

Planning an Adult Family Vacation? Consider India!

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PLANNING AN ADULT FAMILY VACATION? CONSIDER INDIA!

By Judi Cohen

BIG BLEND RADIO INTERVIEW: On this episode, world traveler and travel writer Judi Cohen shares her adventures in India, and offers some fantastic tips on planning an adult family vacation in India. Listen or download the podcast on **[BlogTalkRadio.com](#)**, **[Spreaker.com](#)**, **[YouTube.com](#)**, or **[Soundcloud.com](#)**.



You're tasked with the daunting job of planning a family vacation with your adult children. Usually, destinations like Florida, Mexico, and France come to mind. Well, what about India!?

Our family, with children in their 30's have done two trips to India. We've come back from both eager to return! While I could never have imagined doing this kind of trip with my parents, for the right kind of family, these are opportunities to bond and see this incredible country together.

In this article, I'll give you tips on how to build a trip for your adult family, as well as advice to keep your itinerary authentic, off-the-beaten-path, and customizable.

WHERE SHOULD YOU GO?

Your first question will probably be "where should we go?". It's a great question because India is a huge country with 29 states.

You'll need a sense from your family about what kind of trip they're looking for. It's best if you can plan the "where" of the trip together – either in person, or do a Skype call, whatever works! The more you listen, and incorporate something for everyone, the more successful your trip will be.

There's a good chance you'll want to see the top tourist spots within the "Golden Triangle" (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) for a first-time visit.

But you'll also want to get a read on how open your family is to go off-the-beaten-path. A great option is to begin or end your trip off the usual tourist circuit. For instance, on our last trip, we visited Bikaner and Jaisalmer, as well as Varanasi. On our previous trip, we started with a quirky cruise along the Brahmaputra River in Assam.

TRAVEL AGENTS & GUIDES

While many families want pre-designed packaged trips, we prefer to work with a travel agent in India building on our individual interests and experience. That way, we can customize the itinerary with some off-the-beaten-path destinations.

On our first family trip, we combined a luxury tour of Kolkata, Delhi, Agra, and Rajasthan with an 8-night cruise along the Brahmaputra River. For our recent trip, we had a driver for 8 days, arranged with Delhi-based Shikhar Travel. Using our travel dates, and suggestions from our family, we worked with Shikhar to design a suitable itinerary.

India can be difficult and a local agent is just a call away. Even with the perfect itinerary, you'll probably be faced with delayed flights and schedule adjustments, or weather that's too hot or too cold (on our last visit, we encountered the coldest weather in over 120 years) necessitating changes!

HOTELS & ACCOMMODATIONS

You'll have the option to stay in newer hotels, which cater to business travellers, or you can stay in one of the heritage palaces. We prefer the latter, where you can imagine yourself living like a Maharajah or Maharani or get a feel of a bygone British, Mughal or Rajput era. While you may not have amenities like a swimming pool or a business center, you will have much more charm, history, and authenticity.

There's nothing like spending a long, hot, day in the streets and then coming back to our "palace for the night", for dinner in one of the fine restaurants often located in the hotel's courtyard.

One tip is that having breakfast included is a must so that you can start each day with a healthy, filling, meal.



Alison in the interior of the Brijrama Palace, Varanasi. Photo- Dustin Cohen and At the entrance to the Laxmi Niwas Palace, Bikaner. Photo Judi Cohen



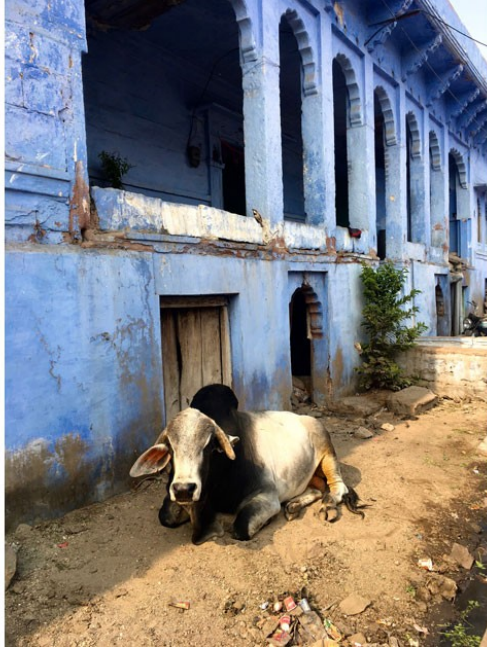
Children of Tea Plantation Workers in Assam on the banks of the Brahmaputra River. Photo- Alison Cohen



Dhobi Ghat- Outdoor Laundry, Mumbai .jpeg Photo_ Alison Cohen



Family Camel Ride in Thar Desert, Jaisalmir



Jodphur the blue city with its cows and Karni Mata Rat Temple Bikaner



Family dressed in traditional Clothing in Assam and Judi and Lawrence in the Cloud Room at Bikaner Fort. Photo- Alison Cohen



Manikarnika Ghat - Varanasi credit Alison Cohen



Our family at the Taj Mahal in Agra. Photo- Val Macklin and The Brijrama Palace Hotel along the Ganges in Varanasi



Part of the Sweet Table at our New Years Gala Party in Jaisalmir. Photo- Judi Cohen and Sadhu on the ghats in Varanasijpg. Photo Alison Cohen



Rare One-Horned Rhino in Kaziranga National Park on our Brahmaputra River Cruise in Assam. Photo- Alison Cohen



Sweatered Goat on a Ghat in Varanasi. Photo - Judi Cohen



Panoramic view of the Mehrangarh Fort from our rooms at the RAAS Hotel, Jodhpur. Photo- Judi Cohen, and Typical street scene in Bikaner in front of the fort. Photo - Dustin Cohen

OUR FAMILY'S HIGHLIGHTS:

Aside from the Golden Triangle (where you'll see Delhi's ancient Chandnhi Chowk market and the Taj Mahal in Agra), we've enjoyed:

- **Staying at the Brijrama Palace and visiting the Ghats in Varanasi**

Varanasi is one of India's oldest and holiest cities. At night, it reminds me of being on a Mad Max film set with billowing smoke from funeral pyres. Indians from all over the country bring their dead relatives here. You'll see throngs of pilgrims in colorful garb praying and bathing along the ancient steps (ghats) that lead down to the Ganges River.

The Brijrama Palace, located directly on the river is admittedly expensive but was worth the splurge for the boat ride and leisurely walk along the ghats at sunset. It's a good idea to book a guide to help navigate the winding alleyways. Your guide will give you the "do's" and "don'ts" about getting close to the fascinating funeral pyres on the Manikarnika Ghat while being respectful to the mourners.

- **Braving the Rat Temple (Not for the faint of heart)**

Visiting the Karni Mata Temple in the town of Deshnok is not for the faint of heart. With 20,000 holy rats scampering around, we learned the legend of how members of the Charin caste are reincarnated as rats and then reincarnated from rats into members of the family who look after the temple and cares for the rats.

- **The Blue City of Jodhpur**

The RAAS Hotel is an experience unto itself. Access is by tuk-tuk through the narrow old city streets. Our rooms had a panoramic view of the majestic Mehrangarh Fort, one of the largest in India, as well as the historic Toorji Step-Well. Many tour itineraries do not include a stop in Jodhpur – however, our family returned twice to this charming Rajistani city. We've enjoyed taking slow walks down from the fort through the blue coloured buildings and back streets of the old city.

- **New Years in the Thar Desert**

Ring in the New Year with a family camel ride in the Thar Desert sand dunes followed by a gala New Year's Eve dinner and Bollywood style party at the ultra-luxury Suryagarh Hotel in Jaisalmer was a memorable family experience.

- **Cruising the Brahmaputra in Assam**

For our adventurous family, taking a small ship 8-night cruise aboard the M.V. Mahabaahu along the Brahmaputra River was the highlight of our first family trip to India. We enjoyed learning about the Assamese culture, safaris in Kaziranga National Park, and visiting small

villages along the river not accustomed to seeing tourists.

- **Lively Mumbai**

We felt the pulse of the city while staying at the storied Taj Mahal Palace Hotel overlooking the Gateway to India. Mumbai “must-sees” include Dhobi Ghat, the largest outdoor laundry in the world, Knightsbridge Railway Station, and the Dabbawallas who incredibly deliver 250,000 lunches to office workers daily, and the Elephanta Island Caves.

I hope this article has been helpful as you consider a family trip to India, and whether you decide to return or not, you will have had an experience unlike anywhere else on Earth. That’s a promise!

Judi Cohen has travelled the world in search of unique experiences and off-the-beaten-path destinations. She is also a connoisseur of small-ship cruises that pack big adventure, along with cultural and dining experiences. Judi became a full-time traveller and travel advisor in 2015 following her 35-year career in Infrastructure and Transportation, and today she writes about her experiences to inspire others to step outside their comfort zones and embrace new kinds of adventures. Judi has been to over 90 countries on six continents and enjoys sharing her stories along the way. Her training and experience as a Health Coach and as a Travel Advisor allows her to plan trips and seek out wellness and adventure destinations and experiences. She is an accomplished Travel Writer accredited by SATW, NATJA and IFWTWA, and her work has been published on travel websites. Follow her adventures at <https://travelingjudi.com/>

