

Learning Outside the Classroom

A Passage to India

Stepping beyond our comfort zone to learn about others and ourselves
Northern India, around New Delhi

What are we trying to achieve?

- to enrich students' understanding of Hinduism and other eastern religions through live, first-hand and multi-sensory experiences
- to nurture students' insight into what religion means through meeting and conversing with members of various religions
- to assist students to reflect and respond thoughtfully and ethically to the challenges, ambiguities and opportunities of life
- to help students build cultural bridges and promote mutual appreciation and social cohesion

Cost:

£1,300 per person, including travel and food. Students brought about £250 pocket money

Who is involved?

12 students (16-18 years old, mixed gender, mainly studying Religious Studies) and 2 teachers; during November half-term break (extended either side)

Preparation:

Students were academically well-versed in Hinduism and other religions. They were asked to consider various issues such as inappropriate dress. Detailed health and safety and risk assessment checks were undertaken. The tour operator and guide ensured good organisation.

How did we organise the learning?

The visit provided opportunity for engaging, personalised and meaningful learning through :

- visiting various sites (e.g. forts, temples, shrines, temples and memorials)
- directly experiencing how spirituality pervades all aspects of Indian life and reflecting on experiences - through fun, play, creativity and more disciplined learning
- responding to challenges, uncertainty and ambiguity: the unusual driving, the climate, seeing a corpse in the Ganges, people staring, the material poverty, the simultaneous depth of culture and spirituality
- getting closer to nature - experiencing exotic animals
- interacting culturally, through food, dance performance, shopping, trying on saris, a Bollywood film
- building bridges, linking the unusual to the familiar, and exploring the historical links between India and the UK (e.g. visiting the War memorial, the ashram where the Beatles stayed or riding the railways)
- promoting inclusivity (e.g. meeting and conversing with priests, shopkeepers and rickshaw drivers)

What was the impact of the experience?

'Tremendous - the experience of a lifetime. For example, one student talked about 'his hairs standing on end whilst watching a religious ceremony. Students will never forget this experience.'

'Students were even more enthusiastic about questioning, learning and the subject of Religious Studies.'

Follow up:

The students assisted by teachers, organised a presentation evening for parents, school staff, governors and other students. Students also brought their experiences and insights to the classroom, enriching the quality and effectiveness of peer teaching, confronting stereotypes and augmenting their 'text-book' knowledge.

Contacts and links:

<http://www.kingsbridgecollege.org.uk/news-events/india.htm> (students' report on the trip, with photos)

http://www.ststravel.co.uk/tour-destinations/Asia/india_tours.asp

<http://www.kuoni.co.uk/>