowd, we found our cab driver with a sign saying "Achina". After a hour drive we arrived at Hotel Kailas, and got settled in for the next part in our adventure.

-Alex

This is where the main tour of India starts as we travel through Rajasthan

**Feb 12th Aurangabad – New Dehli – Agra**

Posted by: **steinfamilytrip** | March 22, 2010

We employed yesterday's car and driver to take us to the airport. We paid a little extra because he had to sleep in his car the night before. Down the street from Kalias was beginning a festival attracting 10,000 pilgrims. The road was closed and the loudspeaker mantra music kept us up much of the night except when the power failed. When this happened there was a brief pause of silence before shouting voices began.

The airport was a modern delight and the flight a refreshing return to modernity. Only problem was that we were starving when we arrived, and from this our New Delhi problems began. First trouble is the arrival portion has no restaurants, and without tickets we are not welcome in the departure section. We hurriedly try to read up on Delhi in LP but had not quite read enough to prevent the series of mistakes we are about to make, as hunger is clouding our thinking. We decide to go to Connaught Circle as this seems likely to have restaurants and internet cafes and the train station is walkable. We are scared of the taxi drivers so decide to buy two prepaid taxi tickets. We immediately see that there is food outside the terminal, but it is fast food we were not yet ready to try and Achina is afraid the prepaid taxis might need to be used right away, so we board two taxis with instructions to follow each other to Connaught Circle. This mistake demonstrates to ourselves we are not fit for survival in India. The drivers ignore our instructions and immediately lose each other in traffic. To our horror we see that Achina and Alex have both cell phones in one taxi – we have lost each other in a strange city! Worse, we made no specific arrangements for getting lost and Connaught Circle is a district, not a specific point. We are panicking and Matt tells his driver to let him out on an arbitrary point on the inner circle road where Matt, Tara and Markus will stand in hopes of being seen by Achina. All the while Matt is trying to guess what Achina is thinking. By miracle we spot Achina's taxi and she screams "there they are, STOP!". We are reunited but shaken deeply by this experience.

We are heavily burdened by our baggage and Connaught Circle is one big construction site making navigation near impossible. We are desperate to find an "Internet Café" still with the mistaken notion that this kind of café serves coffee. We are fed a continuous stream of lies by every local we meet, all pretending to be helpful. They repeatedly direct us to Incredible India travel agent offices lying that these have free Internet. We find one and the agent does let us use his computer, Matt sits down and Achina rolls off the kids and luggage to find The Embassy, a good but expensive lunch place Achina feels she has been in before. After sensing that the use of internet comes with strings attached I finish quickly and join them at the restaurant. Lunch is indeed good, although we are a clumsy sight in this fancy place with our mountain of luggage. Fed, we are beginning to feel a little better and venture out in search of Internet. In retrospect, I do not know why we felt we needed Internet so urgently. There was some mail from Falguni and the status of a train we needed to check. Probably because Kalias had no connection and we had a few hours to kill.

We venture out baggage in hand but continue to get the run around by everyone we meet. We are starting to sense seemingly friendly locals are actively misinforming us, for a purpose we have not yet guessed. After I lose patience with one "helpful" young guy, he changes his story and promises me there is an internet café right around the corner he points out or he will give me \$100. Indeed the Internet café is there, we were just unprepared for the complete lack of coffee. Internet Café's in India are usually dingy rooms, often copy centers with a few computers in the back. We arrived at the working computers like parched souls finding an oasis in the desert. We spent a full two hours on facebook, updating the blog and checking mail, leaving feeling a little better, except Tara who whines all the time that she has no computer. We felt a bit more oriented and found the right way to the railway station, a long walk past filth.

In retrospect we still don't understand why we were so easily fooled. It is natural to us that railway officials ask for tickets when entering stations. We have also faulted, in retrospect, that we were not able to read up on the "dangers and annoyances" listed in Lonely Planet due to our growling stomachs at the airport. In any case, to

our mortification we fell prey to a swindler at the station impersonating a railway official. He convinced us the train was 9 hours late because of fog and we needed to go to the government ticket office to reschedule our ticket. All the telltale signs of his lying were present, but we missed them in the air of confusion. He will not let us pass and showed us his ID, but it was in his wallet not on his vest. He wore no uniform, but a uniformed agent was 3 yards away watching the whole thing. His story changes dramatically several times, first our e-tickets they are invalid, then they need to be stamped, then the train is delayed, but he somehow guiles us onto a Tuk Tuk despite our lingering suspicions. We stupidly speed off only to find we have arrived at yet another travel agent, so we immediately expect foul play. Luckily our guardian angel is awake and responding in her heavenly Mallard Cove abode between the stars. She checks and the train is not cancelled. The lying liars sense that their game is up and lie that the train was “rescheduled”, so we should go back to the train station right away or we will miss it. Another Tuk Tuk and our darkest moment is when the construction confounded traffic seems intent on delaying us forever. But the traffic miraculously clears and 2 minutes and Rs. 300 later we are back in the same place. But this time we are hell bent on boarding the train and March like Stonewall Jackson’s Infantry shouting “You Lie” to all the touts and swindlers trying to divert us. The train is right on the platform and we arrive sweaty and triumphant, not even understanding the hoax, all that just to make us spend 300Rs for Tuk Tuks? But we are furious with ourselves and would have ripped the veins out of the young man’s neck with our teeth if the opportunity presented itself. Only the next day do we surmise the purpose and structure of the hoax. The station liar works for, or at least would be paid by, the slithery travel agent. The goal is to make us miss the train, so the travel agent could, with mock sympathy and false generosity, offer to book us a car instead. We recall in retrospect that the agent at first reiterated that the train was 10 hours late, even though we had not said which train. A car would be Rs5000 and the lying parasite would get half this amount for booking it.

We met a German man and British woman couple on the train who were in New Dehli working to become Buddhists. They are studying Tibetan in order to better understand the original texts and are enrolled in an eight-week program at a New Dehli temple and were just going to Agra for a Holiday. We had a great time meeting them and have since friended Caroline on Facebook.

Arriving about 10PM we are picked up at the train and taken to a Homestay owned by Colonel Lamba, a Sikh Veteran of the Indian Army.

We have arrived at Varanasi: The Holy City for Hindus

Bank of the Ganges

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 15, 2010

This is a Puja on the banks of the Ganges river.



Achina was in tears



**Q'tab Minar** Posted by: **steinfamilytrip** | March 15, 2010

February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010 New Dehli

After breakfast at the hotel, we took metro and tuk tuk to the lotus temple of B'Hai only to find it was closed on Sunday, just like thousands of other tourists and pilgrims encountering the same dilemma. After double checking, LONELY PLANET SAID it was open Sunday. After many drivers giving us advice we decided to Q'tab Minar, and this was a good decision.

**INSERT PIC FOR VIDEO HERE!!**

Parrots were in flight, squirrels were biting my finger. First we saw the incomplete minar then the ancient tomb. We saw remnants of the oldest Mosque in india which had architectural elements from Hindu and Jain temples but all the hunnymuths (Monkey headed god figures) were beheaded because the invading Muslims were resuing the stones but did not want to use the hindu images.

Another tuk tuk to the Sikh Temple Gurdwala Bangla Sahib. This was way cool. Gorgeous and majestic. The courtyard surrounded a square pool with large fish and holy water. Pilgrims were offered holy water and we had to wash our hands and feet to enter. The temple consisted of gold domes and there were continuous prayers broadcast over loud speakers. Achina bought a garlands to offer to the Sikhs. We learned a little bit about the Sikh religion and left impressed. There was a full moon over the temple during the prayers.



**Feb 16th Jaipur**

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

Feb 16<sup>th</sup> Jaipur

After a nice breakfast at Jaipur Home Stay we ventured out to Jaipur for shopping and sight seeing. The first stop was Juntar Muntar and Dilip dropped us off because the hotel control agency where he had to file the paperwork for us was 100m away. The sun is already starting to be too strong to stand in for very long, so at times this site was hot and we needed to seek shade.

We had found the tour guides were mostly clueless or incomprehensible, and the onsite booklets of little value. Not too surprisingly, we found the most valuable information for the sites in the pages of our Lonely Planet. But still, LP might only have a paragraph describing a site where we were spending an afternoon. Resolved to change this, Matt found a scientific paper describing the Juntar Muntar and Dilip graciously let me print it (11 pages in color). Armed with this paper we attempted to figure out the 17<sup>th</sup> century locomotive-sized astrological devices. This did not work immediately, we had to reread the sections again and again, but the “aha” moments finally came, and we felt quite gratified and triumphant. Armed with our newfound conceit, we could then chuckle at the tour guides who clearly had no clue. Our funniest moment, Matt recalls, was seeing them stick a pen through the center hole of a brass ring and show their client its shadow. We had already deduced that the hole was for mounting a rotating sighting tube, and one could see the circular wear patterns made by the tube. Tara hated the whole thing and hid under a shade tree watching birds and complaining that her legs hurt. Alex’s favorite part was a giant sun dial that could indicate time to a precision of two seconds. The Gnomon was 27m tall and we deduced that a flat marble plane in its shadow was for making accurate sightings, even though there was no placard indicating this. Achina made the observation that the site was much more controlled and better maintained than 12 years prior, however, we were prevented from accessing the most interesting parts. Markus’ favorite part was the NNNNN a submerged double bowl used for making accurate night sightings.

Down the street we signed up for the audio tour of the city palace, a structure still partially occupied by the royal family of Singh Raj. Our memory of the tour is finding it amusing for its fawning aggrandizement of the Singh family. This included trumpet fanfare before the voice of the current Maharani relating disinteresting anecdotes about growing up in the palace. Apparently one of the royal guys was good at Polo and took his team to the world championship. (We later made the connection with a prominent movie theatre in the center of town that was named “Polo Victory Theatre”.) The museum houses royal guy clothes, royal guy toys, royal guy ceremonial swords, etc. Achina was more interested in the clothes and fabrics than the rest of. One factor that made the museum less interesting for Matt is that many of the rich artifacts were from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a time when these Raj’s were British stooges. The boys liked the armament room the best, especially the combined sword/pistol (Hunter weapon). Tara liked the part where we played with the audio guides, trying to start them synchronously in four different languages.

The palace was being decorated to host a wedding fit for a queen. We even asked if it was a member of the royal family or anyone important, but a audio tour vendor explained it was just someone who could afford it.

Achina called Saharia and delayed our reservation to allow us to visit Chokodhani on Falgani’s recommendation. We got a little lost on the way to the Hawa Mahal, walked about a mile on crowded market streets and found “LMB” where the kids got Lassi’s and french fries but we were scolded for trying to play cards. We then rode a big tuktuk to Chokadhani, a good 10km out of town making for a fun tuktuk ride with Alex and Tara sitting in the open the back holding on for dear life. Once there the kids took camel and elephant

rides and we watched some traditional arts including dancing, tightrope and a magician. Achina felt sick with stomach cramps as the evening progressed and could not eat the traditional dinner. Markus found it inedible. We returned by Taxi, the ride taking 1-1/2 hours because we passed 41 weddings (we counted). Tara loved the whole thing, especially the elephant slide.

## Feb 17th Jaipur

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

### Feb 17<sup>th</sup> Jaipur

We were attempting to leave Dilip's Jaipur Home Stay because we had a reservation to stay at the Saharia organic farm. We could not get Tara up, Achina called Saharia to tell them we would not be arriving until later in the hopes Tara would rally. We packed our bags into the living room, but Tara did not look well, so we let her sleep. Meanwhile Dilip took Matt to the ICICI ATM machine as we were beginning to run out of cash. There was a problem with the machine, it seemed to counting the money internally and then just shut down.

Boys goofed off using Dilip's internet connection; we eventually took Tara to Dilip's family doctor. The doctor was not too concerned but did give us a script for antibiotic if we wanted to be conservative. We did not fill the script but were relieved it was just a viral infection as Achina thought and decided to cancel the organic farm reservation and let her sleep it off. Dilip offered to make dinner and then we watched "Three Idiots" in his living room. Tara got up late in the movie and watched Animal Planet upstairs.

Ultimately they made us feel welcome and comfortable and we were glad we were able to stay the two extra days in this comfortable home.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## Feb 18th Jaipur-Udaipur

### Feb 18<sup>th</sup> Jaipur-Udaipur

Tara is perking up, so we take a driver for the day, checking out of Dilip's in the morning and packing our bags into the trunk of a good size Toyota. We decide we still want to see the organic farm, and venture out, having great difficulty finding it. The main landmark is a ceramic factory, this is very easy to spot, in retrospect, but it was much closer to Jaipur than we expected.

We ended up genuflecting to Tara because the Farm was an unabated dump. Not only that it was dingy and unappealing – attributes that might be expected – but because there was absolutely no one there willing to explain anything. Rather, we were completely ignored except for an audacious request for 500Rs admission fee at the end. Most memorable moments were the French volunteer workers who regretted they could not show us around because no one gave them a tour either. I recall overhearing they were going on strike until provided more tea. The "pool" was a dank hole.

We left disgusted and asked our driver to take us to Nahargarh fort (Tiger Fort) that overhangs Jaipur. In relative seclusion we ate our sandwiches and walked along the walls that tower over Jaipur providing airplane

window like views of the city. We were trying to deduce the military function of the teardrop shaped hollows in the walls. We were able to recognize Jantar Mantar in the distance. There was a Greek-style amphitheatre inside the fort walls. We could see kites flown from city rooftops beneath us. The litter was omnipresent and the scrub in the fort was a veritable kite graveyard. Went into the partially-restored palace and were mostly alone seeing several well preserved murals and the views out the window. We went back to Jaipur for dinner at a LP listed restaurant Moti Mahal that was vacant except for ourselves and got to the station an hour or so before our train.

We went to first class waiting area for a little while where we cleaned some tables to play cards. We had a bit of a panic that we were not hearing our train announced so bolted out to the platform only to find the station lights indicating our train number as a train was pulling out. We got on, but the train was vacant, so we realized something was wrong. We yelled to/asked some of the people at the station who immediately told us to get off. We tried to get off, but by then it was moving too fast. The conductors had to stop the train for us, apparently there was a change and we were the only ones unaware these cars were destined for the train yard.

The train was an hour late and when finally aboard we discover to our horror that our tickets do not provide us a nice private bunk, but rather there are two uppers and three on the aisle. Worse, the lowers had a family with a baby, the woman; none too pleased to see us there, demands her lower bunks but does invite us to put our bags beneath. Alex begins to feel sorta sick. We are petrified with fear our bags will be stolen and were planning on making a great buckled-together knot preventing easy theft except by trolls. Worse yet still, the baby screams all night. Only on later reflection do we understand this was Karma acting for our providence. No one is going to steal our bags with that baby screaming all night and two wide awake parents trying to calm him, sitting right on top of our bags. We arrive a little bleary at Udaipur and get picked up by Rang Niwas Palace Hotel. We choose to take two deluxe rooms as 5 can't fit in one room, and then we all go back to sleep.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## Feb 19th Udaipur

Feb 19<sup>th</sup> Udaipur

The rooftop hotel restaurant is nothing special but has an overabundance of both sunshine and monkeys. Alex is ill, so we leave him in the hotel and the four of us venture up the hill in the morning to see the famous fort/palace. The "City Palace" is handsomely restored and offers a pretty well organized and worthwhile tour, taking about 2 hours. The palace is developed with hotel and upscale shops, with the usual ragtag of touts and vendors outside. From one of these vendors we purchased great peanuts. By this point in the trip we are getting more comfortable purchasing from street vendors. Alex read "Mote in God's Eye" when he awoke.

Tara and Markus are good sports through the palace tour and requisite shopping and were rewarded with popcorn and peanuts. We return by midday and join the polar bear club by swimming in the freezing pool. We later apply sunshine to thaw ice crystals that formed in our bloodstreams.

Alex feels a little better, we venture out by tuktuk to Dharohar traditional dance and entertainment. The show is awesome, most memorable are women playing tunes on cymbals strapped at various locations on their bodies. There is a traditional dance involving stylized sword battle that is interesting, if incomprehensible. The climax is the water jar dance, a combination of dance and circus act. The matronly dancer added water jars at intervals and danced on broken glass and balanced on a saucer. Then, after some indecision, we went to "Ambrai" restaurant, an LP "our pick". Outdoor seating and drop dead view of the water palace made this restaurant too

popular for its own good. We waited over an hour listening to live music and had a very late dinner with Alex putting his head down on the table. Wine was very good, spaghetti was awesome and we left disappointed we were not able to get more appropriate seating. We resolved to try again tomorrow. With Alex looking like death warmed over, accepted the first tuktuk at asking price directly back to Rang Niwas and went to bed.

## Feb 20th Udaipur

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

### Feb 20<sup>th</sup> Udaipur

The primary mission of the day was to eat dinner at “Ambrai”; all other goals were secondary to this goal. However, eating a fancy dinner did not seem a sufficiently rich experience for the day, so we had to keep ourselves busy until then. Made a whole family pilgrimage to the American God “ATM” - visiting two holy sites in rapid succession. Blessed by ATM, we tried to find the location of the cable car ride up the mountain. We cleverly obtained guidance showing a picture on a brochure we had to a tuktuk driver and grunting. The driver grunted back and off we went, although our progress was impeded by a photo shoot. This was cameras and lighting surrounding a pretty actress, and loads of men milling about to watch.

The cable car ride actually worked! No, there is no punch line following, it really did work. Up we went to a magnificent view of Udaipur and a subtle cliff side mosque, also containing pretty girls but no gaggle of onlookers. Spent about an hour there in the peak heat of the day, but satisfied that we had achieved something of value we retreated to the Ragniwias to jump into the ultra-cold but refreshing pool. Even Alex, against his nature, spontaneously jumped into the pool. Played hearts and got out of there by 6:15 so as not to miss our 7PM *dinner reservation*!!!!!!

Dinner was worth building a day around, the view of the placid Lake Pichola and Lake Palace Hotel on Jagniwas Island could not be beat, food was wonderful and wine flowed like water. Kids and Achina ordered dessert. Made some attempt at walking back, but this was mostly dark, smelly and litter filled alleys and a kind of cutesy footbridge. Achina shopped and kids were in a good mood. Ultimately found our way back, getting a little lost. Matt and Achina nestled in their room with a bottle of wine and kids tried to pick up internet signals from their room down the hall.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## February 21st Udaipur – Jodhpur

### February 21<sup>st</sup> Udaipur – Jodhpur

Packed out and paid the bill of the Rangh Niwas Hotel and met the driver who was pre-arranged to drive us from Udaipur to Jodhpur. He arrived on time with a sufficiently sized car, so we jumped in and drove off to a new adventure – intercity travel by car. We saw some impressive earthquake induced landslides closing large portions of the highway. The first part of the journey was along narrow roads and through the gorge of the Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary where monkeys lined the road.

We stopped for 1-2 hours at Ranakpur 90km north of Udaipur, for Chaumukha Mandir according to LP “the finest in Rajasthan and one of the most important Jain Temples in India”. It was indeed a magnificent temple, built in 1439 and carved almost entirely out of white marble. What we laboriously extracted from the mostly worthless Guide Book is that Jain is a religion. Sarcasm – we got that the temple is about 600 years old and was the life work of one devoted follower. He had had a dream about the seven layers of heaven and had the resources to make his dream a reality in marble. According to the book, hundreds of architects submitted plans before one was chosen who sufficiently reflected the dream. We also learned that the temple had become the home to bats, thieves and creatures of the night for several hundred years before being rediscovered in the 1800’s. Another Jain foundation raised money for its revival, and this was completed in the early 1900’s. The temple is dedicated to Adinath, 24<sup>th</sup> *Tirthankar* and has images of him facing in four compass directions. Jain priests, Jain devotees and camera wielding tourists were encountered, no bats.

The drive continued this time turning onto one of India’s main commercial arteries. Incredible numbers of heavily laden trucks in both directions made the drive interesting; as life-threatening passing occurred almost each minute. We saw wild camels along the way. Arrived at Devi Bangwan Hotel in Jodhpur. We enjoyed the driver’s music so much that we asked him for a copy as his player apparently used a USB stick. To communicate this unusual request we enlisted the help of a roadside vendor who fortuitously spoke English brilliantly. Doing this was Achina’s idea, good call. Note – We used two clips of the driver’s music to make Tara’s First video.

Hotel was lovely with a breathtaking garden and pretty nice upstairs rooms on two sides of a porch sitting area. We could have stayed for dinner, but decided to venture out and follow LP’s recommendation for Indique a restaurant in the center of town. We arrived by tuktuk to a dark, dingy and litter-filled central market surrounding a clock tower. It would be hard to conjure any pleasant memories of the experience navigating the dark marketplace to the rooftop restaurant. Indique, however, was indeed worthy of being blessed with an “our pick” listing in LP. We sat at the rooftop of the rooftop and had a commanding view of the fort, the reservoir and the whole town stretching beneath us. Our dinners were delicious and the beer was cold. When we could not communicate the distinction between “Holi” and “Holy” in reference to the cow, the manager intervened and clarified that one has horns. He shared the interesting tidbit that in his memory Hindus and Muslims can be great friends but never eat together, ever. Achina bought a 3.5L aluminum lunch box on the way out of the restaurant. Returned by Tuktuk and bedded down for the night. Because internet was charged by the hour, gave the boys enough money for one hour each before bed. Tara took a shower, Matt and Achina crashed.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## February 22nd Jodhpur

February 22<sup>nd</sup> Jodhpur

The Devi Bhavan manager allowed us to pack our bags and leave them in the lobby for the day. As LP suggests, the audio tour of Mehrangarh fort was the best fort tour we experienced in India. The tour described a “bird man” who cursed the Raj and breaking curse required a human sacrifice. Locations where cannon balls dented the walls were marked, the Maharajas widow’s handprints before sati were visible. The right angle entranceway prevented attacking elephants from gaining momentum, palanquins in the museum, the flower palace.

We went into the market where the clock tower stood and walked through the bazaar. The Bazaar was only slightly more appealing in the daylight. Things were very cheap. Alex bought gifts all his female friends. We

had some famous lassis. Achina bought some things from Jain Textiles where Richard Gere supposedly bought things and after about an hour Achina did too. During that hour Matt and the kids watched traffic, trying to spot the Tuktuk loaded with the most passengers and female motorcycle drivers. We philosophized that although we have seen many women on the back of motorcycles, women driving motorcycles, two women on a motorcycle, we have never ever witnessed a woman driving a motorcycle with a male passenger.

We experienced an actual rainstorm here, in fact preventing us from going into the pool back at Devi Bhavan. Instead we used the lobby as an internet café and had dinner at the hotel restaurant, and uninspired meal but sufficient to get us to the train. The shiftiest looking Tuktuk driver we met in India did indeed show up on time as promised and with a friend to allow us to take two Tuk tuks to the station with our bags showing that you can't judge a book by its cover.

The overnight train was a little awkward, we had five of the six bunks in the cabin. An interesting French man and his teenage son showed up, but they were across the aisle and alas a wordless French woman occupied the vacant bunk. Slept easily and arrived in Jaisalmer at 5AM the next morning.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## February 23rd Arriving in Jaisalmer

February 23<sup>rd</sup> Arriving in Jaisalmer

We arrived in Jaisalmer at dawn. The air is much dryer and cleaner but dusty as an attic. The hotel manager was kind enough to let us into the rooms despite it being so early and we slept for about 4 hours. We had a late breakfast on the top deck of the fort hotel. The actual hotel is only a small section of the fort that looks like a castle. If the castle were a cake, the pieces of cake were sliced into hotels. We learned later that LP didn't recommend staying at the castle because overbuilding was unsustainable and causing it to crumble. We were unable to verify this though. We all needed to relax and regroup and did very little other than looking for bookstores. We wandered through the small alleys of the town within the fort to try to exchange books as Markus finished his and Achina was almost done with hers. Markus read Sherlock Holmes and Achina was reading Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert. Alex was sick again and reading The Godfather by Mario Puzo. Throughout these alleys were numerous cows and many of their landmines, in which Achina made the unfortunate step. The man at the hotel said that it meant Good Luck, as this rarely happens. Yeah right! Achina found her way into one of many stores. They all sell the same wares so she is always curious about what it is about the store that actually draws her in. She bought some scarves and a throw for a bed while Matt chatted with an Osho swami. Achina found a book called The Siege of Mithla by Ashok Banker but it was Part 2 of a series, the first being Adyodha. It's a modernized version of the Mahabharata and she been looking for it ever since. We were homesick for American food so we ate at an Italian restaurant called Jaisa (it was called little Italy) Italy run by a Nepalese man with an Italian girlfriend. The mixed veg pizza crust was crisp and tasty but it had the chewiest cheese Achina ever tasted. The kids loved the pasta. We wound our way back to our hotel being careful not to step in cow dung for more good luck because we had plenty to last us a lifetime.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## Feb 24th Jaisalmer

Feb 24<sup>th</sup> Jaisalmer

The main event of the day was a Camel Safari. We walked to Gandhi Chowk market outside the city walls. This was a mostly filthy, fly covered market but there were open air blacksmiths. Women used spinning bellows to tend the fire and the entire area was black. We bought a bag and safari clothes for Markus and Alex and scarves folded to cover our heads. Markus has adored his scarf ever since and is frequently seen with a new apparition of headgear. We tried to buy and sell some books but this failed. Came back by 1pm and dressed for camel ride.

It was a 1-1/2 hour jeep ride out into the desert. Along the way we stopped at Muslim and Hindu desert hamlets, and something that looked like an oasis. The boys there made fun of Markus' headgear, apparently interpreting the style as dressing like a bandit. Boys pulled out imaginary swords and challenged Markus to play swordfights. Girls fingered Achina's jewelry and the women covered their faces on our approach. Matt ducked down to 4'1" to pass through a 4' door, everyone laughed. Inside was remarkably clean for a dirt floor, pots and cooking implements were hung from the walls. The woman of the house demonstrated grinding wheat. Alex felt awkward because he felt he was intruding. Tara was captivated by the baby goats. Along the ride we saw wild female peacocks.

Finally we arrived and meet our camels: two names were Monkar and Poupon. The ride was 2 hours and mostly lived up to expectations. Alex was a natural camel rider and took the lead, Tara was frustrated about the laggard camel she was riding. We traversed a big loop but saw some interesting terrain and got the feel of a real flea-bitten camel. We ended on genuine and mostly unspoiled sand dunes. This was an unexpected treat because LP warned that the popular sand dune destinations might be litter filled and overdeveloped. It would have been a perfect moment except for two sheppard girls who wanted everything in our possession including Achina's wedding ring. We gave them some postcards but ultimately had to chase them away. This is why our friends got no postcards. Dessert sunset lived up to its billing.

We had a simple dinner cooked by camel drivers under starlit skies and listened to a local musician singing traditional Hindu ballads self accompanied with a small version of a sitar. Our guides built a lovely campfire and were surprised we could maintain it. The jeep ride through the desert at night resembled a 3D roller coaster ride. Markus and Tara slept on the long ride home, something hard to accomplish in a bumpy jeep ride.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## February 25th- Jaisalmer

February 25<sup>th</sup>- Jaisalmer

With sore legs from our camel rides we had an uneventful morning of reading and watching "Penny". Penny is a pigeon that nested in a gunhole in the castle wall directly beneath Tara's window bed. Tara was inspired by Penny's two eggs in the nest immediately outside the small plastic window, inches from Tara's eager gaze.

While mommy was occupied, the rest of us sort of wandered around, but we didn't really find anything that caught our interest. Mommy bought 3 bed spread sets two of which were a special silk and one was a Mirrored Mandala Design (Rajasthani design). Tara and Daddy finished the Ellora and Ajunta Caves Video. It took 1.5 hours to upload to SchoolTube, but Mrs. Gaynor was able to show it to the class.

Upon her return and because of Mommy's restlessness, she decided to take herself and Tara to get their hands and feet hennaed. After dragging Alex with his nose in his Godfather book, they went to a place nearby the hotel. It took three hours to have both mommy's hands and feet and half of one of Tara's hand, while Alex was

tortured. Alex and Tara attempted to communicate with the children who lived there and are the same age. Everyone laughed at Alex's shyness. After they got hennaed, we took a tuk tuk to the Saffron Restaurant where Mommy could not eat with her hands in fear of ruining all the effort.

## **Feb 26 2010, Jaisalmir – New Dehli**

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

Feb 26 2010, Jaisalmir – New Dehli

Matt got a full body massage in the morning while everyone showered and prepared to leave. When Matt returned we went to see the Jain temple inside the fort. A guide insisted on informing us about Jainism but did not tell us much we didn't already know. Still we paid him Rs100 even though he wanted 150.

We went to Jasai Italy again for a large lunch in advance of the train ride. At 4PM rode two tuk tuks to train station and boarded the train to Dehli. Because we had an entire booth to ourselves we were fairly comfortable played hearts and read books. After tying down the luggage against theft we slept fairly well.

## **February 27th New Dehli** Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

February 27<sup>th</sup> New Dehli

We arrived in New Dehli at 11AM the next morning without incident. Best train ride of the trip we think. Taxi took us to Wood Castle located in Karol Bagh. After freshening up we ventured out to the Metro station, inhaling some fast food along the way. Alex got mad at mean Daddy for criticizing him when he was just considering his options.

The Metro was sparkling clean and uncharacteristically functional. We went to Chandni Chowk and were immediately bedazzled by the noise and hustle bustle. We walked to the Lal Quila (Red Fort) through alleyways of stolen electronics and pirate CDs. Red Fort was picturesque in the late afternoon sun and the full moon behind, so we took lots of pictures, but decided to buy tickets for the evening sound and light show rather than entering. Instead mounted bicycle rickshaws for a hair-raising dash through crowded markets while receiving aerial bombardment of water balloons. Dinner at Karim's was fantastic, the restaurant prominently displays its Travel Magazine "10 Best In Asia" designation. The Sound and Light show at the Red Fort induced drowsiness, but it was wonderful to be in the fort at night. We returned directly to Wood castle via circuitous tuk tuk.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## February 28th, 2010 New Dehli

February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010 New Dehli

After breakfast at the hotel, we took metro and tuk tuk to the lotus temple of B'Hai only to find it was closed on Sunday – just like thousands of other tourists and pilgrims encountering the same dilemma. After double checking, LONELY PLANET SAID it was open Sunday. After many drivers giving us advice we decided to go to Q'tib Minar, and this was a good decision.

Parrots were in flight, squirrels were biting my finger. First we saw the incomplete minar then the ancient tomb. We saw remnants of the oldest Mosque in india which had architectural elements from Hindu and Jain temples but all the hunnymuths were beheaded as the “elements” were happily stolen from their respective temples.

Another tuk tuk was taken to the Sikh Temple Gurdwala Bangla Sahib. This was way cool. Gorgeous and majestic. The courtyard surrounded a square pool with large fish and holy water. Pilgrims were offered holy water and we had to wash our hands and feet to enter. The temple consisted of gold domes and there were continuous prayers broadcast over loud speakers. Achina made an offering of garlands. We learned a little bit about the Sikh religion and left impressed. There was a full moon over the temple during the sundown prayers. We did not see anyone climb the flag pole.

We walked to the Metro and arrived at Chaundri Chowk station during high Holi for fast food dinner at Haldiran sweet shop before making our way past bonfires to the hotel.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## The Closest We Got To A Monkey

this was during one of our first stops in India, (Aurangabad) and we tried to sneak up on a monkey when he wasn't looking.

**PIC HERE**

seen a LOT more monkeys after this.

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## **Tara Ordering Chicken Curry**

PIC HERE

Tara Ordering Chicken Curry. Yum!

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## **Markus Enacts Land Down Under Video**

PIC HERE

Markus

PIC HERE

Land Down Under-Men at Work

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 20, 2010

## **Pineapples at the Ajunta Caves**

PIC HERE

Very tasty pineapples, but the kid wanted like 10 rupees for a slice of pineapple!

Real Camel Safari  
2010

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 15,

Unlike the previous post of a carnival-like venue, we took a real camel safari. This is Markus with the avant garde headgear.



Four Cities this week

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | February 25, 2010

Greetings friends,

We have been in four cities this week, Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodupur and currently in Jaiselmer. All are in the western region of Rajistan, all have been dry while Jaiselmer is outright desert. We have all been sick at least once but not all at the same time and in each case we have been able to stop long enough to sleep it off.

We have been making continuous use of Rickshaws, all five of us packed in, and in the cities with less generous rickshaws (locally known by something that sounds like “took tooks”) half of us dangling out.

We are learning to navigate crowded marketplaces, places where we always attract attention.



Brief Internet Connection

Posted by: [steinfamilytrip](#) | March 13, 2010

We are at an “Internet Cafe” which has pretty good connection although the “cafe” part is a lie.

We have been to Jaipur, Jhohdupur, Udaipur, Jaisalmir, New Dehli, Varanasi and now the last 10 days in Goa. There is so much to describe.

Highlights:

We were in New Dehli for Holi but avoided getting doused with colors although we got hit by a few water ballons.

We rode a boat on the Ganges to watch the sunrise in Varanasi.

We stayed in a real castle in Jaiselmir.

We attended the 100th anniversary of B.D. Behdokher in Goa. He was the liberator of Goa from the Portugese and is also Achina’s uncle.

We have all gotten sick, but not at the same time.

We had dinner on sand dunes under the moonlight cooked by camel drivers.

The Taj Mahal appeared out of the morning fog.

Alex and Matkus climbed the minaret of the largest mosque in New Dehli.