

India revealed

A visit to India is always a wonderful experience. India is a vibrant, colourful and beautiful country with heritage and tradition that impacts immediately. With the diversity and pageantry from its complex history, it has strong historical links with Britain and the Commonwealth. It is not surprising therefore, that there are over 700 RCOG Members and Fellows in India.

I have made several visits to India over many years. Never have I been disappointed. My last trip, in Nov 2013 was to south India. This visit was organised by Jon Baines's Tours and supported by the RCOG.

The RCOG has to be very careful with its collaborations. The association will, to many, understandably infer endorsement and the product must be worthy. In this case the tour super- ceded expectation. It was a remarkable and memorable journey across the middle of south India from Chennai to Cochin, a fabulous mixture of heritage and sight seeing blended with insight and CPD. Organised with the help of the RCOG, specifically for a group of obstetricians and gynaecologists from across the world, it was a trip of a lifetime. Whilst my previous visits to India had been interesting and rewarding, this was getting to know India as it is.



We were privileged to meet charming and welcoming colleagues from the different cities across our trip. The hospitality was marvellous and humbling. We visited hospitals, health centres, tribal villages and newly delivered women in their homes; getting to know and understand the health services and structure of society of this large country. The rates of poverty and literacy vary throughout India with areas of southern India, in general, being more fortunate. Where literacy and the education of women are highest, so standards of health and childbirth improve. Nevertheless most women still give birth without medical support and most on their own or with the help of a local village birth attendant, dai, and often with traditions of practice that are inherited and based on superstition.

The trip began in Chennai and was wonderfully supported by a local guide, Charles, who stayed with us throughout the Tour. The presence and knowledge of Charles gained us access and insight that would never otherwise have been achieved. After experiencing the challenges of erratic driving, motor horns and unconcerned cattle wandering the roads, the group met together at a beachside hotel in Mamallapuram. The fellow “explorers” soon gelled and friendships struck. They were a great group. The following morning we visited a tiny village school, a provincial health centre and also World Heritage Temples – a taste of all to come!



Using a combination of different transports, including the unique experiences of both toy and intercity train journeys, we travelled from east to west through to Bangalore, Mysore, Ooty, Cochin and Kerala. The journey highlighted the considerable variations present in this diverse country. The terrain varied from rubber plantations, rice fields through to tea plantations and inland waterways. The food, culture, animal, and bird life were delightful and everywhere there were amazing temples and palaces!

It was the combination of Jon Baines’s experience and the wonderful hospitality of RCOG members and fellows that led to this very special, encompassing and educating experience of India’s healthcare. The best care in India rivals the best in the world and accounts for the growing trend for medical tourism, whilst sadly the majority of Indians have impoverished and limited facilities. The local doctors are dedicated and extremely hard working. It was a great privilege to meet many terrific colleagues and friends of the RCOG who are championing womens’ health.

Filled with experiences and memories, it is difficult to talk of any one specific highlight, but, the view, in a tiny country village, on entering the home of a newly delivered woman and seeing her with her new baby, will stay with me for ever. Sharing the space with two oxen and talking about her birth and lifestyle was as close to the real India as you can get. Humbling and chastening and reminding me of the fortune of the NHS, I vowed never to forget the experience when I returned to the totally different problems in the UK!

And, next year? The plans are for a trip to South Africa, mixing sightseeing, safari and healthcare and even including a meeting with the Kruger vets! Watch for further information!

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New tour to South Africa

Following successful obstetrics and gynaecology tours to India and China, Jon Baines Tours have planned a new tour to South Africa. This study tour, run in association with the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists, shows you the many faces of this beautiful and diverse land.

Fly into Johannesburg and learn about the history of apartheid, with visits to the Apartheid Museum and Soweto. Travel north to Mpumalanga, an area with spectacular landscapes and stay two nights at a safari lodge deep in the African bush. Move onto Hazyview and visit the Jane Goodall chimpanzee refuge and traditional villages. Finally end your tour in the cosmopolitan city of Cape Town for three nights of relaxation, fine dining and exploration of the beautiful local area. This new tour, led by Richard Warren includes professional visits and talks providing real insight into the medicine and related social issues surrounding obstetrics and gynaecology in South Africa.

To find out more visit Jon Baines Tours website.

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This article was originally published on the RCOG website:

http://www.rcog.org.uk/what-we-do/membership/fellows-and-members/india-revealed?dm_t=0,0,0,0,0