

## Squiz the World goes to... India

Each week, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Amanda Bower, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting one of the oldest civilisations in the world, the biggest democracy in the world, AND in 2023 it overtook China as the most populous country on Earth, with a whopping 1.44 billion people and the population is still growing.

Strap yourselves into the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at India ...

### JUST THE FACTS

If you imagine a triangle balancing upside down on its point, you've got the basic shape of India... Except that on the top right corner, there's a teensy thin strip of land that extends out and connects to another chunk of Indian territory.

As you'll see on the map I've linked to in your episode notes, India juts out from the bottom of Asia... so it's surrounded by water on two sides of its triangle, including the Indian Ocean to the south—no prizes for guessing where that body of water got its name! India then has land borders with, going clockwise from north, with China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and, all the way over on the western side, Pakistan.

Before 1947, Britain was in charge of the area that now makes up India and Pakistan. Initially, Britain had planned to give independence to a united India, but Muslims, a majority of whom lived in the West, wanted their own country. Worried that not splitting them up might cause war between the Muslims and Hindus - which is the most common religion in India - Britain performed what's called "partition", or separation, to create two independent countries.

Up to 20 million people were displaced, and partition is often described as one of the largest refugee crises in history. Sadly, there was a lot of violence, and there is still suspicion between India and Pakistan to this day.

But, as we always say on Squiz the World, a country is so much more than its conflicts and politics! India has tigers, temples, and the Taj Mahal! There are the Himalayan mountains to the north, tropical beaches to the south, and fertile plains and dry deserts in between.

Whenever you travel, it's important to learn a few words in that country's language. It's a great way to show respect. So, let's....

### LEARN THE LINGO

The official languages of India are Hindi and English... but it's a HUGE country, and there are another 22 languages recognised by the Constitution. Today, we're going to learn a little Hindi, and a little Assamese.

Remember I said that there was a chunk of India off to the right of that main upside down triangle? Well, that's where a good friend of mine lives, in the state of Assam. So let's give an especially BIG welcome to her nephew, Squiz Kid Jimit. Jimit, take it away!

If I had half Jimit's energy, I could do a Squiz the World episode every day! Thank you so much for teaching us, Jimit. Now that we can communicate a little, it's...

### TIME FOR SCHOOL

India is a complicated country. It has some of the richest, and some of the poorest, people in the world. In fact, you might remember that, not long ago on Squiz Kids, that we talked about how 91 million houses in India don't have clean, safe drinking water coming out of a tap.

So although school is free and compulsory from the ages of 6 to 14, about 30 per cent of kids don't finish primary school, because their families are so poor, they want the kids to work or help at home.

But I want to focus today on something that I find super cool about school in India. Maths.

You may not know that about one thousand years ago, India had the most advanced mathematicians in the world. And they have different words - in English - for big numbers. They start off like we do - ones, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousands. But the word for what we call 100,000 is lakh - l-a-k-h.

Crore - that's c-r-o-r-e means ten million.

Crore and lakh are the two most commonly used numbers in Indian English, although there are more words for even bigger numbers... there's arab instead of billion, kharab for 100 billion... all the way up to mahashankh - equivalent to 10 quintillion. Which is a number so big it bends my brain.

Now if there's one landmark that India is famous for, it's the Taj Mahal... and I have to say, I was pretty surprised by some of the things I learned about it...

### BELIEVE IT OR NOT

It took 20,000 workers—and let's not forget the 1,000 elephants they used to transport their materials—22 years to build the Taj Mahal, which was finished in 1653.

If you were going to build it today, it would cost \$1.2 billion. The man paying the bills was Emperor Shah Jahan, who was so devastated that his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, had died giving birth to their 14th child - wow, 14 kids - that he wanted to build a palace to hold her tomb, as a monument to his love.

There are so many things to mention about this building, which of course I've put links to in your episode notes. To start with, it is a perfectly symmetrical structure - more of maths! It's made of white marble, and since 1996, the government has worked to limit pollution around the Taj Mahal, because it was staining the marble.

Areas of those marble walls are inlaid with precious stones in a floral design - and their colours and workmanship are said to be so perfect, that the flowers almost look real. There are gardens and water features designed to reflect the palace - that's the image of the Taj Mahal we're all familiar with - and four minarets, or towers, around the outside.

Now, Emperor Shah Jahan planned to have a black palace built on the other side of the river, facing the Taj Mahal, to house his tomb. But - and here's a real twist - one of his sons wanted to be emperor before his Dad died, so he overthrew Shah Jahan and locked him up. He did have a view of his beloved wife's tomb from the room he was imprisoned in, though... and when he did eventually die, his son put his tomb inside the Taj Mahal as well. In fact, it's the ONLY thing about the Taj Mahal that isn't symmetrical.

Well, don't know about you, but I always get hungry after walking around and sightseeing. I think it might be...

## DINNER TIME

India has been inhabited for over 55,000 years... has 28 states.... 22 official languages... so you may not be surprised to know that the kind of food you eat in India is very different, depending on where you are. There's no official national dish... people in the south will make you crispy, potato stuffed pancakes called Dhosas... in the capital, New Delhi, you might tuck into some spicy, yogurt marinated chicken cooked in a clay oven called a tandoor...

But today I want to talk about what just might be the world's oldest smoothie... a lassi. The idea of mixing fermented milk, or yogurt, with fruit and spices started around 1000BC, and is supposed to calm your stomach - especially if you've eaten too much spicy food. Which, in India, is a definitely possibility. I've popped a recipe for a traditional Indian mango lassi in your episode notes. It's healthier than a milkshake, and SO delicious.

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1. What is the name of the ocean to the south of India... and to the west of Australia, too?

Question 2. Name one of the two languages - not counting English - that Jimit spoke in today.

Question 3. What shapes do the precious jewels on the walls of the Taj Mahal make?

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to India.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.