



Canal plus: All aboard for a voyage around the backwaters and beauty of Birmingham

Could there be a better parable of modern Britain? Approaching Birmingham at 3mph in a car and we'd be fidgeting, tooting our horns and snarling at other drivers. Approaching it at 3mph by canal - on a sleek, green 66ft narrowboat called Herring Gull - and there is no such stress. All is serenity as we glide along the Birmingham and Worcester Canal, past pubs and churches, fields of sheep, neat suburban gardens, joggers, cyclists and parents pushing buggies along the towpath. It's Middle England in miniature. A heron watches our progress from the bank. It is standing so still that at first

we think it's a garden statue. But then it suddenly lifts off, does a graceful swivel mid-air and flaps towards the sun, its wings tinged with gold - just one of a hundred vignettes we will take home from our weekend of lazy living. Some people associate canal holidays with the countryside, and many canals, such as the Kennet & Avon, do, indeed, have a pastoral charm. But when the waterways were dug, they were not built to be picturesque: they were industrial arteries linking cities such as Birmingham to the rest of England. Miss the cities and you miss the canals. The great thing about the canals in and around Birmingham is the way

they offer a near-perfect blend of urban and rural pleasures: you get a city-break weekend and a muddy-wellies weekend rolled into one. We board the Herring Gull at Alvechurch marina in Worcestershire, spend our first night moored beside a field with nothing to disturb us but the baa-ing of sheep, then chug gently onwards, towards the heart of the city. First, like burrowing moles, we must negotiate the 2,726-yard West Hill tunnel, one of the longest in the country. It is an eerie experience, inching through the dark with our headlight on, praying nothing comes towards us from the opposite direction - theoretically, there

is room for two boats to pass, but it's not something you want to test as a learner driver. But soon, we are out in the fresh air again, with the Birmingham skyline in the distance. Our route takes us past Birmingham University in past Cadbury World - so close we can smell the chocolate - past graffiti-covered walls, past Birmingham University with its Italianate tower, past suburban railway stations, past factories and churches and housing estates, until we get to fashionable Brindley Place, Birmingham's answer to London's Camden Market. This canalside development, teeming with shops and bars and restaurants, has transformed the

centre of the city. As we moor the Herring Gull, wander, potter, buy some antique jewellery from a woman on a canal boat, then tuck into organic burgers and a glass of pinot grigio, with jazz playing in the distance, there is a Bohemian feel to the day; city life at its most relaxed. We could happily have stayed there all day and all night, but, having been lured by the sheer variety of life on the canals, we board our boat again, do an inelegant three-point turn, jeered by onlookers, then head out of the city. Our route this time takes us along the Stratford-upon-Avon canal, a mazy backwater meandering through green fields and past the backs of gardens. Cats watch us from neatly mown lawns. The smell of sausages on a barbecue tempts. The canal is overhung by trees that seem to be kissing over our heads. It is all eerily quiet. Even the ducks on the bank

are fast asleep, their heads tucked into their chests. A boat called Sir Tristram meets us coming the other way. 'Lock in two miles,' says the bearded, weather-beaten skipper. The boat is his home, he explains, as we pass. He'd not live anywhere else if you paid him. A woman emerges from below deck with a mug of coffee and greets us with a seraphic smile. If canals are about scenery passing so slowly you can savour every detail, they are also about good fellowship; the give-and-take of strangers with time on their hands. No one is in too much of a hurry to say hello or to swap yarns about life on the canals. 'I used to have a boat of my own,' says the publican of one canal-side pub, in a broad Black Country accent. 'Trouble was, it

An evening with Dr. S.Y. Quraishi



(L to R) Dr. Surinder Singh Malhotra, Surender S. Dhall, Mohinder Singh Taneja



Sardana Family (Host) seen with Dr. S. Y. Quraishi



(L to R) Mrs. K. L. Sardana, Indu Jaiswal, Gunjan Desai, Dr. S. Y. Quraishi (Election Commissioner of India), Neeta Bhasin, Mr. Bhasin, Anupam Goenka

(Contd. from page 1) of India, world recognition of accuracy and fairness of the Indian Election process was the focal point of discussion. Prominent Long Island dignitaries like K. L. Sardana and family (Host), Dr. Surinder Singh Malhotra, Dr. Mohinder Singh Taneja, Indu Jaiswal, Bobby Kumar, Sharanjit Singh Thind, Kamlesh Mehta, Inder Bindra, Neeta Bhasin, Surender Singh Dhall, Dharam Aggarwal, Dr. Krishna Jhaveri along with several other community members graced the evening session, followed by dinner.

Indo-American Arts Council presents IAAC ERASING BORDERS 2011

Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Art of the Diaspora



Exhibition Starts:
September 19 - December 9,
2011 at Jorgensen Gallery,
Jorgensen Center for
Performing Arts, University
of Connecticut, Storrs, Ct.
Panel Discussion: November
29th,
3:30 pm Reception: November
29th, 6:00 pm Featured Artist
2011: Natvar Bhavsar
Curated by Vijay Kumar
IAAC Director of Exhibitions:
Tanu Jindal

Erasing Borders is a richly provocative exhibition by artists of the Indian diaspora who confront issues of sexuality, terror, disease, the environment, racial and sectarian politics in painting, prints, installations, video, and sculpture. With great technical mastery and diversity of theme and style, these works combine traditional Indian aesthetics with Western elements, and speak to the powerful experience of personal and cultural dislocation in the global village. In its eighth year, Erasing Borders is curated by Vijay Kumar and produced by the Indo-American Arts Council. Free and open to the public. Participating Artists: (Click on the artists name for details): Fasihu Ahsan, Mohammed Bari, Samanta Batra Mehta, Faren Butt, Amita Chatterjee, Sonia Chaudhary, Nandini Chirimar, Neil Chowdhury, Uday K Dhar, Reet Das, Delna Dastur, Anjali Deshmukh, Anujan Ezhikode, Aaliyah Gupta, Mansoor Hassan, Mumtaz Hussain, Tehniyet Hussain, Samina Iqbal, Nidhi Jalan, Sunita Jariwala-Gajjar, Reeta Gidwani - Karmarkar, Kulvinder Kaur Dhew, Aamir Khan Tarin, Srinivas Krishna, Shaurya Kumar, Shobha Menon, Rahul Mitra, Indrani Nayar-Gall, Kuzana Ogg, Avani Patel, Minna Philips, Antonio Puri, Talha Rathore, Rasika Reddy, Pinku Roy-Bari, Tara Sabharwal, Satyakam Saha, Pallavi Sharma, Sara Suleman, Roshani Thakore, MD Tokon, Prince Varughese Thomas

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