

Serendipity Travels

AROUND THE WORLD 2022

Our travels in October—November 2022 took us around the world from west to east. Join us as our journey continues in South Asia. Previously, we visited [Greece, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Oman](#).

Part 4: India and Sri Lanka

13 November 2022

Mumbai I [72° E]

Here we go again with lengthy customs and immigration processing. Americans, Australians, and New Zealanders can apply online (for a fee!) for an e-visa for entry into India. U.K. and Canadian citizens must apply at the Indian consulate (or use a pricey service). It seems as though the latter countries are a bit more welcoming to persons from Pakistan and require more scrutiny. As it was, we had to answer questions about the national origin of ourselves, our parents, our spouse, her parents, and countries we had visited in the past 10 years. We did all this before we left home. Other travelers did not and had to apply once onboard the ship. Given the condition of on-board wi-fi, there were some frustrations.

With our passports, e-visas, and three other forms in hand, we were held in a comfortable area on the ship while the authorities processed people at a deliberate pace. We were through the process only 90 minutes late and departed on our tour of the day: “Mumbai at a Glance.” Some of you will be old enough to remember that Mumbai used to be called “Bombay.”

This tour was primarily a narrated bus ride through parts of Mumbai, with a few photo stops. We stopped for pictures at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, which was once called the Victoria Terminus Railway Station. Very impressive. Another stop was at the Dhobi Ghat, a giant open-air laundry facility. We visited Mani Bhavan, the residence of Mahatma Gandhi when he was in town. Our final stop was the Kamala Nehru Park, a giant playground with panoramic views of the city waterfront and skyline.

Pictures from our tours of Mumbai are at [Mumbai Scenes 2022](#).



14 November 2022

Mumbai II [72° E]

The Indian authorities are very thorough. As part of the process described yesterday, we obtained an e-Landing Card. This is a full-sized sheet of paper that contains a copy of the picture we submitted with our initial application, our Passport and Visa numbers, valid dates (13/11/2022 to 16/11/2022 in dd/mm/yyyy format), four

identical QR codes, and an official stamp from the Inspector of Police, Seaport Branch, S.B.N.C.I.D., Mumbai. This is scanned once, and visually inspected three times for us to exit the port. It is inspected three times and scanned once as we reenter the port. We do not know what happens to the poor soul who loses or damages the document, nor do we wish to learn.

Today's excursion was entitled "Architecture and Historic Buildings of Mumbai." We rode a bus to a central point, then dismounted for a 1½ mile walk. A significant portion of the walk was on the streets, avoiding sacred cows and their effluent, stopping traffic for a group of some 20 gray-haired pale-skinned pedestrians, observing the interplay among busses, motor bikes, taxis, private automobiles, and pedestrians.

Our guide narrated what we were seeing, mainly buildings built during the British Occupation of India. Lovely buildings indeed. Some of them were well-designed for the climate, a few less so. We saw the High Court, Mumbai University, Municipal Corporation Building, St. Thomas Cathedral, and other buildings in central Mumbai. Our tour also included a visit inside the Victoria Terminus (now called the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus) where we admired the precision of arrivals and departures to this 18-track train station.



We took a break for lunch at a five-star hotel. The lunch consisted of several Indian dishes, somewhat spicy but all very tasty.

After lunch, we had a brief visit to the Prince of Wales Museum, which has displays of sculpture, paintings, and jewelry from pre-British times. Our final stop was the Gateway to India, which is an iconic structure on the waterfront and dock for ferries to outlying islands.

Pictures of Mumbai's civic center are at [Mumbai Civic Center 2022](#).

15 November 2022

Mumbai III [72° E]

Our tour today was "The Hidden Charm of Old Mumbai." We visited two neighborhoods. One, named Khotachiwadi, was once primarily a Portuguese Christian enclave. We saw some of the old houses from the outside and visited the inside of one, which is now owned by a descendant of the original owners. He is a fashion designer and had several attractive clothes to sell. I think he did a bit of business during our visit.

The second neighborhood is centered on the Banganga, a sacred, spring-fed, water reservoir surrounded by the 400-year-old Walkeshwar temple complex on Malabar Hill. We walked down hill to the reservoir, observing everyday life on the way. We stopped at one temple where a man was mourning the passing of his father. It seems as though a bevy of foreign tourists brought him some comfort as he smiled and waved at us. Several more temples, one with a resident bull, and a few shrines were seen on the walk.



Our return to the ship was uneventful, although the bus driver earned his pay weaving in and out of traffic. Tonight, we leave Mumbai and head down the coast to Goa.

Pictures of Mumbai's neighborhoods are at [Mumbai Neighborhoods 2022](#).

16 November 2022

Goa [73° E]

The State of Goa was the last part of India to shake off its colonial masters. Liberation was achieved in 1961 when the Indian Army and Navy entered the Portuguese territory and demanded that the Portuguese garrison leave within 24 hours. Goa has been part of the nation of India ever since. Because Goa was part of Portugal for hundreds of years, it has the largest Christian community in the nation. About 26% of Goans are Christians; most of the others are Hindu.

Our tour got off to an interesting start. When our bus got to the gate, it was pulled aside by the authorities. Because ours is the first cruise ship to visit Goa since the pandemic, the local legislator named Sankalp Amonkar wanted to welcome us. For some reason, our bus was chosen to be the group to be welcomed. We dismounted, were given roses, flower necklaces, showered in flower petals, serenaded by local band and dance troupe, and had our picture taken with the representative. Quite fun, actually. The first pictures below show the ceremony. Here is a YouTube Video posted by the local news media:

[Welcome to Goa.](#)



After that excitement, we were off on our tour of “Goan Heritage.” This consisted of a visit to an open-air museum called Goa Chitra, where the proprietor has amassed over 4000 items from local and national sources. The museum motto is “Preserving the past to enrich the future.” He has one area devoted to wheels and wheeled vehicles of all sorts, another for farming equipment, and yet another for interior furnishings for both home and office. At various times during our visit a local dance troupe performed for us with appropriate musical accompaniment. The pictures show some of the myriad of items on display, the dancers, and the musicians.

Following our tour of the museum, we went to a local resort for refreshments. Refreshed, we drove back to the ship. Goan traffic is not as crowded as Mumbai, but can be pretty hectic at times. Still, we welcomed the slightly calmer scene. Our passports were stamped to indicate we have exited India and our e-visa forms were retained by the authorities. Tonight, we depart for another country.

Today’s pictures are at [Goa 2022](#).

17 November 2022

At Sea

After three days of Mumbai and one of Goa, we were ready for a “day off.” Biggest challenge of the day was getting Meredith’s iPad to charge. Thanks to Google and Apple Support pages, we learned how to do a hard reset, which seems to have done the trick.

18 November 2022

Colombo, Sri Lanka [79° E]

It takes about 39 hours to sail from Goa, India to Colombo, Sri Lanka; we arrived about noon on 18 November 2022. The cruise port has room for one ship, and it is tucked into a corner of the land devoted to Sri Lanka’s main container port. We had a good look at unloading operations as we sailed in.

Sri Lanka is the native name for the island country that the Europeans called Ceylon. Long ago, the island was called Serendip, and the legendary exploits of three Princes of Serendip gave us the modern term Serendipity.

The air quality in Colombo, the capital, is much better than that in India, although not quite up to normal Pacific Northwest standards. Our excursion today was “Colombo City by Tuk-Tuk.” Tuk-Tuks are those three-wheeled scooters that are ubiquitous in Asian cities. The ones we rode were quite clean and in good repair. It was a hoot being in a long line of about 40 of the little buggers, weaving through city traffic. We drove past government buildings, lots of shops, a few parks, and a residential area. It is fascinating to see the life of the city at eye level.



There was a substantial military presence in town, we are not sure whether there were protests expected (we saw none) or maybe that is just a normal precaution. A few months before the trip, there was a bit of a problem with the Tamil guerillas in the northern part of the country.

We were impressed by the general state of tidiness in Colombo. In contrast to many places in India and Egypt, there was very little trash laying around. Most of the storefronts were clean and tidy and one would not hesitate to shop there.

Today's pictures are at [Colombo 2022](#).

Galle, Sri Lanka [80° E]

Today we rode to the southern part of the island to visit “Galle Fort and Old Town.” On the way, we passed a lot of agricultural land. Crops included Palm Oil Palms, Tea, Cinnamon, Rubber, and Rice. Sri Lanka is the original source of cinnamon, and most of the world's supply still comes from here.

When we reached Galle Bay, the bus stopped for a few minutes so we could observe the local fisherman at work. They use a gill net, similar to that used in our home waters. However, the net is anchored on shore and rowed out perpendicular to shore by two guys in an outrigger canoe. After some time, a team on the shore pulls it in. Nothing mechanical here. We did not observe any fish in the net, but they still had a lot to pull in. A bit farther down the road, we saw the local fish market. Lots of fish on offer, some from the gill netters and some from larger ships that go farther offshore.

Galle was first conquered by the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally the English. Most of the fortifications are from the Dutch in the 17th century. A fair amount of the walls and towers are still visible; it would have been a difficult place to attack from the sea. After our time in the fish market, we walked some of the ramparts and through the town. The mix of Dutch and English architecture is interesting. Some buildings are being restored.



We broke for lunch at a nice restaurant called the “Lighthouse,” although there's no record of there having been a lighthouse at that location. After lunch, we toured a maritime museum, then took the bus back to Colombo.

One thing we have noticed the past two days is that the signs seem to be in three languages, with three different alphabets. Our guide confirmed that, one picture shows a sign with the top part in Sinhalese, the language of most of Sri Lanka, the middle in Tamil, the language of northern Sri Lanka and parts of southern India, and the bottom in English.

We depart tonight and have three days at sea before we reach our next destination, well to the east.

Today's pictures are at [Galle 2022](#).

20-22 November 2022

At Sea

We encountered the first rough weather of the trip on the 20th. Before then, the seas had generally been so calm that we could have taken our boat on them. That day it was windy enough that there was noticeable rolling and pitching. Not enough to bother us other than a bit of creaking, but I suspect some guests are feeling a bit queasy. Definitely not proper conditions for *Serendipity*. On the other hand, we have seen much worse on cruises, so we took advantage of the gentle rocking to get in afternoon naps.

The next two days were calmer. About noon on the 22nd we entered the Straits of Malacca. Apparently, the Malay Pirates are no longer a concern. We are speeding southeast without barbed wire or armed guards.

What does one do when the ship is at sea for several days? Some go to the gym and swim (not me!). There are lectures, trivia contests, and baggo (a.k.a. cornhole) games. We have attended some of the lectures, learning about religions from Buddhist to Hindu to Judaism to Christianity to Islam. Most religions include prescriptions for living a good life and being kind to others. The latter three are monotheistic (all believing in the God of Abraham). Hinduism has thousands of gods, while Buddhism has none. Common legends and parables are found in them all.

We have also learned about history and politics of many of the places we are visiting. In addition to lectures, mostly given by college professors, there are port talks that highlight the ports we are about to visit. These talks also discuss the history and current situation in the various ports.

There is also entertainment on board. Some of it is genteel, like the piano player and string duo that play in the central atrium (called the living room on Viking ships). There are also production shows and guest entertainers on the main stage.

There are a dozen or so electronic game tables on the ship, where one can play games using the electronics, or use the table for a game of cards. One table is devoted to jigsaw puzzles (the physical kind).



For retail therapy, the ship has a few shops selling jewelry and up-scale clothing.

If none of that appeals, there are many places to sit and read, or do things on a computer. Meredith and I have spent a fair amount of time in our cabin, she reading and me sorting pictures and programming lights for the upcoming Lighted Boat Parade.

Oh, and there is always food to eat and beverages to drink, available somewhere on board from 6 AM to midnight.

The journey continues to [Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand](#) in Part V of this log.