



INDIAN EXPLORATIONS

Indian Explorations is growing well and we are constantly surprised at how little information there is on the lesser known parts of India. However, we are continually researching small boutique hotels or owner-managed houses, forts and palaces. We already have over 80 special, hand selected hotels and lodges in our portfolio from the Himalayas to Cochin. Our latest find has been some beautiful, colonial cottages set on a working tea plantation in Assam. The owner and his family are charming, and reside on the property. He is also the president of the FEI in India and has excellent horses and a tutor for those who need a little brushing up on their equine skills. This is where we base some of our riding safaris. However, even if one's interests aren't equestrian, this is such a beautiful part of the country and we can offer cruises up the Brahmaputra river, too. The tribal history is both diverse and fascinating, and one learns about manufacturing tea. The birdwatching is some of India's finest with over 700 species.

In Kerala, we have a handful of beautiful houses on the backwaters and surrounding areas. Probably the most fundamental point is that we appreciate the distances covered in India, and we try and give you as much time as possible in any area of great beauty or interest. Susannah went off to Pench, which is the newest and most interesting park to view tigers, and we have a short piece from her as well as from some of our clients who have stayed there.

SUMMER
NEWSLETTER 2003

UNSPOILED INDIA

The Eastern Himalayas are equally wonderful, and again we have a lovely small lodge on the banks of the Ganges, surrounded by orchards, gardens and forest. In addition, there is the splendid Ananda Hotel, which has the most stupendous views over the Himalayas as well as being a world class spa.



The backwaters of Kerala are strikingly beautiful, and one can observe a pace of life otherwise unknown. The area is one of extreme beauty. One can take a rice boat and watch the local people trade on the waterways, and view traditional Indian life in a leisurely manner. In Cochin, we have found the most heavenly hotel which is owned by a German antiques dealer, and he has filled this beautiful, colonial Dutch mansion with artefacts and antiques collected from all over the world. The manager is wonderfully affable and efficient and the meals are some of the best I have come across in India. Chefs are invited

from all around the globe to teach the local chefs and this is reflected in their menu which offers both international and Indian cuisine.

Pondicherry, which is three hours from Madras, is a wonderful town, which used to be owned by the French. There is a wonderful French colonial mansion, which has just fourteen suites, all furnished with fascinating artefacts and traditional tiles and woodwork. The town boasts stunning buildings reflecting its French colonial history.



We offer riding safaris in Rajasthan and also in Assam at the colonial bungalows. The riding in Rajasthan allows one to overnight in palaces and royal tented camps en route, which is a fabulous way to see the local countryside in style.

We are blessed to be associated with the finest wildlife company in India, which houses their top naturalists. We are able to offer the finest quality of guiding on our Tiger Trails trips as well as any individual safari that we assemble for our clients.

MAGNIFICENT INDIA Pench Tiger Reserve

My introduction to Pench – by Susannah Baker

Having run lodges and camps in Africa, I was interested to see how an Indian lodge would compare – and the moment I arrived, it was clear to me that the high standards I was used to in Africa are the same here. The lodge is run by Dushyant Singh, who has a vast wealth of experience behind him gained while working at TigerTops in



Nepal, and a genuine love of the wilderness. He is backed by an extremely knowledgeable wildlife naturalist and a cheerful hardworking team of locals from the nearby village. The lodge, consisting of twelve rooms, is set amongst Saja and Mahuwa trees on the edge of a Nallah – a small streambed which becomes a roaring torrent during the monsoon. The décor is warm and rustic, using earthy colours which blend in beautifully and add just the right touch of elegance and



comfort. Pench Tiger Reserve is just a stone's throw from the lodge itself. Drives are conducted in the morning and evening in an open four wheel drive vehicle. Each drive is accompanied by Dushyant or the naturalist, both of whom have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the flora and fauna. The park is rich in wildlife, boasting Gaur (Indian bison), Sambar, Nilgai, Chetal, Langur monkeys, wild boar, monitor lizards, mongoose, leopards, jungle cats and, of course, the formidable



Bengal Tiger. The park has five park elephants who, along with their mahouts, go out tracking tigers every morning. They are very successful – and I saw my first tiger within a week of being in Pench! It's a wonderful way to view wildlife, ambling through the forest, with your enormous taxi stopping here and there to pull a branch off the tree, or uproot a trunkful of grass!

STOP PRESS - Special Offers:

1. Indian Explorations' Escorted Wildlife Safari departing 14th Feb 2004, visiting Pench, Kanha, Kaziranga and Addabarie in Assam - £2490.00 per person excluding international airfares.
2. India – one week riding on a tea plantation in glorious Assam: £800.00
3. Kerala and Assam – 15 days: £2050.00
4. Rajasthan, including Ranthambore, Assam, Himalayas 16 days: £2305.00

MALDIVES - by Mrs Heidi Goodwin
Soneva Fushi



Banyan Tree

On arrival at this wonderful coral island paradise we were rather taken aback by the request to remove our shoes. These were promptly put into linen bags marked 'No News No Shoes' and were spirited away before we realized what was happening. This was to set the thoroughly laid back tone that permeates this idyllic resort. Although we were totally pampered and cosseted by the attentive and unobtrusive staff, we always felt that we practically had the island to ourselves. Kunfunadhoo island on which Soneva Fushi is situated is unusually lush and provides



Soneva Gili

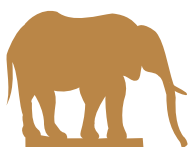
total seclusion between each room or villa, just a few steps away from a private and secluded stretch of beach. Informality and total relaxation are the order of the day and if you wish to explore the island you can make one



Soneva Fushi

onerous decision as whether to saunter around on foot or to take a ride on your bicycle which is provided with your accommodation. Snorkelling gear is provided and there are excellent facilities for scuba diving. The coral atolls are home to some of the most colourful and exotic fish in the world. Sailing boats and windsurfing boards are also available. Swimming in the warm translucent turquoise waters of the sheltered reef is a delight and lazing on the white coral beach or reading in the shade of a coconut palm is a totally therapeutic experience. A wide choice of superb meals is provided by two restaurants or can be supplied direct to your accommodation. On the morning of our departure our footwear reappeared, much to our amazement together with a glass of champagne from the staff and management of Soneva Fushi to bid us farewell.

Indian Explorations' recommended hideaways in the Maldives are: The Banyan Tree, Soneva Fushi, Soneva Gili, Cocoa Island, The Four Seasons Kuda Huraa and Nika.



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