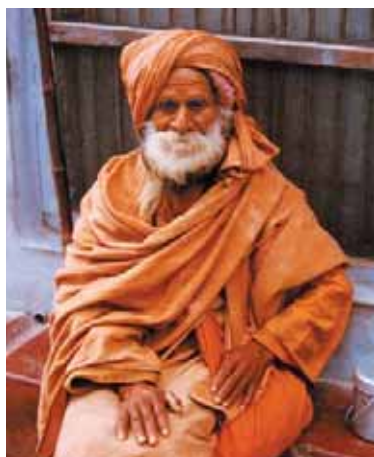




Front row (left to right): Ringo Starr, Maureen Starkey, Jane Asher, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Patti Boyd, Cynthia & John Lennon – Rishikesh, March 1968

Graeme Every looks back to a memorable year in the world's - and India's - recent history.



Hindu pilgrim

It's often said that you remember where you were when great historical events took place, and in 1968 there were many. Across the pond the United States was shocked as first the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated, only to be followed into history two months later by the brother of JFK, Robert Kennedy. The most powerful country on earth was still embroiled in Vietnam and as protests raged throughout the USA and beyond, President Nixon was elected to office. In Europe the impregnable 'Iron Curtain' seemed briefly rusty as the relative freedom of the Prague Spring gripped Europe's imagination, before being crushed by Soviet troops. In sport Bob Beamon grew wings and soared to a new world long jump record at the Mexico Olympics while four working class lads from Liverpool sought a different high.

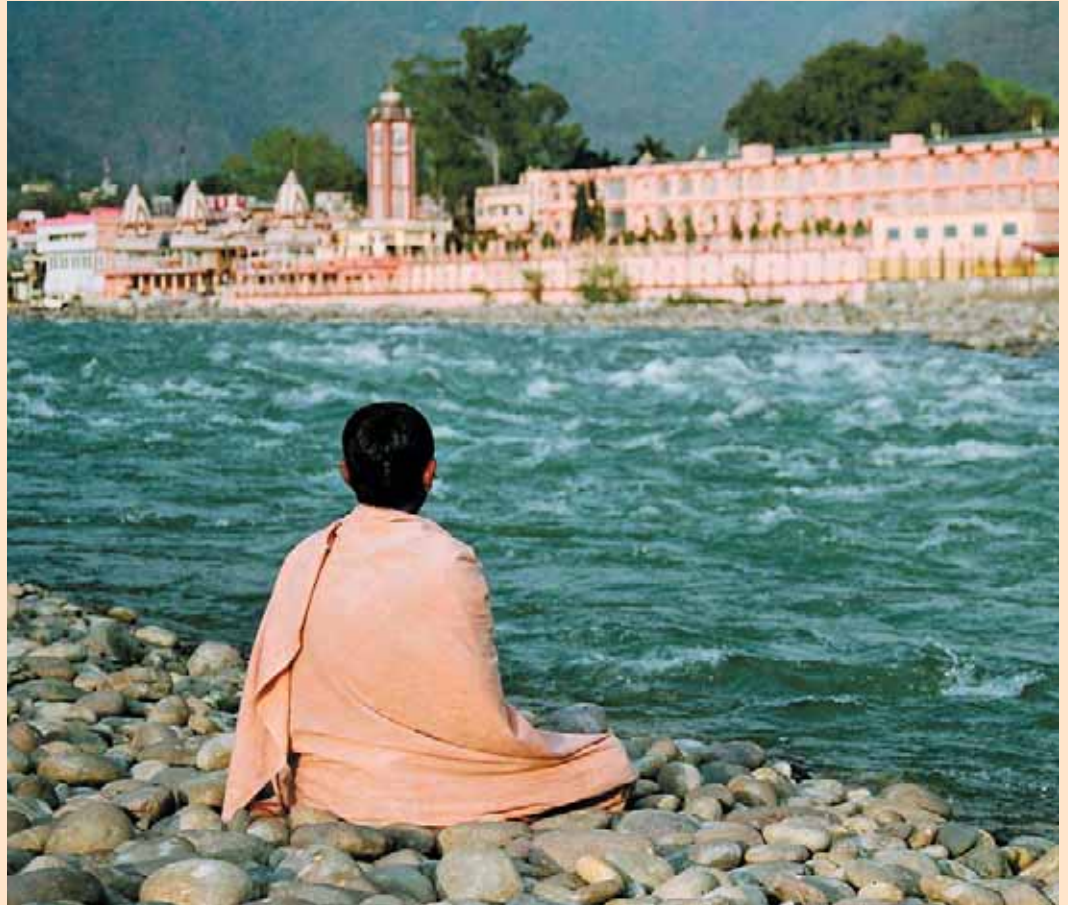
Attracted by the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, The Beatles left England behind and retreated to the solitude of an ashram at Rishikesh.

In the shadow of the Himalaya and beside the swift waters of the Ganges the band practised transcendental meditation, learned to play the sitar and wrote numerous tracks that would later form the essence of The White Album. Today ashrams abound in Rishikesh, offering all manner of mind, body and soul enhancing treatments including laughing yoga, mantra chanting and crystal healing, but the incredible beauty of the region can also be enjoyed by those seeking a less challenging trip. The surrounding hills are cloaked in forests and are great for day walks, while the evening ganga aarti ceremony is a must-see. Every night bearded sadhus, Hindu pilgrims and visitors flock to the water's edge to make offerings to the river goddess. Hundreds of tiny lanterns are cast into the waters to the ringing of bells, lighting up the holy river as they race away downstream.

The hotels have also come a long way in the last four decades and two of the best are the Glasshouse and Ananda. The Glasshouse on the

1968

the year the world rocked



The Ganges at Rishikesh

Ganges overlooks the river and is sited at the only point where the river flows northwards. As the name suggests, glass is used extravagantly throughout the property and a glass wall overlooks the river with wonderful views of the surrounding hills. A luxury alternative for those seeking a relaxing retreat without the necessity of staying at an ashram is Ananda in the Himalayas. The views from this hotel are superb, and with well tended gardens and helpful staff this is a great spot to soothe the mind and restore the body. Renowned for a spa which offers an enticing array of treatments, it also boasts a small golf course for those seeking a little more activity.

In 1968 Andy Warhol famously said that in the future, everyone will be famous for 15 minutes. John, Paul, George and Ringo received more than their fair share and forty years ago the Fab Four sought to escape the chaos of the modern world and headed to India in search of peace, tranquility and the secrets of the eastern mystics. Whether they succeeded in

their quest is uncertain but India certainly left an impression on The Beatles. The India of 2008 is different in so many ways to that experienced by the most famous band on Earth but the enduring spirituality of the country and stunning diversity remains to be discovered by future travellers.

Graeme Evemy
India Specialist



Bathing ghats, Rishikesh

FACT FILE

A 14-night tour to northern India including return flights and three nights in Rishikesh staying at Ananda in the Himalayas costs from £2,800 per person. For details please contact Graeme on 01993 838 308.

