

# Train kept a rolling... Jaipur to Jaisalmer

*Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, India - January 25, 2008*

Brent:

When our train was due to arrive, we found our way to our platform and waited. And waited. An hour and twenty minutes late it arrived. Waiting was OK because we had lots of company (mostly passengers, families, army guys, a few rats, which I didn't tell Amy about 'til later) and I liked watching them put a new train together in the switch yard—it was a lot like a game of the Towers of Hanoi, but more complicated. (Amy read on the platform and bundled up to keep warm).

When the train pulled in Amy and I ran like platform rats to where the sign flashed S1 (our sleeper car). We climbed in only to find, in the dark, that there were no seats with our number. Another passenger looked at our ticket and told us that S1 was near the other end of the track. So we ran like panicked platform rats to the other end of the train and got on board. People were in our (upper = the top of 3) sleeper bunks so we found empty ones, but the train employee insisted we get in the correct bunks and so he kicked the two sleeping guys out.

We climbed up to the third (top) bunks, used our bags as pillows, wrapped ourselves in our new blankets. And waited. It was quite a while before the train moved again, and so all that scurrying had been unnecessary, but for our cardio-vascular systems (gotta stay healthy). I fell right to sleep but Amy did not, and so read for a while. Once asleep, we both slept pretty well, thanks to the constant rocking of the train, until morning, although Amy had to climb down a few times to use the restroom. Occasionally our feet were cold, but whaddya gonna do?



Amy asleep

In the morning at some train station (Jodhpur?) I bought a little veggie sandwich tray from someone walking through the train, then read for a while while Amy took a nap.



delightful bathroom

We didn't see any other foreigners on our car (but they did emerge from some other cars), and hardly any women. Many of the people were listening to a cricket game on their radios. There were quite a few Army men, wearing camouflage, headed to the big army base in Jaisalmer (near the Pakistan border). The army guy closest to us was very friendly. We talked about India, and America (no one says United States but always America). Our kids. Food. The shoe-



Brent's veg breakfast

shine boy. He read our Lonely Planet guide for a while and was very impressed by the content and accuracy—although he said the cover was totally inaccurate because the two women they show in front of the Taj Mahal are dressed in completely wrong outfits for that part of the country. He also borrowed my Atlantic Monthly for a while and wanted to buy us tea, but we'd already drank lots of our water and eaten plenty of biscuits.



our Army friend

That train ride went until about 2:20 p.m (we boarded at 1:20 the previous morning) stopping only briefly at a couple of stations along the way . At the final stop we pulled up next to The Palace on Wheels, a super-fancy train that (we're told) is like a rolling cruise ship with all amenities. The outside was painted very regally and we saw turbaned-moustached men working on the train.



At Jaisalmer station a travel agent with an "Amy Newman" sign (she's very popular around here) picked us



Amy taking a picture from roof

up, dropped us off at an OK "multi-ethnic," not-very-spicy rooftop restaurant where we had just enough time to eat before our camel safari.

We had arrived to Jaisalmer in time, despite all the travel changes made two days earlier and the station delays. Our train ride had not been in vain.



view from restaurant

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