

"Gory," people shout on the streets. Here is India as seen by an "OG" correspondent

EDITORIAL NOTE. Shortly before Inn prom 2016, an international industrial exhibition in Yekaterinburg, Russia, and "OG" launched a series of materials, dedicated to the main partner of the event - India. On the eve of the exhibition our correspondent visited three Indian states. The first cycle material was devoted to industrial facilities (issue of July, 5th), today - the story is about India as viewed by a tourist.

Olga Koshkina

Well-kept offices and workshops of participant enterprises at Inn prom in Delhi, Pune and Bangalore, with automated equipment and concentrated faces of "white and blue collar workers" stand in contrast to the life outside: bursting with colors, buzz, motion and smell, the life that is sometimes unpredictable. Palaces and high-rises neighbor with ram shackled slums that look like ghosts from the past centuries; wide autobahns are adjacent crowded narrow streets, signs of European boutiques stand alongside resounding advertisements of street vendors. It seems that India is literally woven from such contrasts ...

Streets

You can re-read "Shantaram" by Gregory David Roberts for several times, but in order to appreciate the true India, it is necessary to visit its heart. Here, cutting off a "Fiat", a yellow-green rickshaw (three-wheeled motorcycle) is speeding past followed by a family of four people on a two-wheeled motorcycle. Ten meters far from the place, on the side of the road, a local resident sells helmets for motorcyclists. At some distance one can see stalls with mangoes, bananas and coconuts at the price of 15 rupees*, tubs full of Indian donuts "Gulabjamun" and rickshaws with ice cream. Nearby an unattended cow and a buffalo are grazing off fruit residues that kind-hearted citizens feed to them. One of the vendors burns incense in his shop hoping to attract buyers. And behind his workplace there



Thousands of pilgrims came to Pune at the annual festival "Palkhi". They brought things, and they brought them on their heads

is a meter high mountain of garbage. By the way, you can see the same pile of garbage at roadside ditches, railway embankments, and backyards, especially in poor quarters. With the advent of plastic packaging, residents continue to litter on the streets in the same old way, and modern centralized systems of garbage collection and disposal still do not exist in most Indian cities. Local authorities have repeatedly tried to clean the streets, but it is still impossible to change the habits of countrymen. For this reason it is necessary to mind your step while walking. In new elite residential areas there is no such a problem because garbage is cleaned regularly there.

People

The hardest thing to get used to how people stare at you, and the farther from the city center you are - the more you are looked at as if were a GODora wondrous animal. After five minutes on a street of Delhi where about fifty by passers nearly broke their necks turning their heads to stare at us, my colleague advised me to take off my hat. It turned out that the hat is not the point. The point is that Indians are very welcoming and friendly, and their perceptions of private space are slightly different from ours. That is why they do not hide their interest in tourists, calling their guests ["gory"] "white" or ["yangrezi"] "Englishman" and willingly making

"Those who don't have money to buy a house in the city spend the night right on the ground at the roadside - God bless the warm Indian climate!"

commemorative pictures. Once we allowed local teenagers to take a picture with us, and a minute later on a city street there was crowd around us of those who wanted to be photographed with tourists, creating a traffic jam on the road.

The same situation happens in all tourist sites. Once you lose concentration somebody pulls at your arm and shouts 'Hello!' and 'Madam!' and 'Let me show you something!', being absolutely sure that you won't survive here without a wooden snake, a plastic bracelet or a miniature copy of the Taj Mahal. Fighting your way free is useless - a new portion of merchants will appear in a second. Now, there is nothing to be done but go through the crowd with a straight face, tightly clutching your bag to your body.

Accommodation

Old houses peacefully stays side by side with new buildings: slums, wrapped in wire networks, tarpaulin and motley cloths, don't make any obstacle for building high-rises that have been sprouting like mushrooms after summer rains for the last few years. India is the second most populated country in the world, that is why every square meter

costs a fortune here. The price of a villa or a two-bedroom flat in an elite residential area amounts to tens of millions. The cheapest accommodation can be found in slums, but even here the cost of one square meter exceeds one thousand dollars. Those who don't have money to buy a house in the city spend the night on pieces of cardboard or right on the ground at the roadside - bless the warm Indian climate. We were told that these are not homeless people but workers from the countryside who came to the city to work.

Transport

- You need courage and a quick eye to drive on Indian roads, - says the taxi driver with laugh, recklessly swerving to the opposite lane. Caution signs don't make any difference for drivers: there seems to be no traffic regulations at all. The most important thing is to keep honking all the time. Maybe, that's why there are so few expensive cars: roads are filled with more maneuverable motorcycles, auto- and bicycle rickshaws. Several years ago, rickshaws were about to be banned but their owners Vehemently protested since for many of them rickshaws are the only means of earning money and transportation. To go for a ride on a rickshaw costs next to nothing while the labor of a rickshaw man who has to pedal his vehicle costs much more. A trip with a smiling rickshaw man to the main

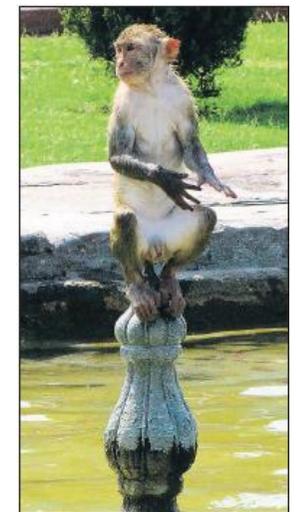


On the roads of Delhi, the most popular means of transport are motorcycle, rickshaw and car.

attraction of Delhi - the triumphal arc "Gateway of India" - cost us 50 rupees and added a few grey hairs: every second the cyclist runs the risk to get into an accident. We had to relearn how to cross the street: even at the crosswalk you have to wave to reckless drivers asking them to give you the way.

Souvenirs

Pankaj Saran, Indian Ambassador to Russia, advised us to buy high-quality tea, coffee, joss sticks and well-known Indian shawls and kerchiefs in a state-run store in Connaught Place or in a roofed market center with fixed prices. For example, half a kilo of tea Assam or Darjeeling made in the state of Karnataka costs about 300-500 rupees, the same tea in wooden gift boxes is about more than one hundred rupees. For cashmere kerchief you'll have to pay from 500 to 1500 rupees. Seeking out local colors you should go to a local market. If you do good bargaining, you will be able to knock down the price to the half for all goods - from a magnet to a leather bag. Unlike in Russia, there are no mugs or plates with "Made in China" on the back side: everything is manufactured in India and almost everything is handmade. India and almost everything is handmade. There are no stiff prices. A plain wooden elephant goes for more than 150 rupees



Olga Koshkina

while the same elephant of sandalwood is ten times more expensive.

