

Last Day in Mumbai

Mumbai, India - February 7, 2008

Amy:

(Before this blog entry, I wanted to write that Brent changed his name to Naresh b/c many people here in India had a hard time pronouncing "Brent". Naresh and Brent both mean "king" so Brent changed his name to "Naresh" while in India. Or maybe forever, who knows....)

We had one final day before we were scheduled to take the 9:50 pm (overnight) train to Hyderabad. We woke up and packed our bags, and went upstairs to the lobby. We checked out, left our bags in the lobby, and called Avi. She told us to come to her house at noon, which gave us time for some pastries! We walked back to the 201 Celsius café, and got some pastries and coffee for breakfast. The café was crowded with teenagers, and seemed to be a hot spot.

After breakfast, we walked back to Veer Nariman road (the street where our hotel was located) to catch a



double-decker bus. There were several that went by, but we managed to hop on one and work our way to the upstairs. Brent took some pictures of us on the bus and we watched the road from our high bus-perch. We

arrived early at Avi's neighborhood, so we got off the bus a few stops after her building and walked back. We stopped at an indoor mall and bought some batteries and looked at the upscale sari shops (beautiful). [Naresh: Amy's primary reason to come to India was to ride a camel; mine was to ride in the top of a double-decker bus. We were both pleased at having attained our greatest desire. Actually my greatest desire, after seeing all those Buddha caves, is to achieve a state of enlightened nirvana; I desire that enlightenment so much I can barely stand it.]

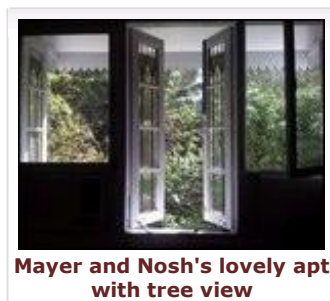


When we arrived at Avi's house, the maid let us in and told us that Avi wasn't home but would be back soon. We relaxed for a bit and read the paper in her beautiful apartment. When she got home, we went downstairs to go to her friend's house for lunch.

Avi's friends, (Mayer and Nosh)'s driver drove us through the city to their house, which was another spectacular apartment, with lush greenery inside and out. The balcony and many of the rooms had views of the tops of trees, which Avi said was unusual in Mumbai. We sat in Mayer and Nosh's beautiful apartment, surrounded by beautiful antiques and furniture.

I should mention that many of the apartments we've

seen have tiles, which are now unavailable, but are beautiful and unique; Mayer and Nosh's apartment had different colored and patterned tiles in each room.



We ate chips, beer, and mini samosas and chatted with Mayer and Nosh, who are Avi's oldest and best friends and are wonderful. They run a performing arts school. Nosh used to be in the software field, so Brent was happy to talk software for a while. For lunch, we moved to the big table covered with a lace tablecloth and a huge spread of delicious food. We were treated to a "typical" Parsi meal of curry chicken, cheesy-cauliflower casserole, rice, & potatoes with rye. Brent and I ate everything in site (no surprise there), then they brought out cake and ice cream! The cake was a double-layer chocolate cake with vanilla ice cream. I didn't think we could eat any more, but I was proven wrong. Another delicious meal in Mumbai!!!

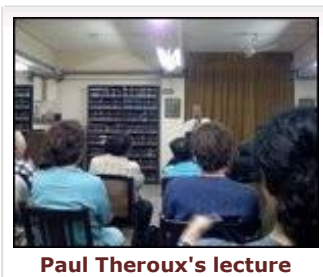


and continued driving around to different sites in the city. We drove in a different section of Mumbai than we had seen before, which was fun. We saw a Muslim mosque that was offshore and connected to the rest of Mumbai by a walkway that disappears at high tide, a huge race track, and another country club, this one with a golf course. We walked around the stadium track for a while, then picked Avi up again.



Avi has the enormous job of reupholstering all of her furniture and shipping it to the US. We went with her to several fabric stores throughout the city so she could find matching fabrics for her furniture.

After shopping, we went to a wonderful lecture by Paul Theroux, a novelist and travel writer. Brent and I were intrigued, b/c we now fancy ourselves travel writers, so we wanted to hear what our colleague had to say. During the lecture, he discussed traveling and the ways in



which travel to the same place can be different every time b/c (though the place may have changed) the writer is different (older, wiser?). He listed several of his favorite books, which we took note of and plan to read.

We left the lecture during the Q & A section because we didn't have seats assigned for the train and were told to get to the station 2 hours before the scheduled

departure time. We walked past Churchgate station, which was a crowded maze of people, to our hotel. The Ambassador Hotel (right next to our hotel) has proven to be a great landmark for our stay in Mumbai, as it has a large circular (rotating, at times) towering-over-the-city dome on top, which can be seen throughout the city.

Back at the hotel, we picked up our bags, which were in the lobby under several different nets. After fishing the bags out, we went downstairs and the offered to hail us a cab. A few cabs passed by, and he told us that there was a taxi strike because of the violence (North- Indian cab drivers are being attacked in a recent wave of Maharashtra-is-for-Mahrashtrans group). We finally caught a cab and went to Victoria Station. In the crowded (an understatement) station, we went to one window after another trying to get seats. We finally went to the correct window, and a man wrote down our seats numbers for us. He told us to look at the board to see which gate we were departing from. Another guy at the window also told us who had won the superbowl.

We sat down and ate some biscuits, and Brent went a-wandering to look around the station. He came back and said that he had found an “upper class” waiting room upstairs, so we gathered our bags and went up a class. This waiting room was the fanciest one we’d seen in India, with comfortable seats, tables, a t.v. and a very clean bathroom with a hands dryer!

Luxury! We waited there for a while and I went downstairs to call my sister (noone was home). I looked for our track, and found that our train was already boarding (1/2 hour before departure time) so I went upstairs to get Brent, and we boarded our train.



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