

## Of endings and new beginnings

02.02.2018, Episode 38

### Owen in China

Hello, this is Owen and this is my podcast for Friday 2nd February, 2018. Happy New Year everyone! I hope 2018 got off to a good start for you and I hope you all had a nice Christmas. My time in India has come to an end. I made it back to Wales in time for Christmas as planned. Christmas is the perfect time to return home, isn't it? The family reunites [1], so everyone's in one place at the same time. And then there's all that good food and drink and the atmosphere is nice and festive [2].

Today, I'll be talking about the last part of my Indian adventure and we'll revisit one of the places I came across [3] during my time in India.

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For the last leg of my trip I travelled from Gujarat to Rajasthan. I was flying home from New Delhi and Rajasthan is the very large state in the north-east between New Delhi, Gujarat and Pakistan. I had to cross Rajasthan to get to New Delhi, so I thought I might as well check out a couple of places in the little time I had left. The whole state of Rajasthan is very popular with tourists because it's the stereotypical India we know from all the photos. It's where you can find all the beautiful forts which are like castles that are built on the top of hills. Rajasthan is also home to the Indian sand deserts. The camels and the men with colourful turbans and handlebar moustaches [4] are there. And the women covered in gold jewellery and the gypsies [5] and the snake charmers are all there as well. The images most people have in mind when they think of India are of Rajasthan.



My first stop in Rajasthan was Jodhpur. The city is built around a hill on top of which they built an absolutely enormous [6] fort. Below the fort is the old town. All the houses in the old town are painted an indigo blue, so the city is also called the Blue City. The views of the fort up on the hill from the old town are stunning, as are the views of the blue old town from the fort. I did a little tour of the fort and I have to admit, it was pretty amazing. I caught a bus to Jaisalmer after that. Jaisalmer is in the desert in the far west. It also has a fort, one that's even more beautiful than Jodhpur's in my opinion. The fort in Jaisalmer looks like a huge intricate [7] sandcastle.

And, unlike in Jodhpur, it's possible to actually stay inside the fort in Jaisalmer. The guesthouse I stayed in had a great rooftop terrace with 360 degree views of the desert. Apart from the fort, the desert is what people come to Jaisalmer for. You rent a couple of camels and a guide and you ride off [8] into sand dunes where you sleep on Persian rugs under the stars. That sounds nice, doesn't it? Well, unfortunately, it was incredibly cold when I was there and it rained non-stop. So no camel safari for me! I didn't really care though. It was right at the end of my trip and I was getting a little tired of it all. I was looking forward to going home and to Christmas and, to be honest, I was a little hesitant [9] about going to Rajasthan in the first place. I was almost dreading [10] it as I knew that Rajasthan would be crowded and busy and loud. I sort of knew what to expect and I wasn't that excited about going. I enjoyed it more than I thought I would though. I wasn't there for very long, so my time there was short and sweet [11].

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I've been thinking quite a lot about one of the places I visited in India. If you've been listening to my podcasts recently, you might remember me talking about an amazing building - the one that looks a bit like a huge golden golf ball. That building, you might recall [12], is in Auroville and Auroville has been on my mind [13] a lot. Why? Well, at the moment I don't have a clear plan of where I want to live next. I've been taking stock [14] of my time in China and my travels in India and now it's time to make some choices. It's quite a luxury to have lots of different options, but it makes it that much harder to decide. There are so many things to consider. Where would I like to live? What am I looking for? I've been asking myself all these questions. What's important to me? Do I want to be in a city? Or

somewhere quieter? Do I want to be close to home? Do I want to be an expat again? It's so difficult to answer any of these questions. I often find that I would ideally [15] like a bit of everything.

One thing I do know is that I'd like to live somewhere with a real sense of community, a place where I can really get to know the people around me. And that's why I've been thinking about Auroville a lot.



The community there is made up of an international group of creative, open-minded [16] and progressive [17] people from every corner of the world. They share common ideas and try to live in a communal way. There is a communal kitchen in Auroville that is a great example of this. It's the place where everyone goes for their lunch. It's where you can catch up every day with the whole community. The idea that you are close to everyone in your community is very attractive to me. So could I just move there? Well, when I was in Auroville, I met a Spanish woman who is in the process of [18] becoming a citizen [19] of Auroville. She was sick of her life back home; the long hours, the stress, the materialism and the anonymity of living in a big city. She packed her bags and left her old life behind and moved to Auroville for a life closer to nature, a healthier and simpler life and above all a more communal life. We've kept in touch and she's been keeping me up-to-date on her progress. It's not actually that easy to become a citizen of Auroville. You can't simply move there and be accepted into the community. You need to prove your worth [20] and show that you can contribute to the community. You're required to spend at least one year volunteering in Auroville and you need to make financial contributions during that time. After one year they decide whether or not you can become an 'Aurovillian', which is what they call their citizens. I don't think I'm ready for that just yet but just hearing about it has opened my eyes a little to some new possibilities.

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That's about all from me for this month. Thank you all for listening and thank you, Armin, for your comment. If you have a question you'd like to ask or a comment, please use the box below. You can find all our episodes on our website [podclub.ch](http://podclub.ch) or by downloading our app. You can also also download our vocabulary trainer and you can find me on Instagram using the hashtags #PodClubOwen and #oweninchina. Gerry will be back in two weeks. My next podcast will be on Friday 2nd March when I'll be talking about Greece. Until then, take care everyone. Goodbye!

### Glossar: Owen in China

[1] **to reunite:** to come together again

[2] **festive:** relating to a period of celebration, especially Christmas

[3] **to come across sth.:** to find sth. by chance

[4] **handlebar moustache:** a wide, thick moustache with the ends curving upwards so that it looks like a handlebar (the part of a bicycle that you hold on to)

[5] **gypsy:** a member of a travelling people

[6] **enormous:** very large

[7] **intricate:** very complicated or detailed

[8] **to ride off:** to travel away on an animal

[9] **hesitant:** unsure

[10] **to dread sth:** to expect sth. unpleasant to happen

[11] **short and sweet:** brief and pleasant

[12] **to recall:** to remember

[13] **to be on so.'s mind:** to think about a lot

[14] **to take stock:** to review, to examine (typically before making a decision)

[15] **ideally:** used for saying what one would like to happen if everything were possible

[16] **open-minded:** willing to consider new ideas

[17] **progressive:** here: liberal and in favour of change and innovation

[18] **to be in the process of doing sth.:** to continue with sth. one's already started

[19] **citizen:** a resident of a particular town or city

[20] **to prove one's worth:** to show others one's value