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Maharajas' Express: Super luxury train voyage, celebrity included

Luxury rail travel now comes with celebrities, such as writer Mark Tully regaling you with stories of India on your eight-day, old-world train journey across the subcontinent

By Sita Wadhvani | 29 March, 2010

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The Maharajas' Express train is currently on its maiden voyage on the Kolkata-Gaya-Varanasi-Bandavgarh-Khajuraho-Gwalior-Agra-Delhi route.

Now that the Indian Railways tourism company has given a private sector partner permission to operate a luxury passenger train on its tracks, travelers can experience India more comfortably and at a rail's pace.



The Safari Bar. Maharajas' Express, a pan-India super luxury train which CNNGo previewed in October 2009, was finally flagged off for its debut run by the Minister for Railways, Mamata Banerjee on March 20 at Kolkata Station.

On its 'Celestial India Tour', an eight-day itinerary on the Kolkata-Gaya-Varanasi-Bandavgarh-Khajuraho-Gwalior-Agra-Delhi route, it covers Buddhist and Hindu religious places at Bodh Gaya and Varanasi, the forest jungles of Bandavgarh, the rock cut temples of Khajuraho, the Gwalior fort and the Taj Mahal at Agra.

The best part, other than the turbaned butlers and plushy interiors with books on polo strewn round the Safari Bar, is that selected journeys will come with a celebrity inclusive! For example, you could have eminent journalist and writer, Sir Mark Tully for a travel companion. Tully has an enviable knowledge and a lifetime of anecdotes on Indian history and culture, which he will present as a series of talks. Or celeb chef Vivek Singh from the Cinammon Club in London cooking you and your 84 other rail riders your every meal, eight days in a row.



Mayur Mahal restaurant. The itineraries include the Celestial India Tour, the Classical India Tour (the Celestial India tour in the reverse with minor changes), The Princely India Tour (an eight-day itinerary that will follow

the Mumbai-Vadodara-Udaipur-Jhodhpur-Bikaner-Jaipur-Ranthambore-Agra-Delhi route) and the Royal India Tour (the Princely India tour in the reverse with minor changes).

The cost per journey on the Princely India Tour and Celestial India tour begins from US\$6,400 per person on twin-sharing basis to US\$20,000 in a Presidential Suite. The cost per journey on the Royal India Tour and Classical India Tour begins from US\$5,600 per person on twin-sharing basis to US\$17,500 in a Presidential Suite.

For bookings, visit Royale Indian Rail Tours (though it sounds like you may have to wait till September for the first free slot).



The Maharajas' Express is operated by Royale Indian Rail Tours Ltd (RIRTL), a joint venture between Cox and Kings (India) Ltd and Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).