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Subject: Fwd: MAX Weekly Newsletter – MAX Cruise on Virgin, Cuba, Miami, and St. Patrick's Day Is Sunday Part 2/3

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Weekly Newsletter Part 2/3 - March 12, 2019

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MAX STORIES

MAX India Part IV: THE PEARLS IN INDIA'S NECKLACE

by Phil Walker



After visiting Delhi and the Taj Mahal in Agra, we were off to visit the 2 most beautiful cities in northern India-- Jaipur and Udaipur.

Jaipur is called "The Pink City." It got that title because all of the buildings and walls are painted a shade of pink. (Actually, I thought it was more Santa Fe Sienna, but who am I to say?) Jaipur is centered on an outdoor astrological observatory; palaces with carved windows so the female inhabitants could look out but not be seen inside; a hunting lodge palace, which appears to float in the middle of a lake; and elephants.



One of the greatest highlights of our trip was spending an afternoon with elephants. We painted, fed, bathed, and then rode them. If you have never been near these remarkable, gentle creatures, this was a powerful and moving experience. Humans are naturally drawn to them.

Gary Thackeray was king of the Mahoots (elephant trainers). James Claffey demonstrated his style while riding a female, and Brian Richards showed his artistic flair while painting a forehead. Refat looked like the "Jungle Boy" atop his elephant.

For photos of Jaipur:

[Jaipur Video 1](#)

[Jaipur Video 2](#)

[Jaipur Video 3](#)



After Jaipur, several of us traveled to the peak of our trip: Udaipur and the Taj Lake Palace Hotel. Udaipur is known as the City of Lakes. An Indian prince owned the area. The area was dry. He wanted to own a palace which floated in the middle of a lake. So, he had his summer palace built on a hilltop and flooded the valleys around. As a result, the area is now home to a major lake with a palace floating in the middle--the Taj Lake Palace Hotel.

Udaipur is magnificent! Once the prince built his palace, other royals came and built their own palaces surrounding the lake. As a result, at night, the illuminated palaces form a necklace around the lake. You spend your time there taking boat tours of the lake, dining at magnificent outdoor restaurants, and touring the City Palace (where Octopussy was filmed).

Photos of Udaipur:

[Udaipur Video](#)



The Taj Lake Palace Hotel is the number 1 hotel in the world. This hotel was the Raja's summer palace, created to look like it floated in the middle of the lake. The Raja invited Jackie Kennedy Onassis to visit the palace. She loved it and told him: "You should turn this into a hotel." He did.

The week before our arrival, the King of Saudi Arabia had held the wedding for one of his sons at the Taj Lake Palace Hotel. (I must have been traveling when my invitation was sent...)

We found ourselves at the Taj Lake Palace through sheer luck. The normal price of the hotel is \$1,100 per night. Too much, so we decided to have dinner there. When we called to make a reservation, we were told that only hotel guests could dine there. Luckily, it was a Sunday, and the hotel was not too busy. James and

Phil looked at each other and said, "What do you think?" They went onto [hotels.com](https://www.hotels.com) and were able to get a room for \$430.00. Then, when they applied their [hotels.com](https://www.hotels.com) credits, the cost came down to \$260.00. Done!



That night turned out to be the absolute high point of the India trip. You take a boat to get to the hotel. When you arrive, a turbaned doorman escorts you, holding a large Indian ceremonial umbrella over you. The rooms were heavenly. Celebrities lounged by the pool. (This is the hotel where Anderson Cooper and his partner, Ben Masani, stayed when they were mending their relationship after the paparazzi took pictures of Ben Masani canoodling with his former boyfriend in Central Park while Anderson was in Yugoslavia with Kelly Ripa...)



Phil had his astrology done by an Indian astrologer in his 70's who was a former Chemical Engineer (very good reading). Gin and tonics were drunk while Rajahastani singers and dancers performed folk dances on the terrace and sunset fell.



That evening, Phil, James, and Refat dined on the roof of the hotel. With sitar music playing in the background, they sat having cocktails looking out across the lake at the illuminated palaces where Octopussy had been filmed. While they grew hungry smelling lamb being roasted outdoors, they could hear the sounds of the Hindu Durga Puja Celebration going on in the streets of the City. The streets were filled with people banging drums, chanting, and dancing amid flashing lights behind the statue of a Hindu goddess.



Finally, at exactly 11 p.m., all of the lights on the illuminated palaces went out. The night was plunged into darkness. Only candles flickered on each table atop the roof of the Taj Lake Palace. James called for a nightcap and savored sitting in the number 1 hotel in the world.

The next afternoon we departed. To say that James, Phil, and Refat practically had to be dragged out of the Taj Lake Palace would be an understatement. You have never seen 3 sadder faces than when they boarded the boat to be taken to land and driven to the airport.

Photos of Taj Lake Palace Hotel:

[Taj Lake Palace Hotel Video 1](#)

[Taj Lake Palace Hotel Video 2](#)

That afternoon, they flew from Udaipur to Delhi where they rested several hours. And then, at 2 a.m., their

flights departed for the US.

MAX is hosting two trips to India in 2019. The first runs from March 28 through April 13, 2019. Ten people are currently signed up for that trip. It will retrace most of the steps of the first MAX India trip and add in a new destination--Neemrana Fort Palace--a fort from the 1400s which has been renovated into a luxury hotel by a gay couple from Delhi.

MAX will host a second trip to India in the first two weeks of November 2019. That trip will head to the Pushkar Camel Fair--a gathering of thousands of nomads and camel traders/herders in Northern India. The festival is filled with magicians, snake charmers, astrologers, hypnotists, musicians, camel races, camel decorating, and religious ceremonies. Some have called it "Burning Man on Acid!" That trip will also feature Delhi, the Taj Mahal, and the Taj Lake Palace Hotel. For information, email Phil Walker at phil@askphilwalker.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March Third Thursday Thursday, March 21st at 5:30 p.m.



Join MAX SF at Beaux Bar from 5:30 pm to 8 pm for MAX's "Third Thursday". Join a superb crowd of gay men and their friends for food, conversation, and spectacular performances at the nearby piano. Tasty cocktails at happy hour prices! Appetizers provided!

Admission is \$5; complimentary for dues-paying members.

RSVP on Meetup [here](#) for a fun time! Or if you prefer, click [here](#) to RSVP on the website.

MAX Goes to *Hamilton*! Thursday, March 21st at 6:15 p.m.



Join MAX for the musical and cultural phenomenon that is *Hamilton*!

Hamilton tells the story of America's Founding Father Alexander Hamilton. Featuring a score that blends hip-hop, jazz, blues, rap, R&B, and Broadway, *Hamilton* is the story of American then, as told by America now. In 2016 *Hamilton* received a record-setting 16 Tony nominations, winning 11, as well as receiving a 2016 Grammy Award and the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. For more information about the SHN production of *Hamilton*, please click [here](#).

The show starts at 7:00 pm. **For attendees from MAX, a VIP reception will be held in the Orpheum Theater Blue Room starting at 6:15 pm.**

Buy your tickets for the 7:00 pm March 21st performance [here](#). Orchestra tickets start at \$246 and mezzanine tickets start at \$214 (no discounts are available for *Hamilton*).

Then register on our website [here](#) to **RSVP for the MAX pre-show VIP reception in the Orpheum Theater Blue Room.**

For any questions or for help with ticket availability, please contact the event champion and MAX SF liaison to SHN, MAX SF Board Member Nick Wade at wade.nicky@yahoo.com.

SHN Orpheum Theatre
1192 Market St., San Francisco

SFGMC: The Brits Are Coming Friday, March 22nd at 8:00 p.m.



Join MAX SF Community Partner, the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus (SFGMC) for a salute to our British friends and the extraordinary music and artists they have shared with us.

Accompanied by a five-piece band, SFGMC will take audiences on a vibrant and varied journey into British music legacies from **Handel** and Sir William Walton to **The Beatles** and **Adele** to **Sir Elton John** and, of course, **Queen!**

Grab your mates for a smashing evening of memorable music, cheeky humor, and the posh stylings of 300 queens (minus Elizabeth).

Special guests from the African-American Shakespeare Company join in the fun with their twist on a rousing scene from the classic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

To purchase tickets, please click [here](#).

Davies Music Hall
201 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

March Fourth at Finn Sunday, March 24th at 3:00 p.m.



Join us at Finn Town for our March **Fourth at Finn!** Enjoy a fun afternoon of conversation, cocktails and delicious appetizers thanks to the wonderful team at one of our favorite Castro hotspots.

MAX Board member Nick Wade will be hosting the event, and we'll have our own private space at the back of the restaurant. Held on the fourth Sunday of each month, MAX SF's Fourth at Finn events provide an opportunity to get to know other men in the MAX community in a friendly space.

RSVP on Meetup [here](#) for a fun Sunday afternoon! Or if you prefer, RSVP on the website [here](#). There is no cover charge.

My Favorite Place: 54 Mint Ristorante Italiano Thursday, March 28th at 5:30 p.m.



Join MAX SF Board Member Nick Wade for our March installment of our new monthly dinner series, *My Favorite Place*. Join Nick at one of his favorite restaurants, 54 Mint.

Mint 54 is a wonderful Roman Trattoria. Mint 54 provides a true Italian experience from the very attentive (and exceptional) Italian staff, to the truly original magnificent Roman cuisine. The fresh pasta and deserts are made daily. View the Mint 54 menu [here](#).

Enjoy an evening of delicious Italian dining with other men from the MAX community and find out why Nick loves 54 Mint. *According to another MAX SF Board member, the feeling is mutual; 54 Mint absolutely adores Nick.*

To reserve your space, a \$25 non-refundable deposit towards the cost of your meal is required. Click [here](#) to pay the deposit and reserve your space.

Space is limited to 10 people, please reserve your spot TODAY.

Once registered, If you find you are unable to attend, please let Nick know so that he can adjust the reservation.

Reservations close Tuesday March 26th.

54 Mint Ristorante Italiano
16 Mint Plaza, San Francisco

MAX India: Delhi, Taj Mahal, Jaipur, and Udaipur March 28th-April 13th



MAX INDIA FOR \$1,644.00! (16 Days)

10 From MAX Are Going to India On This Trip!

"Spectacular!"

"Absolute best trip of my lifetime!"

"The most incredible trip of our lifetimes!"

- MAX India Tour members, 2018

In a little over two weeks, ten members of the MAX community will travel to India. The MAX 2019 India trip will be filled with 5-star hotels for \$100 per night, sights such as the Taj Mahal (truly, the most beautiful building in the world), restaurants selected by an Indian Food Blogger, handsome Indian men, tea in a Maharajah's palace, cooking class in an Indian home, a moving day decorating, bathing, and riding elephants, temples, holy men, the group's own Tour Guide and drivers, a doctor traveling with the group, cocktails served poolside by turbaned waiters, and the smells of roasting meat and spices as the travelers dine on the roof of the world's number one hotel, the Taj Lake Palace, listening to sitar music while gazing through the night sky at the lake below and illuminated palaces above.

EXCLUSIVE DINNERS WITH AMAN NATH AND PRINCE MANVENDRA SINGH GOHIL

During the trip, the travel group will be visiting with two India gay rights leaders, Aman Nath and Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil.

[Aman Nath](#) and his partner, Francis Wacziarg, restored the Neemrana Fort outside Delhi into a magnificent jewel hotel dating from the 1300's (the travel group will be staying there). The renovation was so successful that they went on to restore and own 25 additional hotels across India.

In addition to restoring hotels, Aman joined 5 others in June 2016 to challenge the Colonial-era Indian law that outlawed homosexuality – Section 377. In 2018, the Indian Supreme Court unanimously declared the law unconstitutional and legalized homosexuality in India.

[Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil](#) is a long-time friend of MAX. MAX hosted a fundraiser for him in 2017 to help support his opening of the first LGBT Center in India. Prince Manvendra is the first Indian royal to come out as gay. He has been featured on The Oprah Show two times as well as the BBC and India Times. Prince Manvendra now spends his time traveling the globe highlighting the struggle of all gay people for freedom.

The travel group will enjoy an afternoon tea with Aman Nath and a number of his friends in Delhi and will dine with Prince Manvendra in Udaipur.

The travelers will hear the amazing experiences of these two gay rights pioneers and what Western gay men can do to help our gay brothers and sisters in India.

THE TRIP:

Phil Walker will be the Tour Leader. He visited India twice in 2018. He loves India. It shows, as the 2019 trip incorporates all the special finds he and the group made in 2018.

Phil created an itinerary where MAX dues-paying members could book their trips for \$1,644.00 double occupancy or \$ 2,209.00 single occupancy. That itinerary includes \$578 for airfare SFO – Delhi, \$ 666 for hotels, \$100 for the tour leader, and \$ 100 to MAX (\$250 for non-members).

Phil will arrange for a guide and driver to take the group to the sites each day (for a cost of \$30 per person per day in addition to the fees above.) Most of the Tour Hosts are gay. Per Phil, they do all negotiating in Hindi, arrange transportation around the city, show us where the gay spots are, introduce us to friends, and tell us about gay life in India. Phil's Food Guide, Singh, is a food blogger who knows all the great restaurants of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur. Among the experiences, the group will dine on incredible northern Indian food at Pinch of Spice, and have cocktails and smoke hookah while listening to Sufi music overlooking Delhi's evening sky.

The MAX travel group will travel with a doctor who takes care of any medical needs a member of the group may have. (On our last trip, no one needed his help. The water in all the hotels is filtered. Everyone's stomach was fine.)

For information on this trip, just email Phil at phil@askphilwalker.com.

"This will be the trip of a lifetime. I promise." -- Phil Walker

DTLA (Downtown Los Angeles) March 29th - March 31st



Join MAX in exploring the revitalized and transformed downtown Los Angeles (DTLA). Over the last twenty years, downtown LA has transitioned to be a vibrant cultural destination with the city's most exciting restaurants, a slew of new indie shops, and a vibrant Art District.

On the last weekend of March, join event champion and travel leader Phil Carberry in exploring this dynamic neighborhood.

The weekend will be centered at the elegant historic [Millennium Biltmore](#) hotel, set in the heart of LA's vibrant cultural district. All planned group events will be within walking distance of this hotel.

Friday evening meet with your fellow travelers for drinks and dinner. If you can arrive by mid-afternoon on Friday, start the weekend with a visit to [The Broad](#), LA's most in-demand contemporary art museum. Be sure to reserve an admission ticket (click [here](#) for available times and reserve a ticket and visit [here](#) for tips to make the most of your visit).

On Saturday join your fellow travelers and take a [walking tour](#) of downtown LA. See Angels Flight, the shortest railway in the world, the architectural landmark Bradbury Building, and many other cultural and historic landmarks. Join the group again on Saturday evening for drinks and to hear about everyone's day and their exciting finds.

Join the group for Sunday brunch before you head back home or head out to explore more of Los Angeles.

Phil Carberry will be heading to Palm Springs on Sunday March 24th before heading to DTLA on the 29th. Phil can provide information on a discounted hotel option for fellow interested in joining him in Palm Springs before the trip to DTLA.

This will be a book-your own trip in which you book your own travel, hotel, and tours. That allows you to decide whether to stay at the Millennium Biltmore or at one of the many hip boutique hotels in the area. You can join the group for as many or few of the activities as you would like. Afternoon cocktails provides an opportunity to catch-up with your fellow MAX travelers and hear what everyone did that day.

Currently, if you register on the Millennium Biltmore hotel [website](#), a two night stay, March 29th - 31st, with the pre-paid non-refundable Spring Away this Winter rate, costs \$390, \$195 per night.

The fee to MAX for arranging this trip and for being part of this MAX travel group is \$25 for dues-paying members and \$40 for non-members.

Contact Phil Carberry at philcarb166@gmail.com for more information and for details on the planned itinerary. Phil can also provide information on travel options to downtown Los Angeles and information on alternative hotel options.

To reserve your space with this travel group (**limited to ten individuals**), contact Phil Carberry at philcarb166@gmail.com and pay the fee to MAX [here](#).

Contact Phil Carberry, reserve your space, and book your travel NOW, as the size of this travel group is limited, and travel prices are likely to go up.

MAX Goes to the Theatre: *Steve* Sunday, March 31st at 11:45 a.m./1:15 p.m.



Join MAX and the [New Conservatory Theatre Center](#) (NCTC), the premier LGBTQ theatre center in San Francisco, for the regional premiere of the tragicomedy *Steve*. Praised in a New York Times [Review](#) as the “some of the funniest dialogue in town”, ***Steve is a show not to be missed.***

After years with his Prince Charming, Steve finds himself bored with his “happily ever after”, his prince is sexting another man, his best friend is ill and he’s facing the expiration date on his desirability. Filled with musical theatre references, plenty of heart and quick wit, *Steve* is a funny and relatable comedy about growing up, without growing old.

For more details on joining MAX at *Steve*, and for the 20% off **MAX discount code**, please click [here](#).

NCTC shows sell out, so ***now is the time to purchase your tickets*** and plan to join MAX for a fun and entertaining afternoon.

Plan to arrive at 1:15pm to meet and greet fellow MAXers at the NCTC full bar!

Buy your tickets for the Sunday, March 31, 2:00pm performance [here](#). Then register [here](#) to let us know you’ll be attending so we can prepare a name tag for the pre-show MAX gathering at the NCTC bar.

Steve Pre-Show Brunch at 11:45 a.m.



There are only 2 spots left for the Pre-Show Brunch

Event champion Paul Munro is organizing a pre-show brunch at [Revelry](#), a nearby French-inspired bistro (8-minute walk from the theatre). Reservations are for 11:45am.

Space is limited! Registration and deposit required to join us for this pre-show dinner.

Please email Paul at paul.munro@maxsf.org if you are interested in joining us for this pre-show brunch.

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-- Paul Munro, Programs and Events Chair, MAX SF

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