

As Seen Around India

When you visit India, you have to keep a good sense of humor. There are little surprises everywhere -- some truly delightful. Here are some photos for you to enjoy....

Remember the photo in the Boghgaya vignette that showed temple flowers? These flowers are changed daily. Multiply this by just about every temple in India -- which are probably too many to count. What happens to these blooms ???



They become delicious and colorful food for wandering and sacred cows! And they in turn, provide the dung that many rural people use as fuel for fire to cook and heat their homes.

India is trying to deal with its garbage issues. Some states have banned plastic bags; historic sites have rubbish bins and some communities have recycling bins.





As a sign of respect, we are asked to take off our shoes at all temples and some historic sites. Having had a pair of my brand new Keens stolen at the Dalai Lamas temple in Dharamsala a few years ago, I don't mind it a bit when there is a shoe-keeper that we pay. In some places, shoes are kept in an alcove with numbered shelves and spaces, and other places, it is just an old man hanging around hoping to be offered a few rupees for the service.

I like it when the rate is posted - but this is an old sign. The going rate is now 10 rupees or about 15 cents for one or two pair.



And there isn't enough money in the world to pay for some services.

Pilgrims from all over the world come to Northern India to do the Buddhist Circuit. Many are in constant battle with authorities at archaeological sites as those from Southeast Asia (especially Thailand and Myanmar) like to pay tribute by putting gold-leaf foil on the holy stones. This is customary in those countries and many their statues have so much gold on them they have become deformed and now resemble blobs.



Even monks disregard the signs!

In years to come, these old bricks will probably be encrusted in gold.





Gouri Shankar (L) is our guide in Chattisgarh and Pradeep (R) is our driver. Shankar is the first guide I've had that explained some aspects of Hinduism so I could understand them, and I've been to India over 15 times!

He gave us the best explanation of why there are so many erotic sculptures and details on ancient temples. For example, on this 11th century beauty in Bhoramdeo about 85% of its sculptures can be considered erotic.

During the times of princely states, the kings wanted to build armies. So the sculptures were graphic suggestions for people to go home and get busy. They were teaching tools!



Jewelry

In Chattisgarh, there are no banks, so women buy silver coins, wear it to keep it safe, and if they need money, they sell one of the pieces. If things are going well for them, they buy more coins and have the necklace re-strung at the local market. The cost of the coins depends on weight and start at 1000 rupees (about \$15.) and up.



Members of the Gond ethnic group wear a heavy silver bracelet on each upper arm. It is sold by weight and the pair ranges from 8000 rupees (\$125.) and up.



And finally.....



Varanasi has a reputation.....

Some things are better left unsaid.... like the name of this ironworks company.

