

# Old Delhi - Like Nothing You Can Imagine

November 13, 2005

9:00 p.m. Delhi - It takes a visit to Old Delhi to fully appreciate that **this is a city of 13 million diverse, busy people.** Whereas New Delhi feels like Washington, D.C.—large government buildings, wide boulevards, tree-lined parks, police patrols, and a general sense of order. Old Delhi is chaotic, dense, dramatic, compelling, and unlike any place in the Western world.

Hundreds of streets (as narrow as five feet across) are teeming with bicycles, motor-rickshaws, horse-drawn carts, cows, motor scooters, tricycle rickshaws, tiny cars, thousands and thousands of people on foot, and the occasional elephant.



The biggest SUV in Delhi

Ancient five-story buildings line the streets, packed with tiny five-by-eight shops that spill into the crowd. Thicket of power cables and telephone wires grow like vines overhead. Occasionally monkeys and squirrels scamper across the lines. Street dogs wander along looking for scraps. And a rat darts here and there.

Beautiful women float along draped in brilliant, flowing colors. Laughing children scamper underfoot and workmen balance bolts of bright cloth, sacks of grain, piles of vegetables, or bundles of wood on their heads.

Muslim women, hidden in elegant black cloth with only their eyes revealed, move as fluidly through the crowds as proud Sikh men with their vibrant, bright turbans.

A melody of Hindi voices selling products, negotiating prices, and ordering food fills the air that is also steeped with smells: spices, cooking oil, charcoal, smoke, steaming vegetables, incense, and curried chicken.

What I didn't see or hear were crying children, parents yelling, anger, tension, shoving, rudeness, or anything other than gracious, busy people—a whole LOT of people!



Old Delhi street scene