



Northern India by Train

New Delhi and the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Upper Pradesh 2011



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In February, 2011, Andy and Bill Bowe travelled to New Delhi, India by way of the United Arab Emirates. Sightseeing in Delhi, population 16 million, let us take in the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Qutab Minar and Humayun's tomb and the Red Fort.

Soon enough, we boarded the Royal Rajasthan on Wheels train. We went first to Rajasthan State, to Jodhpur, to Udaipur, to Chittorgarh, to Jaipur and then to Sawai Madhopur (and a fruitless tiger search in Ranthambore National Park). Next it was on to Madhya Pradesh State and the World Heritage site at Khajuraho, with its erotic temple carvings. Finally our train took us to Uttar Pradesh State, home of Varanasi (the former Benares), with its cremations and Hindu celebrations on the Ganges River, and, finally, to Agra, home of our last Heritage Site visit, the Taj Mahal.

Our train, aimed at visitors like us, was a joint venture between the tourist bureau of the State of Rajasthan and India Railways, the central government-owned railway company of India (with 1.5 million employees)..

Our only hotel was in Delhi. As we moved about by train through northern India, we typically had dinner on the train each night (Indian food or "European" cuisine) and slept in our twin bed compartment. Our quarters even had its own toilet and shower (thank you very much!). In the morning, after breakfast in one of our two train dining cars, we would debark to buses to visit that day's local sites of interest.

As with the 122 foot-tall Victory Tower at Chittorgarh Fort, to the right (built to commemorate a victory over Muslims in 1440), the northern part of India has a long history and reflects an important part of the diverse cultures of the subcontinent.

Bill Bowe
Northbrook, Illinois
June, 2011







Above: Vigilant lookouts at watch over government grounds

Left: Parliament and the Australian 1931 Ashokan Column, with a bronze ship on top, commemorates the British Empire's sailing ships





Above: Andy Bowe enters the Qutab complex, built on ruins in 739

Right: Minar Qutab (1211-36), highest brick minaret in the world, is 237 feet tall and was built to celebrate Mohammad Gauri's victory over the Rajputs

Left: New Delhi street scenes and water shortage truck







Above: Ancient New Delhi place of worship

Left Clockwise: Newer apartments; family headed to worship; Lotus Bahai Temple built in 1986





Above: Andy Bowe visits the National Rail Museum in New Delhi

Left: Bill and Andy Bowe at Humayun's Tomb





Above: Jama Masjid Mosque in Old Delhi was completed in 1673 and holds 25,000 faithful

Left: Cobra snake charmer; Elephant taking his time on a major highway





Above Clockwise: World Peace Stupa Buddhist Temple opened in 2007; Pushcart with heavy load; Andy Bowe lunching at the Imperial Hotel;
Birla Mandir temple inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi in New Delhi
Left: The Red Fort was constructed by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the walled city of Old Delhi in the 17th century



Above: Andy Bowe before boarding the Royal Rajasthan on Wheels train at Safdarjung Station in New Delhi

Right: Japanese documentary TV crew tapes the departure, as Andy Bowe checks out his shower and gets to know the train that will be his home for a week





Above: The Jaswant Thada cenotaph and related tombs in Jodhpur

Right: Bill Bowe with Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort behind him





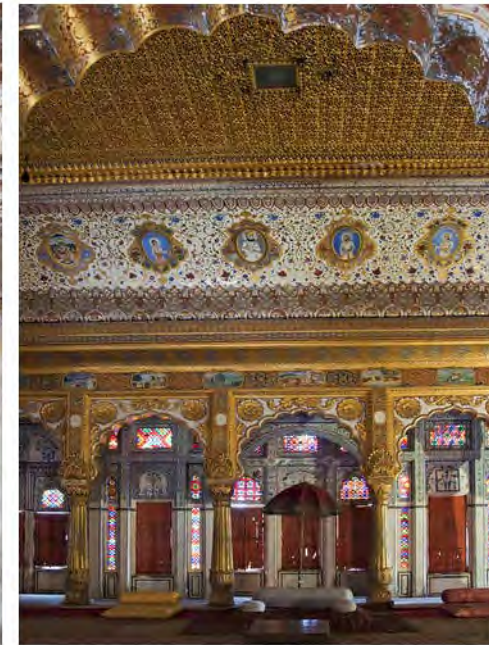
Right Clockwise: Turban wrapping demonstration; museum displays of a coat of armor and an elephant carriage howdah; an inner Fort courtyard



Above: Construction on Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort and its museum began in 1459. The Fort stands 400 feet above the city and the colorful mural at its main gate is still preserved



The ceiling is made of gold filigree and mirrors



The Palace of Flowers chamber was built as an audience room in the 18th century

Sheesha Mahal or Hall of Mirrors, has intricate mirror-work and brightly painted religious figures made in plaster



The 16th century's Pearl Palace room was also built as a hall of public audience



Fort ramparts with views of Jodhpur, the Blue City, below









Above: Street scenes on the way to Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, built by Maharaja Umaid Singh from 1929-43

Right: Woman seeking alms upon arrival in Udaipur

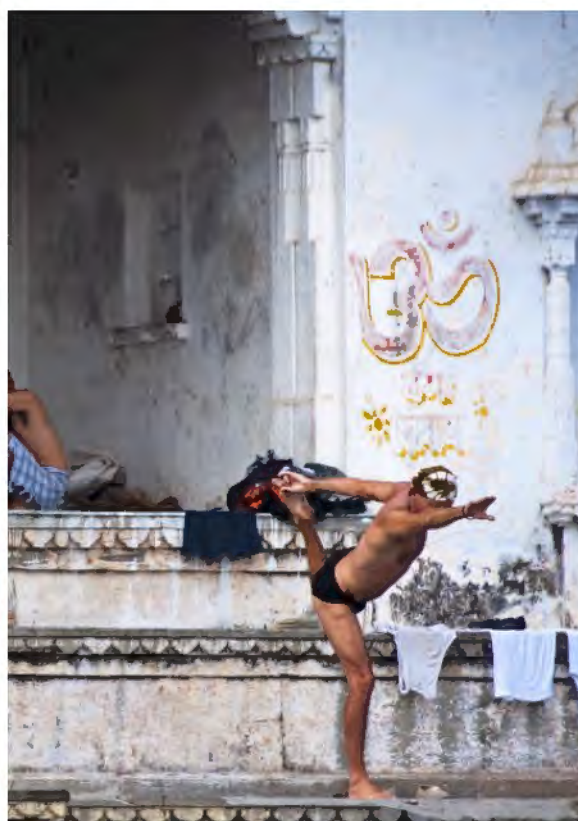
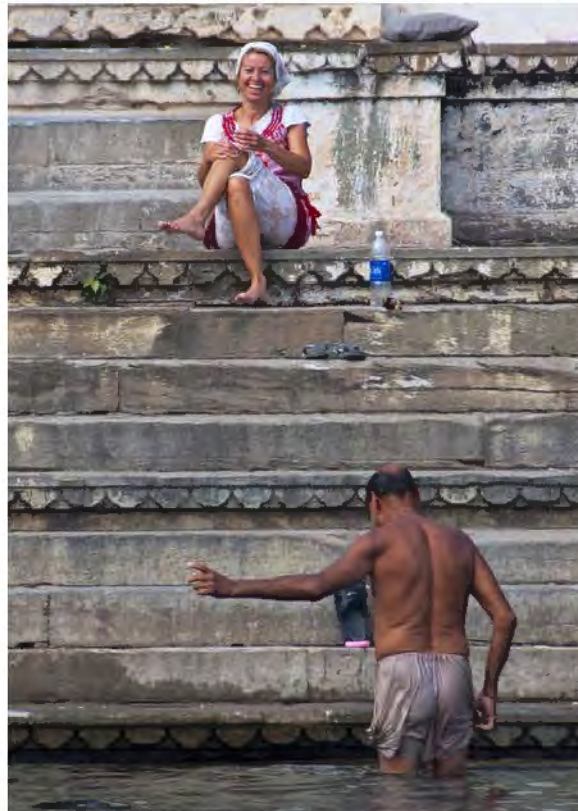




Above Clockwise: Fountain at Gulab Bagh Garden in Udaipur's Sajjan Niwas Park; Andy Bowe encounters a sacred cow; market; school sign

Right: Lake Palace Hotel in Lake Pichola in Udaipur







Above: City Palace from Lake Pichola in Udaipur

Left: Activity on the shores of Udaipur's Lake Pichola and the Jag Mandir Island Hotel



Above: City Palace, Udaipur

Right: Elephant mural in City Palace











Above: Chittorgarh Fort, Padmini Palace and its dry lake and the Samiddheshvara Temple area above Chittorgarh city

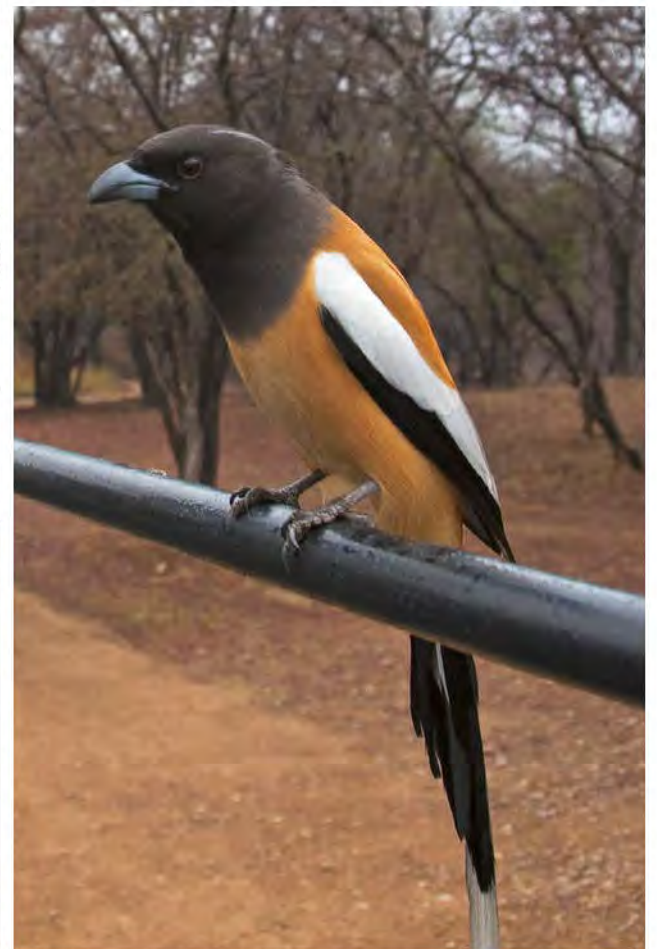
Left: On the way to Chittorgarh Fort; the Victory Tower



Left: Chittogarh houses below the Fort

Below: Sound and light show at Chittogarh Fort





Above Clockwise: In Sawai Madhopur, Ranthombore Fort, wildlife in Ranthombore National Park , and an enormous banyan tree

Right: Andy Bowe enjoys a wild bird landing on his hand






DASTKARCRAFT SHOP

DASTKAR



A WOMEN'S SELF-HELP INITIATIVE SINCE 1988



Amber Fort, Jaipur











Left: Andy and Bill Bowe at Amber Fort

Below: Water Palace in Man Sarobar Lake, Jaipur









Above Clockwise: Intersection in Jaipur, the Pink City, capital and largest city (3.5 million) in Rajasthan; Palace of Winds, built in 1799; City Palace Gate; Andy Bowe in a City Palace plaza; 360-pound silver jar made in 1896

Right: Guarded entrance to the Maharaja's private residence at the City Palace



PRIVATE



Above Clockwise: City Palace Gate; Andy Bowe with strange birds; Andy Bowe with peacock birds; a snake charmer

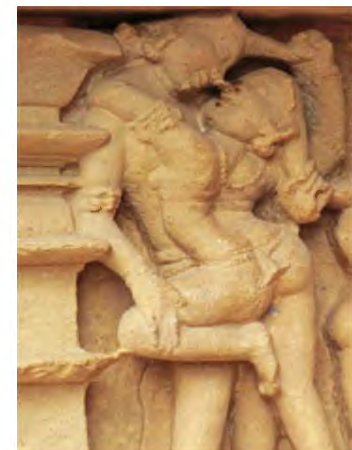


Khajuraho railway station



One of the western group of Hindu temples built from 950 to 1050





The Khajuraho temples are known less for worshipping and more for sensuous friezes







Above Clockwise: The Jain group of temples in Khajuraho; an uncowed tourist in jeans

Right: The Royal Rajasthan on Wheels train crosses the Ganges River into Varanasi on laundry day







Above Clockwise: Moving wood; crossing rails; removing whiskers; street restaurant; and produce markets

Left: Varanasi is a pilgrimage destination as a religious center. Cremations on the Ganges River banks are daily events and dying in Varanasi is said to ensure an quick route to heaven



Above: Schoolchildren in Ispatana Deer Park by the 1931 Mulagandha Kutty Vihara temples containing relics of Sakyumuni Buddha

Right: Temple dome and archeological dig near where Sakyumuni Buddha delivered his first sermon







Spice cart



Mother India Temple



Fruit cart



Schoolchildren by roadside



Marble rendition of India at the Mother India Temple



Procession of Varanasi women in finery



Portrait of Ghandi at the Mother India Temple



Monkeyshines



Above and Right: Boats leave the Ganges River landing at Ravidas Mandir Temple

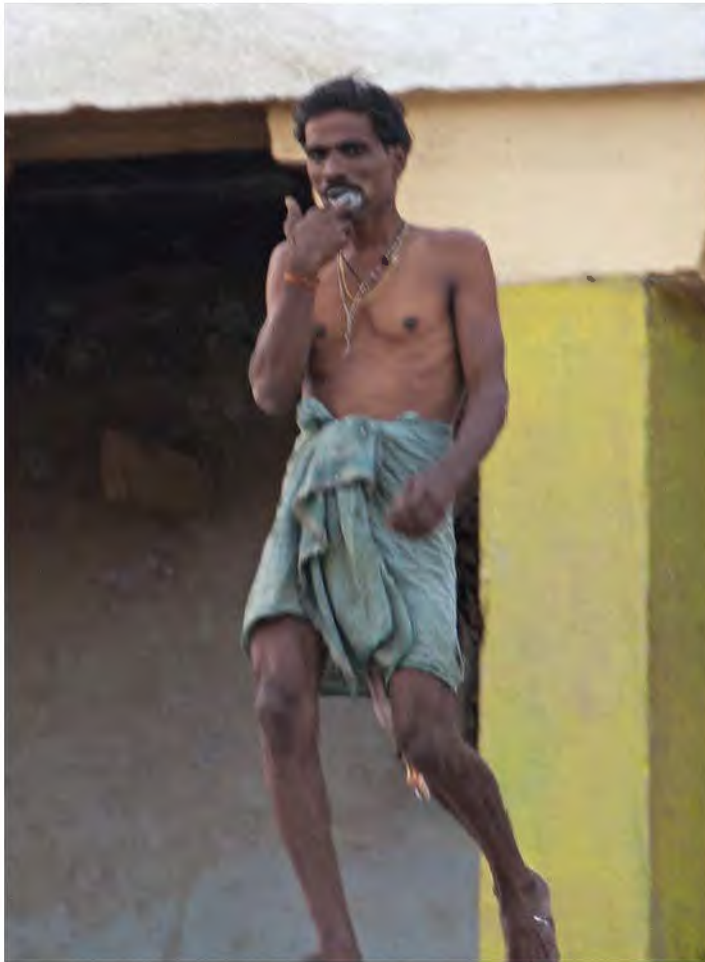




MEHRATAR
FACILITY















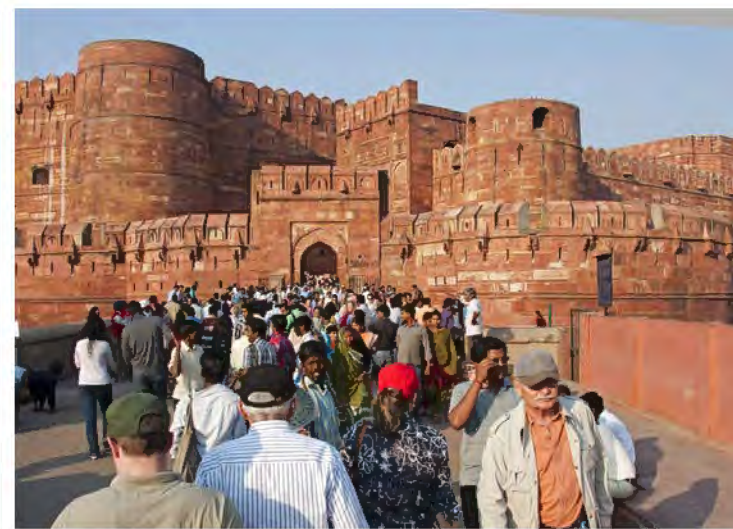
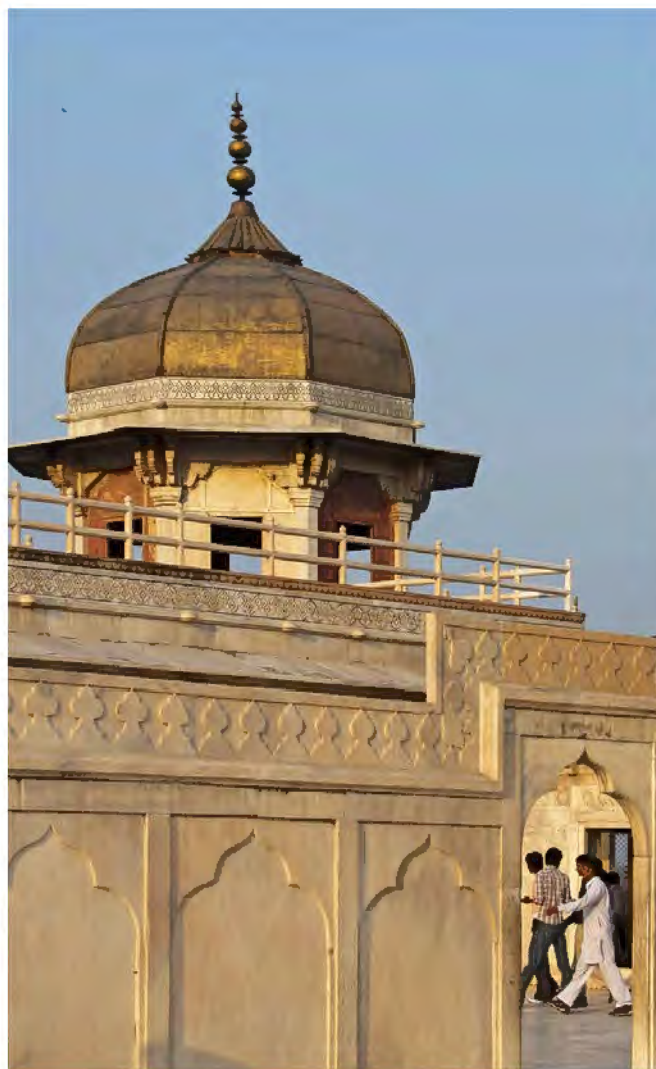


Ghat-Maha-Aarti ritualistic worship at Daksamagh Ghat on the Ganges



Arriving in Agra and driving to the Red Fort and the Taj Mahal





Above: The Red Fort in Agra, rebuilt in sandstone in 1573

Left: Crossing the Yamuna River on the way to the Red Fort and Taj Mahal in Agra



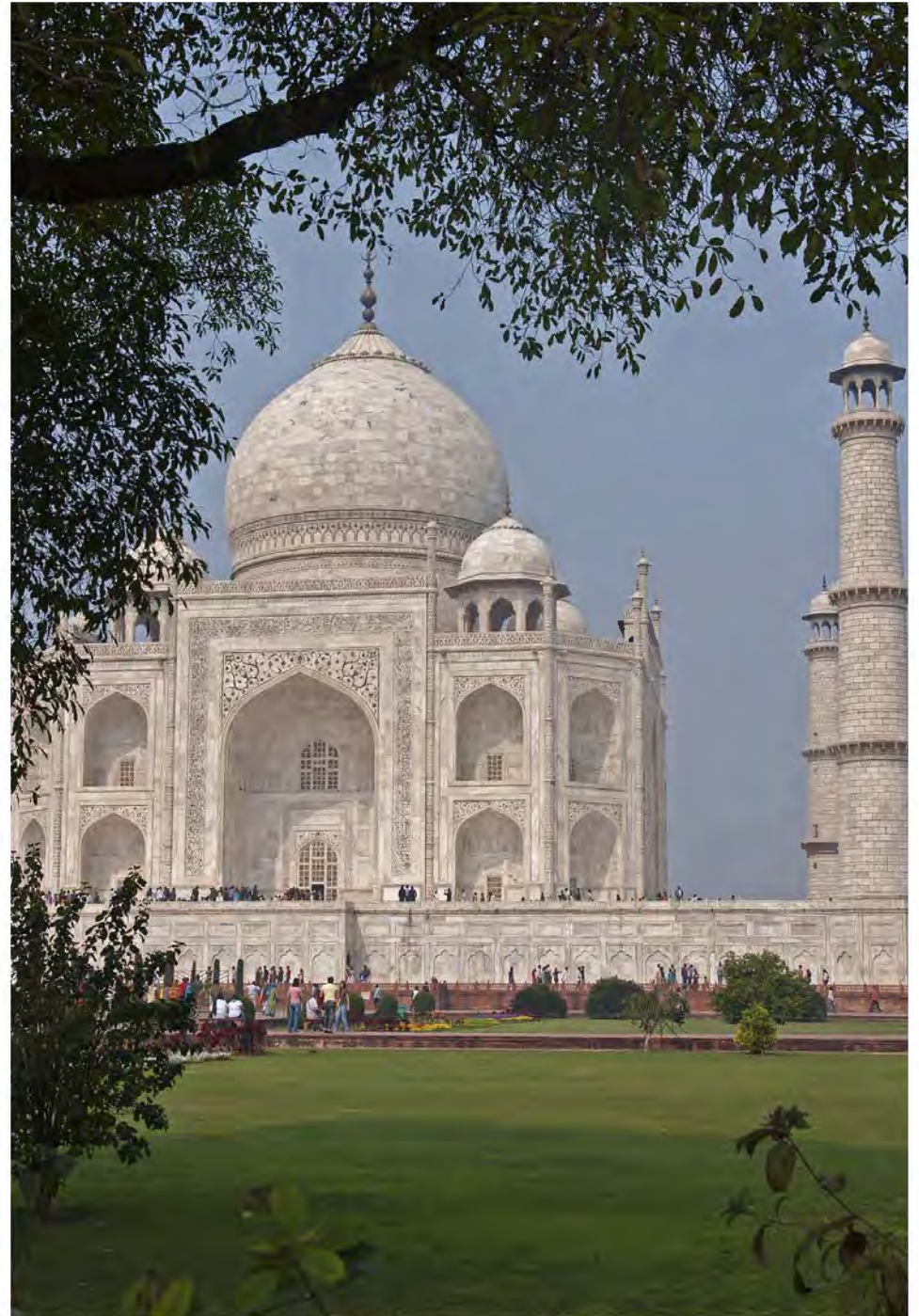


Varied local attire at the Red Fort in Agra





Above: The Taj Mahal was built beginning in 1632 on the Yamuna River in Agra by emperor Shajahan in memory of his wife Ajumand Bano

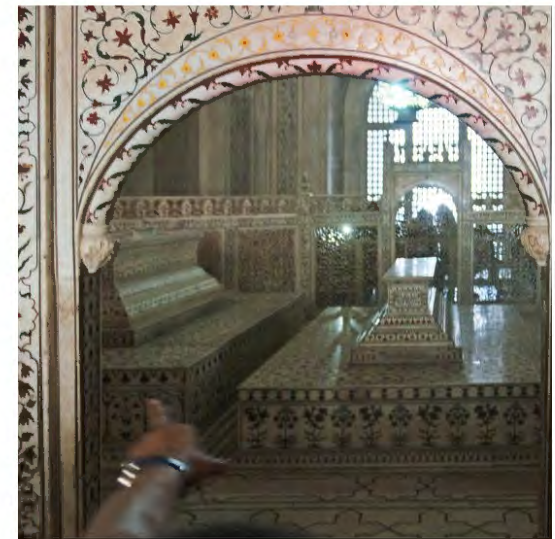


Right: Bill and Andy Bowe at Agra's Red Fort with the Taj Mahal in the distance









Above: Inside the Taj Mahal

Left: A uniformed officer by visitors waiting to enter the Taj Mahal

Right: Companion structure to the opposite mosque



Boat crossing the Yamuna River behind the Taj Mahal





