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My trip to India

Elisa Leonelli · Tuesday, May 15th, 2018

Ancient India had fascinated me since my hippie days in Rome, so, once I was in the travel photography phase of my life, I planned an extended trip to that continent.



Jama Masjid Mosque. Delhi, India (c) Elisa Leonelli 1984

We started in Delhi, the capital city, timing our arrival for Republic Day parade, January 26.



Boats on Ganges. Benares, India © Elisa Leonelli 1984

Then on to Benares (Varanasi) on the Ganges, where we witnessed men's ritual bathing in the holy river, despite te dead cow carcasses floating about.



Leogryph. Kahjuraho, India © Elisa Leonelli 1984

In Kajuraho we marveled at the 10th century Chandella temples covered with carvings, some of an erotic nature.



Fatehpur Sikri-Agra, India © Elisa Leonelli 1984

In Agra we visited the ghost town of Fatehpur Sikri, built in 1570 by Akbar the Great. And the [Taj Mahal](#), built in 1638 by another Moghul Emperor, Shah Jahan, as a magnificent tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz.



Taj Mahal-Agra, India © Elisa Leonelli 1984

We traveled through Rajasthan, to Jaipur, the Pink City built in 1727 by Maharaja Jai Singh, to Jodhpur founded in 1459, and to Udaipur, where we stayed at the Lake Palace Hotel, built in 1754.



Colva Beach- Goa, India (c) Elisa Leonelli 1984

My travel companion returned to Los Angeles, and I continued solo for several more weeks, traveling south to Bombay (Mumbai) and to Goa, a Portuguese colony from 1510 until 1961. Then to Cochin in Kerala and to Madurai in Tamil Nadu.



Young dancer-Madras, India-©-Elisa Leonelli 1984

In Madras (Chennai), the capital of Tamil Nadul and fourth largest city in India, after Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta (Kolkata), I was greeted by a friendly woman at the local tourist office. I inquired as to where I could photograph the classical Indian dancers of South India, and she invited me to her house, where her 10-year-old daughter was an expert practitioner of Bharatanatyam.



Shore Temple-Mahabalipuram, India © Elisa Leonelli 1984

From there I hired car and driver to visit the 7th century shore temple of Mahabalipuram, and stayed overnight to enjoy the sunset light on the beach.



Indian man-Agra, India © Elisa Leonelli 1984

In the modern city of Bangalore I was invited to a traditional Hindu wedding by TV actor Kabir Bedi, whose niece was getting married. From there I visited a 13th century temple near Mysore.



Young Buddhist monks-Katmandu, Nepal © Elisa Leonelli 1984

On my way back, I stopped in Kathmandu, Nepal, a haunting place high up in the Himalayas, at the border with China. It was a fitting ending to an unforgettable adventure.



Farm house-Kathmandu Valley, Nepal © Elisa Leonelli 1984

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