

## Delights of Room 207: Jane Nugent:

'We here.' The driver of the rather battered red taxi, turned and gave us a toothless grin, as we pulled up outside a grimy building.

Once, it must have been cream, though the paintwork was so faded and crazed it was hard to tell. Old advertising bills adorned one of the walls, rubbish had been blown into a corner and a spluttering neon sign announced, The Palms.

We'd landed in Delhi and walked into a blast of hot air, carrying the seemingly exotic smells of an Indian night - some fragrant with spices and cooking, and others well, different!

We climbed into our taxi tired after our long flight, and drove passed the sacred cows, patiently chewing on the roadside, passed the rows of tuk-tuks with their drivers smoking and talking round a lighted food stall. We were so looking forward to a shower and relaxing in the bar of our 5 Star hotel.

'There must be some mistake,' I said trying to swallow the rising hysteria.

'No, no,' said our driver. 'This only Palms Hotel.'

'Well, it didn't look like this on the internet,' babbled Philip, staring helplessly at our luggage which had been dumped on the cracked footpath.

Furiously, I pushed open the door and stamped into a gloomy reception area where a young man in a grubby white tunic smoked a cigarette.

Maybe it was the wrong place, but no, we had a booking. 'Nothing we can do tonight,' said a defensive Philip, stating the obvious.

Our room was two floors up. No lift. We staggered up the stairs dragging our cases behind us and opened the door of Room 207. There we were greeted with water-stained dark walls and a strong smell of damp and dirt. A washbasin in the corner had a dripping tap and air conditioning involved opening the window. Two of the three wall lights were hanging from their brackets looking dangerously unsafe.

Gingerly, we sat on the bed and, the lights went out - a power cut.

That was all we needed. It certainly wasn't the travel experience we thought it was going to be.