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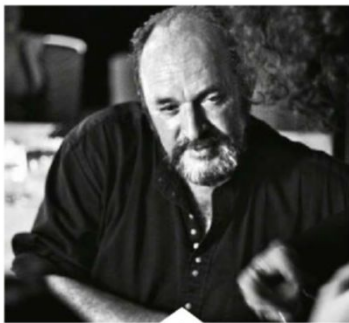




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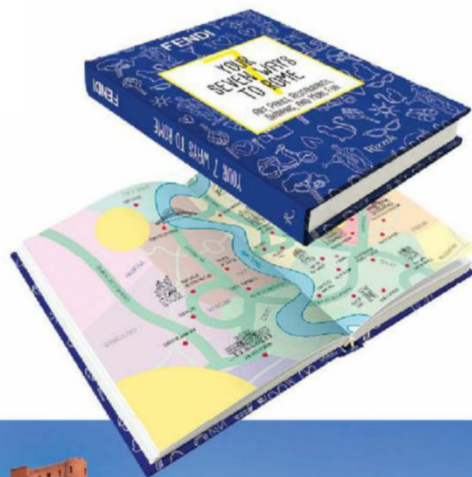
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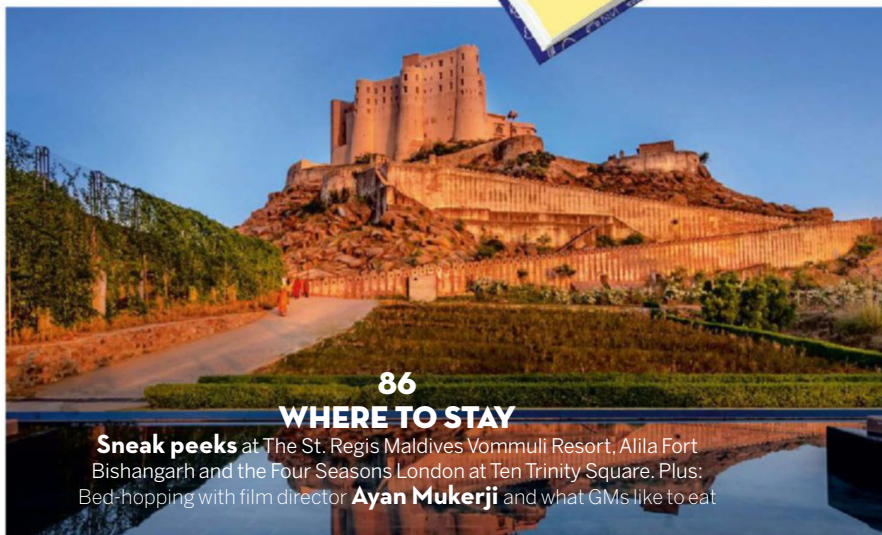
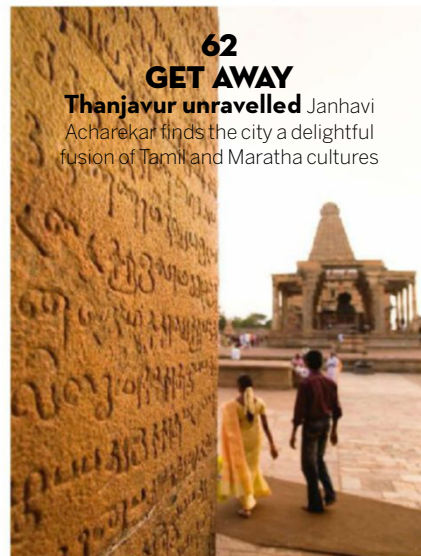
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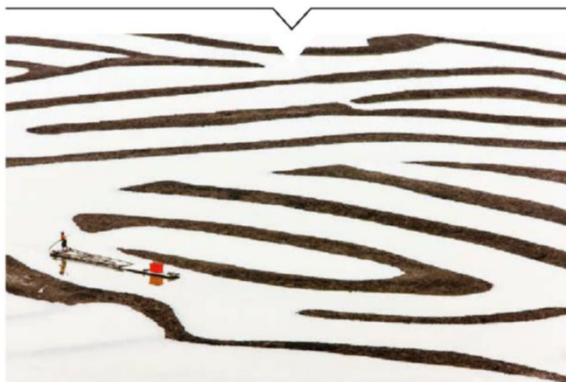
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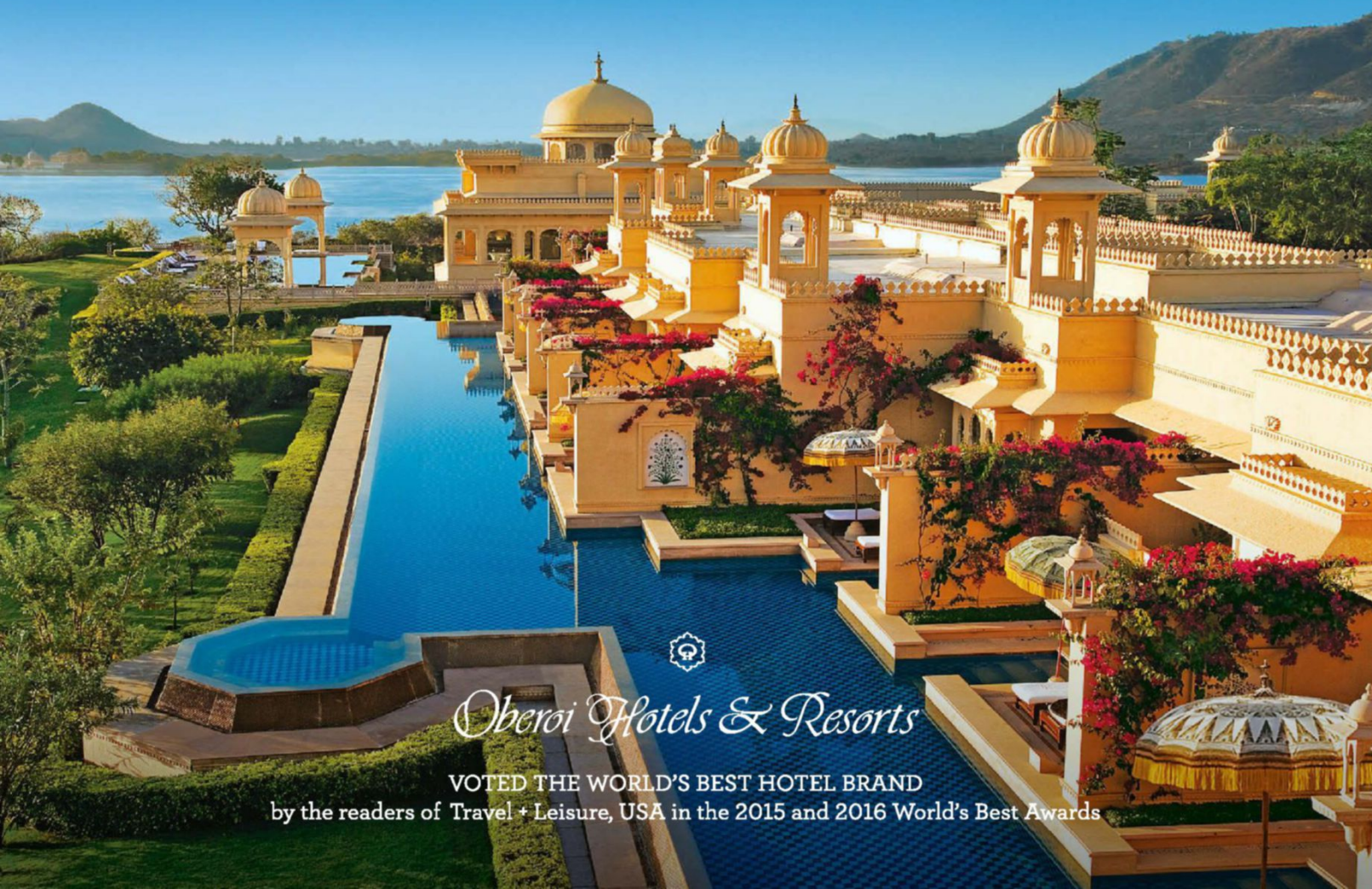


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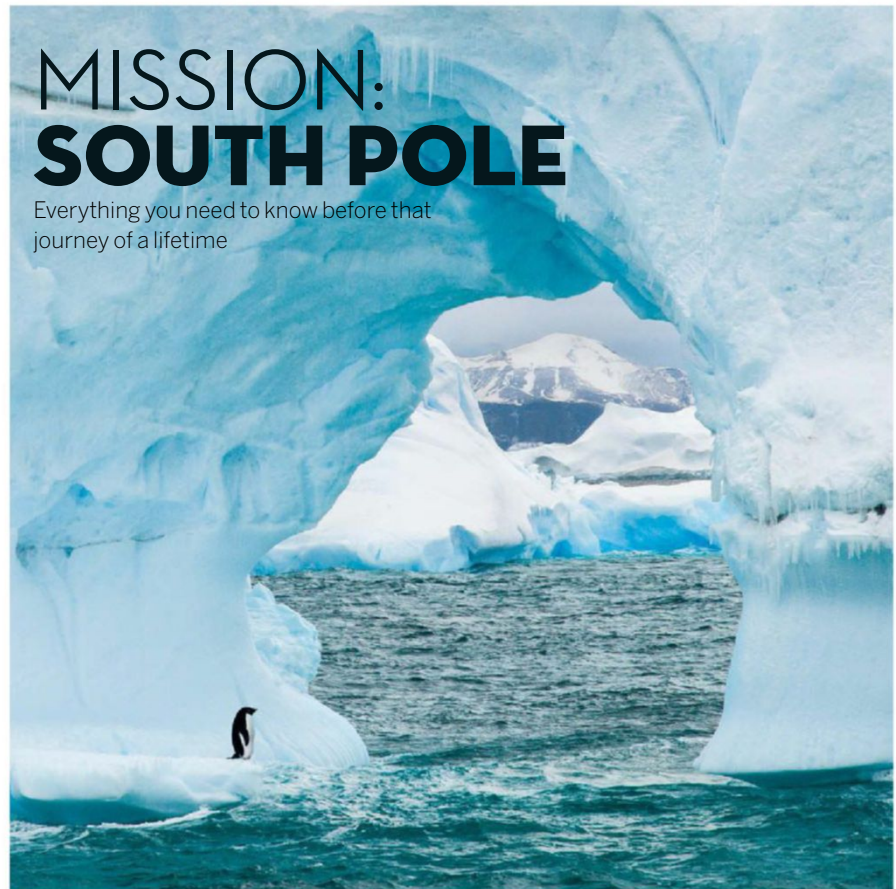
5 GREAT MEALS TO HAVE IN HIMACHAL

Its mountains and rivers may hog all the attention, but the food is just waiting to be Instagrammed



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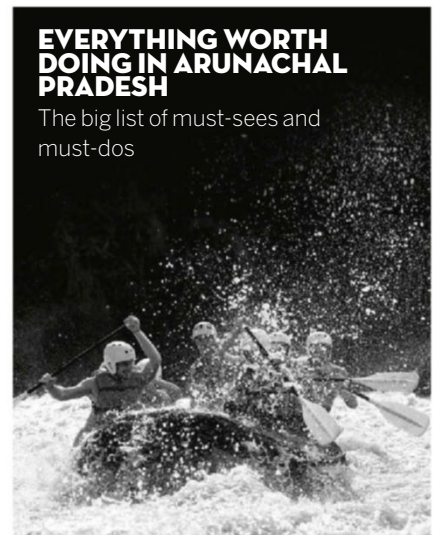
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Who: Writer; *Where to eat in 2017*, p62 **A:** "Thousand-year eggs, which, I discovered on the streets of Taipei, are made by curing eggs (traditionally by burying them in clay) for three months. Better than blue cheese." [@tweetsona](#)



SUKETU MEHTA

Who: Writer; *Japan: it's all in the details*, p128 **A:** "Bhelpuri, of course, for this Bombay boy. Wherever I am in the world, at 5pm, I get a craving for this delicious mongrel mix that is as hot, sweet, sour and spicy as the city itself."

[@suketumehta](#)



WE ASKED OUR CONTRIBUTORS:

"YOUR FAVOURITE STREET FOOD—WHAT, WHERE AND WHY?"

RISHNA SHAH

Who: Writer; *A walk in the park*, p38 **A:** "Wafels & Dinges is a Belgian food truck in New York. Its light, crispy waffles fill me with nostalgia for my childhood days in Antwerp." [@rishnas](#)



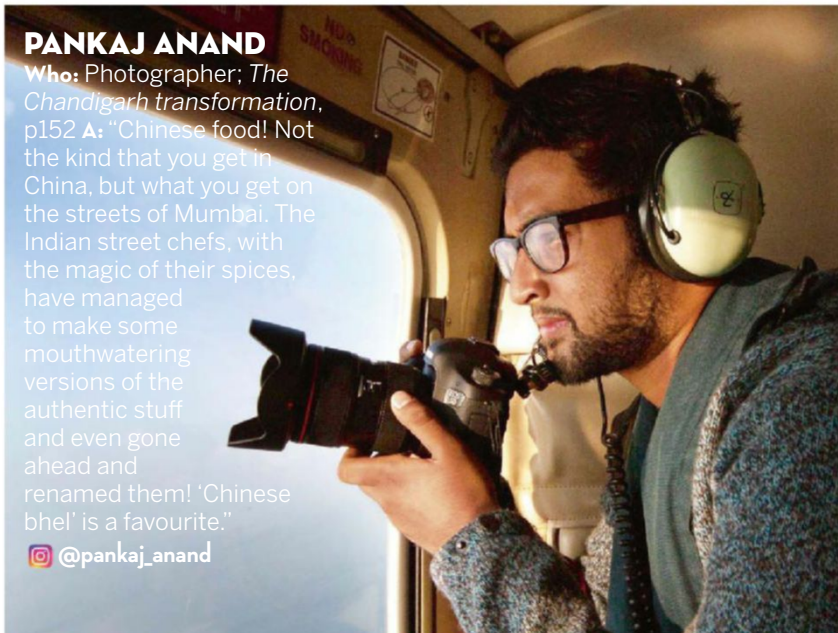
AATISH NATH

Who: Writer; *Where do chefs eat?*, p36 **A:** "In Mumbai, it has to be vada pav, for its ubiquity and its ability to be eaten on the go. Abroad, the plain cheese pizza slices that can be found all over Manhattan, is definitely the one thing I make a beeline for when I'm in the city." [@aatishn](#)



PRITI MAHAJAN

Who: Writer; *The Chandigarh transformation*, p152 **A:** "I discovered bunny chow—a hollowed-out loaf of crusty bread, filled with curry or stew—in Cape Town, but am told that it originated in Durban among the Afro-Indian community. It's a full meal in half a loaf! Filling, ready, easy (even if messy), with ample room for experimentation. Above all, it ties me to Africa—the country that holds my heart."



PANKAJ ANAND

Who: Photographer; *The Chandigarh transformation*, p152 **A:** "Chinese food! Not the kind that you get in China, but what you get on the streets of Mumbai. The Indian street chefs, with the magic of their spices, have managed to make some mouthwatering versions of the authentic stuff and even gone ahead and renamed them! 'Chinese bhel' is a favourite."

[@pankaj_anand](#)

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Probably my favourite part of my job is learning about all the fabulous new hotels opening up all around the world—even if I know I will not see many of them. To me, new hotels are a lot like new relationships, filled with the promise of a new beginning, the chance to learn from past experiences and to get things absolutely right going forward. Of course, there will be teething problems—that's to be expected—but you can't help but start out optimistic: the sheets are clean and crisp and blindingly white; the marble floors gleam; the staff is motivated and quick on their feet; even the food seems fresher. Newness is everywhere. Creativity is oozing. Despite your previous failures, you're inclined to speak in hyperbole: This is it, this is the one, this is the best I've ever had. But as time goes by, there's a little disappointment: room service shows up late; the concierge doesn't answer; the fancy TV in the bathroom doesn't work; and goodness, is the paint in the corridors already chipping? You try not to see it, you don't admit it even to yourself, you forgive it once, twice, three times, but then housekeeping misplaces your sari right before your big event. You have a talk with the hotel manager, or you write to customer service, you threaten to go public on TripAdvisor, and briefly, it seems like things will return to normal. You're hopeful. You notice another new hotel being constructed nearby, completely different in look and feel, but attractive. It might be time for a change, but you feel disloyal even considering it. No, you're giving things another chance. You've had such good times together, after all. You've accumulated points, you've told your family and friends about it, you've put yourself on the line. Then one morning, the bathroom floods/your key card doesn't work, twice/they charge you for painfully slow wi-fi. And you

can no longer hide from the truth. It's time to end it. It was beautiful when it was beautiful, it was great until it wasn't. You don't know how it happened so fast or what went wrong when you got off to such a flying start. You may never know. You walk out, sad, alone, wondering how you're going to start all over again. You may never trust again. You contemplate Airbnb, One Fine Stay, a serviced apartment, even staying with an annoying relative on your next trip. You spend nights on hotels.com and booking.com (a hotel junkie's Tinder equivalent), tweaking your preferences in the hope that something new and unexpectedly gorgeous pops up. But your efforts are half-hearted. Then, one day, as you're driving out of the airport, you notice that the under-construction hotel you'd noticed a long time ago out of the corner of your eye is ready to open. It's inviting you in. Give me a try, it says. Our sheets are crisp, our marble gleams, even our food feels fresher. We're nothing like your old hotel. We're better. We're perfect. We've got this. And just like that, you're hooked. This issue is full of new hotels, new places to visit, new dishes to eat, new sights to see. Don't let 2016 get you down: there's still much to hope for, much to fall in love with and live with happily ever after. 📍

“New hotels are like new relationships, a chance to learn from mistakes and get things right”



PHOTOGRAPH: FAROKH CHOTHIA ILLUSTRATION: ALAMY



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All information and travel details are correct at the time of going to press, and may have altered after publication. Unless otherwise stated, hotel prices and airline fares are for the months of publication. Currency conversions are correct at the time of going to press, and may be rounded up.

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LEGEND MEETS LUXURY

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Q&A In conversation with

WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

The celebrated Indophile writer, historian and shahi tukda enthusiast talks to **Raj Aditya Chaudhuri** about the Kohinoor, Kandahar and family holidays in Tuscany

While researching your new book, on the Kohinoor, you travelled almost as much as the diamond! Tell us about your journeys.

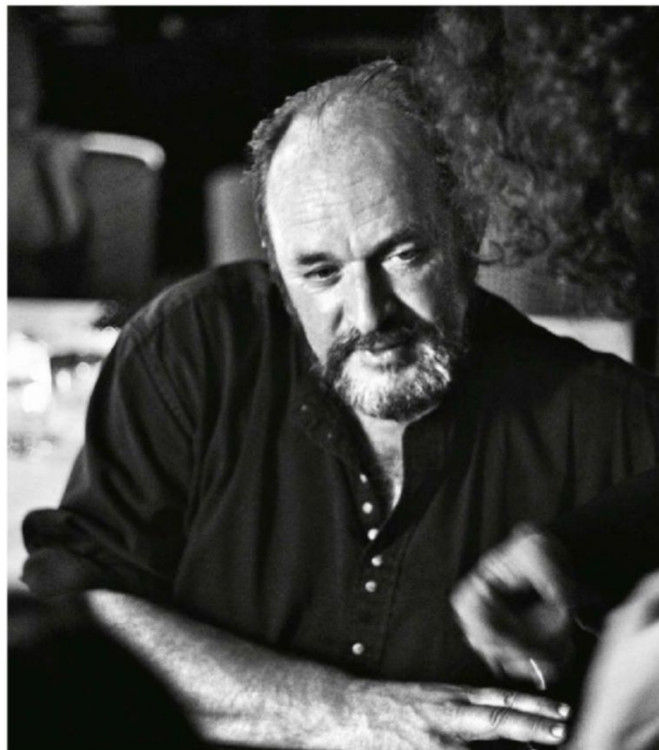
I went back to Persian sources from Nadir Shah's time, to try and work out what actually is the true story of the diamond. Most sources I retrieved were from Afghanistan—Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad. Some were found in Tehran, in the National Archives of India and in Britain.

What was it like to stay and work in Afghanistan?

Kandahar is no easy place to visit, it's a dangerous city. I stayed with Afghan friends, wearing the local dress, trying to get these documents and manuscripts about this diamond. In Kabul, the then chancellor of Kabul University, now the country's president, Ashraf Ghani, was the person who found many of these sources for me. A considerable historian of Afghanistan, he told me about a bookseller in the old city of Kabul where I could get many of these manuscripts. In a single morning, I acquired five previously unused Persian sources, all of which are fantastic and tell the story of a forgotten hundred years when the diamond was in the possession of the Durrani dynasty in Afghanistan.

What about the diamond is so fascinating to you?

The very interest in the Kohinoor is one of the most intriguing aspects of the whole story. It was never the biggest Mughal diamond, nor was it particularly celebrated in India until it left the country. In the course of my research, I found not a single absolutely clear reference to it before it was stolen by Nadir Shah in 1739. All the history that it



is supposed to have way back to antiquity, where it was supposed to have been the eye of an idol, in the possession of the Lodis, passed to Babur, passed through the Mughals—is just speculation. It wasn't the largest diamond and yet it became the most celebrated rock star of gems, thanks to the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, London, when three million people queued up to see it in 1851. And that history of how it gained prominence is really essential to this book.

Your love for Delhi is well documented. What places would you include in your personal guide to the city?

I'd start with monuments such as Lodi Gardens, Safdarjung's tomb and Humayun's tomb, and then have an evening in the historic neighbourhood of Nizamuddin. All this can be done in one day and it'd be the

best possible introduction to the magic of Delhi's history. I'd go to the old city of Shahjahanabad, through Dharampura Haveli and the havelis and lanes of Chandni Chowk, eating the street food—shahi tukda, nimish in winter, fantastic jalebis—and sampling ittar from Gulab Singh Johrimal. And I would loop around Mehrauli Archaeological Park, through the jungles of Mehrauli.

What about the rest of India? Any places you just can't get enough of?

Chamba Valley in the Himalayas, Mandu and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh and the interior of Kerala. That's a place I want to move to at some point.

What books did you read before travelling to India for the first time?

When I first came to India in the 1980s, I was fabulously ignorant about the country. The first few

books I read were *Slowly Down the Ganges* by Eric Newby and *India Discovered: The Recovery of a Lost Civilization* by John Keay, which is the story of the archaeology of India—I love that book. I also read Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *Jewel in the Crown* by Paul Scott. Today if I were to recommend a book about India that's written by an author from my generation, I would choose *Maximum City* by Suketu Mehta.

How do you prepare when you're travelling to a destination you've not been to before? Do you read local fiction or historical novels?

I often read fiction when I get back from a new place. But as a historian, when I want to learn about a place before visiting it, I always go to history and learn about a place and its past. Before going to Afghanistan for my current book, for example, I read Peter Hopkirk's *The Great Game*, *The Road to Oxiana* by Robert Byron, *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* by Eric Newby and various histories of the First Afghan War.

What are your vacation plans for this year?

I stay in India for nine out of 12 months. But I flee the summer in May and come back in September. We always go to this lovely villa in Pienza in Tuscany. That is our annual family holiday—it is the perfect mixture of sybaritic restaurants and delicious landscapes and wonderful views. It is an extremely peaceful place and I love it. 📍

William Dalrymple's latest book, Kohinoor: The Story of the World's Most Infamous Diamond (Juggernaut Books; ₹500), with Anita Anand, is on stands now.

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WORD OF MOUTH

GOA **ZIMBABWE** DUBAI NEW DELHI **LONDON** LAS VEGAS **AMSTERDAM**

OFF PISTE

So what if you missed ski season in the usual spots? The southern part of the world is a winter wonderland in summer. **Raj Aditya Chaudhuri** tells you where you can hit the slopes

CORONET PEAK Only 20 minutes out of Queenstown lies this stunning destination, with immaculate pistes for skiers of all abilities. It is the only resort in New Zealand that offers night-time skiing. Ski season here starts in June and continues until September. Facilities include a bar, café, snowsport school and childcare centre. (www.nzski.com)

CERRO CASTOR This is the southernmost ski resort in the world. Located in the southern tip of Argentina (*pictured*), just outside Ushuaia, this peak's location and natural orientation mean that it gets lovely, thick snow. Fly to Ushuaia from Buenos Aires and then drive here for stunning views. Plus, the resort has cosy wood cabins where you can relax your tired muscles after a long day out in the snow. (www.cerrocastor.com)

PERISHER Don't judge a ski resort by its name. Located in the Snow Mountains in New South Wales, Perisher, 210km from Canberra, offers seven stupendous peaks. The fact that they vary in difficulty level makes this is an excellent place to learn the basics of the sport. The resort also has a host of interesting restaurants and cafés, which means that your après-ski experience is as fantastic as your time outdoors. (www.perisher.com.au)

SKI PORTILLO If you want to go out on a limb and try heli-skiing, Chile has you covered. Ski Portillo, 150km northwest of Santiago, is the oldest ski resort in South America, and a great place to park yourself. Located high in the Andes, its 17 peaks look more Alpine than South American. High season here is between July and August so start planning. (www.skiportillo.com) 

WORD OF MOUTH

The wild side

For your next safari, Africa has some great options

If a safari is on your 2017 #bucketlist, Africa has some exciting new openings to help you plan. Zambia is an ideal base to explore wildlife, both locally and in the neighbouring Zimbabwe and Botswana. Stay at the newly rebuilt **Thorntree River Lodge** (www.africanbushcamps.com), slated to open in May. It's located in the Mosi oa Tunya National Park, which is known for its predator-free game viewing; think zebra, giraffe, elephant, antelope and a variety of birds. Or park yourself at **King Lewanika Lodge** (www.normancarrsafaris.com), expected to open in April, in the grassy Liuwa Plains National Park, to see the famed Liuwa lions, hyenas hunting in clans of up to 50 and, reportedly, Africa's second biggest wildebeest migration. In Zimbabwe, explore the Bumi Hills, which are home to lion, leopard and elephant herds. Stay at the 10-key **Bumi Hills Safari Lodge** (www.africanbushcamps.com), which is located by the Matsudona National Park and offers views of the game-rich Lake Kariba. In Madagascar, travel to Nosy Anka—part of a private five-island archipelago—to see extraordinary marine wildlife. Post April, check in at **Miavana** (www.timeandtideafrica.com), where you can snorkel straight off your villa, watch turtles laying eggs or see native lemur species on the mainland. **RASHMI SHANKAR**



DESI BY DESIGN

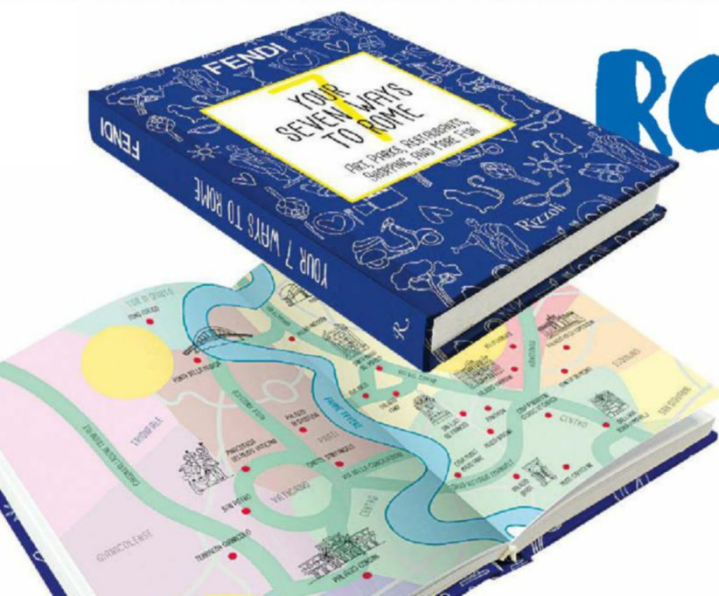
Born in India, based in the US, these jewellery brands are taking the world by storm

From top: handcrafted bidri and sterling silver earrings, ₹4,850, **Lai**; silver-plated handmade Raykah Choker with black onyx, ₹17,000, **AARYAH**; Celeste mirror mesh earrings with gold-plated brass, ₹10,680, **ISHARYA**
See Directory, pXXX



Park Regis Goa

The sunshine state has brand new digs on offer: the 96-key Park Regis Goa in Arpora. With a 3,800sq ft ballroom, a poolside bar, sheesha and live music, there's no reason to leave. But if you do decide to head out, the charms of Arpora and Baga are close by. (www.parkregisgoa.in; doubles from ₹8,500)



ROME BY FENDI

The Italian luxury fashion brand pays tribute to its home with a new guidebook that will help you explore the city like a local. Available in Italian and English, *Your Seven Ways To Rome* includes insider tips on the best restaurants, walking paths, shopping and more, along with a map, cool stickers and a playlist at the beginning of each chapter. (Rizzoli; €25)

1980



1990



2017



OPENING SOON

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Make in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's major national initiative designed to facilitate investment, foster innovation, enhance skill development, protect intellectual property and build best-in-class manufacturing infrastructure has made unprecedented progress. From mining to tourism, telecom to the automotive sector, from electronics and IT to power, food processing, textiles and more — it's been two years of stellar milestones and record-breaking achievements in some of the country's most important and flourishing sectors. As 2017 takes off, and the initiative continues to move forward, here's a roundup of some of the biggest successes conquered between 2014 - 2016 and an insight into the ones to come...

1 INDIA'S MINING SECTOR ROCK SOLID

With mining being one of the core sectors of the economy, providing basic raw materials to important industries, the Make in India initiative paved the way for liberalizing FDI up to 100 per cent under the automatic route. The result: in the last two years, this sector has witnessed major policy interventions — promoting exploration, private participation and steadfast growth.

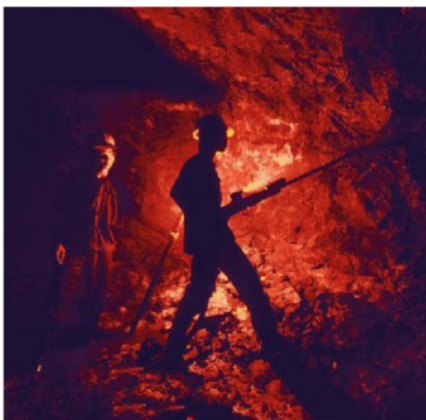
E-AUCTION FOR MINERAL BLOCKS

17 mineral blocks auctioned across seven states, resulting in an additional revenue of ₹47,551 crore and a total revenue of ₹59,639 crore

GROWTH IN PRODUCTION

7% growth in mineral production in FY 2016-17

26% growth in iron ore and chromite production



EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

- Mining lease/composite license granted only through auction
- Post Auction Mining and Approvals Facilitator constituted to expedite clearances and approvals
- Transfer of captive mining leases allowed

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

◊ National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) set up:

- 13 mineral exploration projects in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, underway

◊ National Mineral Exploration Policy (NMEP), 2016 approved

2 INDIA'S FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR THOUGHT FOR FOOD

The Food Processing sector in India, a sunrise sector, is poised for immense growth and greater contribution to the world food trade. The sector has witnessed a number of initiatives undertaken by the government since June 2014 primarily aimed at scaling up infrastructure for storage transport, tackling the issue of food wastage in the country and creating value addition that will benefit both producers and consumers in India through facilitating domestic and foreign investment — for example: The Government has sanctioned 42 Mega Food Parks out of which 6 Mega Food Parks are operational and the remaining would be operational in the next two years. Each Mega Food Park is expected to create direct and indirect employment to about 5,000-6,000 persons and benefit approximately 25,000-30,000 farmers.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS INITIATIVES

- Single Window Facilitation Cell set up for investors
- Help Desk managed by Invest India
- 1,590 queries have been answered

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

\$1.16 billion in FDI equity inflow until September 2016

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

28,199 people trained



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

56 cold chain projects completed | **6** Mega Food Parks operationalised
4 Abattoirs operationalised | **11** Quality Testing Food Labs commissioned

3 INDIA'S AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

TOP GEAR

The automotive sector in India has always been a crucial catalyst. India is the largest tractor manufacturer, 2nd largest two-wheeler manufacturer, 2nd largest bus manufacturer, 5th largest heavy truck manufacturer, 6th largest car manufacturer and 8th largest commercial vehicle manufacturer. It contributes to 71 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product by volume and projects six million-plus hybrid and electric vehicles to be sold annually by 2020. Innovation, R&D and a favourable policy regime has put this sector's growth in the fast lane.

UPWARD TREND IN PRODUCTION AND SALES

	CATEGORY	2014-15	2015-16	PERCENTAGE INCREASE
PRODUCTION	Electric & Hybrid Vehicles	17,107	71,909	320%
SALES	Electric & Hybrid Vehicles	16,513	65,224	295%
PRODUCTION	Passenger Vehicles	32,21,419	34,13,859	6%
SALES	Passenger Vehicles	26,01,236	27,89,678	6%
PRODUCTION	Commercial Vehicles	6,98,298	7,82,814	12%
SALES	Commercial Vehicles	6,14,948	6,85,704	12%



NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE TESTING AND R&D INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT (NATRIP) SET UP AT:

- Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI), Pune
- Vehicle Research & Development Establishment (VRDE), Ahmednagar
- Automotive Inspection Maintenance & Training at (NIAMIMT), Silchar

SKILLING THROUGH AUTOMOTIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (ASDC)

2.8 lakh persons trained (2014-16)

AUTO-COMPONENT INDUSTRY: ROBUST GROWTH

There has been a growth in turnover:

- 15 per cent growth in turnover to ₹4,90,400 crore (2014-16) from ₹4,27,700 crore (2012-14)

There has been a growth in exports:

- Exports grew by 22 per cent during 2014-16 to ₹1,39,400 crore (2014-16) from ₹1,14,000 crore (2012-14)

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

FDI increased by **72%** | 2012-14: **\$3.05** billion | 2014-16: **\$5.25** billion

4 INDIA'S TOURISM SECTOR

OPEN FOR BOOKINGS

A flourishing tourism and hospitality sector is considered a direct agent of development and an engine for socio-economic growth. And for India, it has indeed been bright with Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism in rupee terms during FY 2016-17 (Jan- Dec, 2016) as ₹1.56 trillion with a growth of 15.2 per cent as compared to the FEE of ₹1.35 trillion during FY 2015-16 (Jan- Dec, 2015). What's more, the Domestic Tourist Visits to States/UTs have increased by 11.6 per cent in a year to 1.4 billion. As per the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2015 of the World Economic Forum, India's rank climbed up 13 places to 52 in 2015 from 65 in 2013. For every \$1 million spent in Travel & Tourism sales, \$0.18 million of GDP is generated in the agriculture sector and the wholesale and retail sector gains \$0.11 million.

GROWTH IN TOURIST FOOTFALLS

11.6 per cent increase in Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in a year

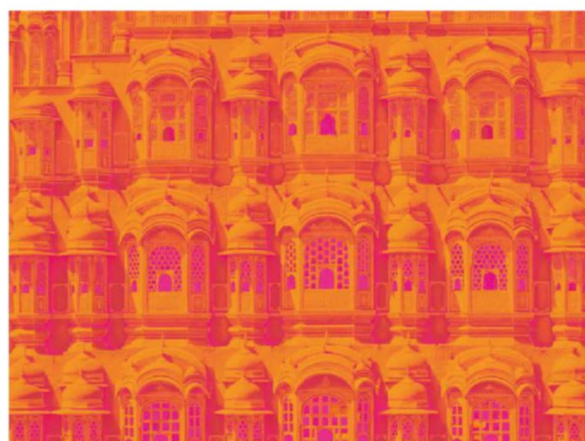
	Jan-Dec 2014	Jan-Dec 2015	Jan-Dec 2016	% increase (2015 vs 2014)	% increase (2016 vs 2015)
TOTAL	7.68 MILLION	8.03 MILLION	8.9 MILLION	4.5%	11.6%

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- 1.85 lakh people trained through various skilling initiatives in 2 years
- An Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) established in Tirupati
- 12 Institutes of Hospitality Management approved for the North East

VISA REGIME: A WARMER WELCOME

- E-visa scheme extended to 161 countries
- 2.5 times increase in e-visa arrivals in a year



INVESTING IN WORLD CLASS TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Swadesh Darshan:

- 13 theme tourist circuits identified for development.
- 51 projects worth ₹42.7 billion underway

National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD):

- 25 cities identified
- Projects worth ₹4.1 billion underway

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT UP AND UP

72% increase in FDI in a year | FY 2014-15: **\$777** million | FY 2015-16: **\$1.3** billion

5 INDIA'S TEXTILES & APPAREL SECTOR

AN XXL OPPORTUNITY

The Indian textile industry exhibits the rich cultural heritage of the country with a wide variety of fabrics, techniques and hues that reflect the diverse set of people and traditions. One of India's oldest industries, it covers an extensive spectrum of segments, from hand woven/hand-spun, unorganised segment on one end to capital and technology intensive organised segment on the other, India is the largest producer of Jute in the world and is the second largest producer of silk and cotton globally. What's more, this industry is the second largest employer. The textile sector is a key investment destination for manufacturers around the world.

INNOVATION & R&D

6 Focus Incubation Centres (FIC) have been set up to help budding entrepreneurs develop innovative technical textiles

SPECIAL PACKAGE

₹6,000 CRORE
aims to create

10 MILLION additional jobs
aims to attract

\$11 BILLION additional investments
aims to generate

\$30 BILLION additional exports

PROMOTION OF INDIAN HANDLOOM

- India handloom brand launched on August 7, 2015 to provide brand value to handloom products
- Indian Handloom Website launched as a one-stop-platform on February 11, 2016 for all services to consumers, bulk buyers and handloom producers

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

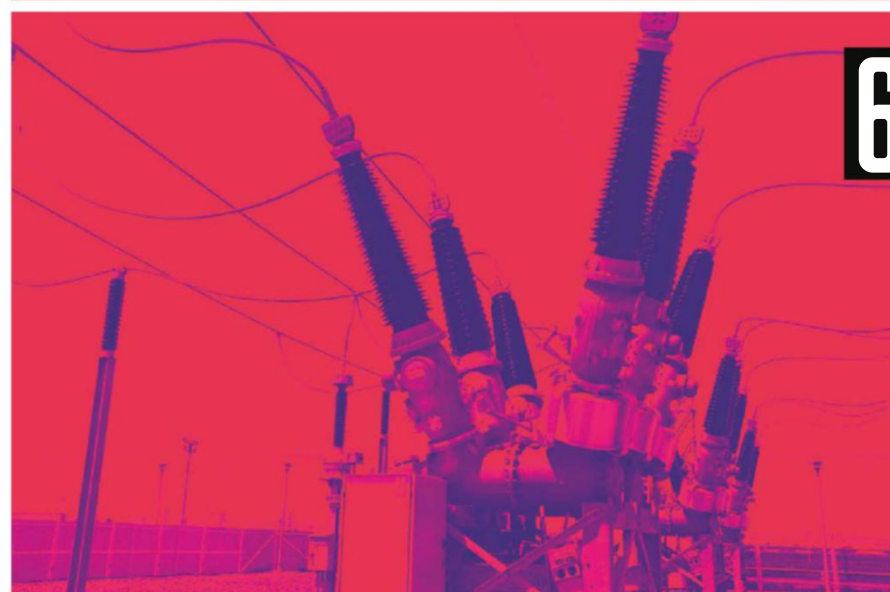
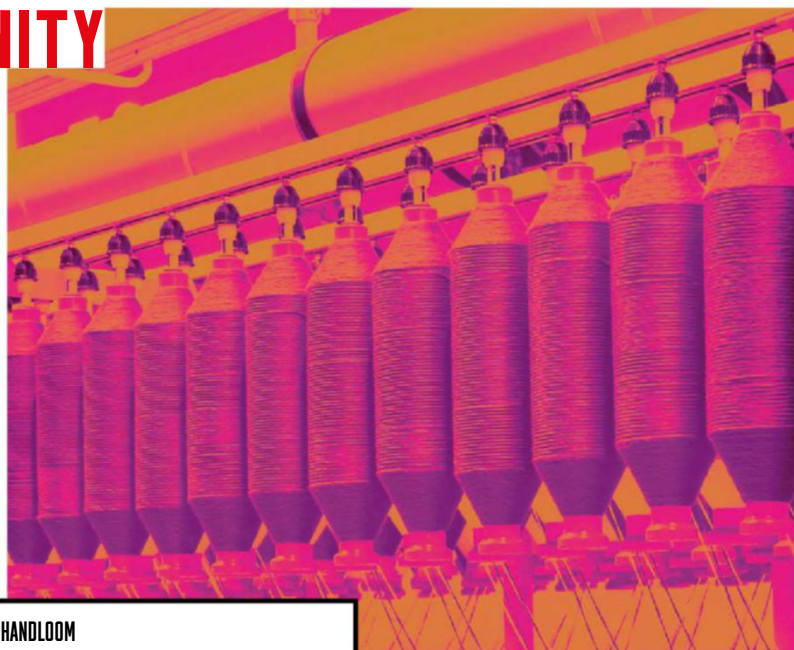
- 5.3 lakh youth have been trained
- Over 81 per cent people have been placed, including 79 per cent of the trained women

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- 19 new textile parks underway
- 3 new mega textile clusters underway

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

41% growth in FDI
FY 2014-16: **\$427.6 MILLION** | FY 2012-14: **\$302.8 MILLION**



6 INDIA'S POWER SECTOR

POWER PLAYER

POWER FOR ALL BY 2022

- 307.28 GW of installed capacity—fifth largest globally
- 50,471.41 MW addition in generation capacity since 2014 (until October 2016)
- Lowest ever energy deficit of 2.1 per cent
- Electricity generation increase:

FY 2013-14: **967 BU** | FY 2014-15: **1048 BU** | FY 2015-16: **1107 BU**

NATIONAL LED PROGRAMME

17.9
crore LED bulbs
distributed as of
November 2016

14.5
lakh street lights
replaced in several
States as of
November 2016

India has the world's fifth largest power generation portfolio. Now with 100 per cent FDI permitted under the automatic route in this sector, a major addition in capacity has been seen in the last two years.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS ON THE UPSWING

- Power Purchase Agreement for hydro projects extended beyond 35 years for an additional period of 15 years
- Hydro projects exempted from competitive bidding until August 15, 2022

7 INDIA'S TELECOM SECTOR

TRUE CALLING

The Indian telecom sector shaped by consumer demand, innovation and competitive forces offers tremendous investment opportunities. With the second largest subscriber base in the world with 1.1 billion connections (including fixed phone lines), the telecom industry is thriving. Recently, India with 275 million smart-phone subscribers, outpaced the United States, to become the second largest smart phone subscriber market in the world. The volumes and potential growth of India's mobile market makes it an ever increasingly important investment destination world over.



GROWING SUBSCRIBER BASE

2nd largest subscriber base globally – with **1.1** billion connections

2nd largest smart phone market globally – with **275** million users

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

3.5 lakh people trained

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT & SECTOR REFORMS

- \$8 billion in FDI
- Spectrum sharing, trading, harmonization and auction initiated

GROUND-BREAKING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Overall Tele-density reached 86.25 per cent
- Rural Tele-density reached 52.43 per cent

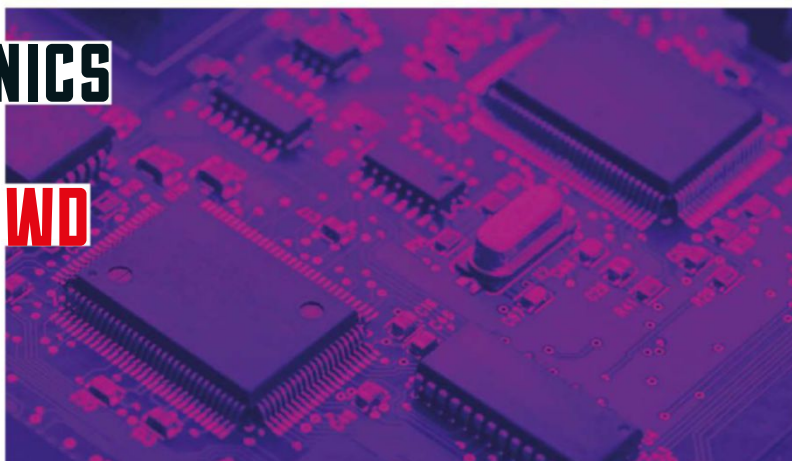
MANUFACTURING ON THE UPSWING

- 38 new mobile manufacturing units set up since September 2015, creating 38,300 new jobs
- Number of mobile phone units manufactured grew by 83 per cent in 2015-16

8 INDIA'S ELECTRONICS & IT SECTOR

IN WITH THE I.T. CROWD

The electronics market of India is one of the largest in the world. As the demand for high-end products rises in the domestic market, the Indian ESDM sector is projected to grow at a CAGR of 24 per cent from \$70 billion in 2014 to \$400 billion by 2020.



INNOVATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

- National Centre of Excellence in Technologies for Internal Security (NCETIS), IIT Bombay, set up
- National Centre of Excellence for Large Area Flexible Electronics (NCEFlexE), IIT Kanpur, set up
- First Centre of Excellence for Internet of Things (CoE-IoT) in Bengaluru, set up
- Incubation centre in Delhi, set up

SKILLING INITIATIVES

Digital Saksharta Abhiyan and National Digital Literacy Mission

99.6 lakh candidates enrolled for training | **82.7** lakh trained | And over **47.1** lakh certified

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

Total FDI equity inflows:

- 409 per cent increase in FDI in Computer Hardware & Software sector from \$1.6 billion in 2012-14 to \$8.2 billion during 2014-16.
- 79 per cent increase in FDI in Electronics sector from \$170 million in 2012-14 to \$305 million during 2014-16.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Investment Facilitation Cell for the Electronics sector and Help Desks for Japan and Israel set up. 914 queries addressed for the Electronics sector

THE SUMMER FESTIVAL CALENDAR FOR 2017

From dancing in Austrian igloos to soaking up jazz in Ukraine, here's what you should be doing in 2017. By **Sanjana Subramanian**

FEBRUARY

Stockholm Design Week

6–12 February Furniture and design lovers can check out groundbreaking work in Scandinavian design. Last year's highlights include leading Swedish brands Lammhults and Fogia. (www.stockholmdesignweek.com)

Desert Festival, Jaisalmer

8–10 February Witness camel races, folk dance and traditional ballads sung by locals. And while you're at it, catch the Udaipur World Music Festival, from 10 to 12 February. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Jashn-e-Rekhta, New Delhi

17–19 February A must for Urdu aficionados, it includes debates and recitations by renowned writers, as well as sessions on Urdu poetry, prose, cinema, art, drama and even popular culture. (www.jashnerekhta.org)

MARCH

Art Dubai 15–18 March Held at Madinat Jumeirah, this prestigious event will showcase art from over 90 galleries from across the world (below). A highlight is the curated themed section that changes every year. (www.artdubai.ae)



Art Basel, Hong Kong

23–25 March This fixture on every art enthusiast's calendar (above) includes superb exhibits and talks at The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. (www.artbasel.com)

Melbourne International Comedy Festival

29 March–23 April In its 31st edition, the much-awaited festival is back with an impressive line-up, across multiple venues. This year, watch hilarious acts by Ginger and Tonic (Desperate and Dateless), Music, Mirth and Mayhem and Auntie Donna (Big Boys). #Imao (www.comedyfestival.com.au)

APRIL

Snowbombing, Mayrhofen

3–8 April Imagine the world's best live music and DJ gigs in Austria's coolest (literally) spots. Think raves in igloos and parties in magical forests. Popular British skier Eddie the Eagle and TV presenter Pat Sharp will be making special appearances. (www.snowbombing.com)

Schneider Electric

Marathon de Paris

9 April Watch participants race across the pretty city, zipping off from the Champs Élysées up to the Bois de Vincennes and Boulogne. Come in earlier for the

Salon du Running fair at Porte de Versailles.

(www.schneiderelectric.parismarathon.com)

National Spanish Cheese Festival, Trujillo

29 April–2 May The Spanish square comes to life with locals selling mounds of rare cheeses like Torta del Casar, Los Ibores and favourites like Manchego. You can taste slivers of over 300 varieties. (www.turismoextremadura.com)



MAY

Frieze New York 5–7 May Browse and buy works created by more than 1,000 artists, attend panel discussions and fun workshops. (www.frieze.com)

Venice Biennale From 13 May Geek out on art, architecture, film, music and theatre at the 57th edition of this institution. (www.labiennale.org)

Festival de Cannes 17–28 May The holy grail of film festivals turns 70 this year. The crème de la crème of world cinema in a glam French beach town—what's not to love? (www.festival-cannes.fr)

Hay Festival, Hay-on-Wye 25 May–

4 June Lit nerds will love this celebration of writing (below), from poetry and drama to comedy and science. (www.hayfestival.com)



JUNE

Glastonbury Festival, Somerset

21–25 June Enjoy the English summer at one of the biggest performing arts festivals (above). Iconic rock band Radiohead has been confirmed as the first headliner for this year's edition. Need we say more? (www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk)

Alfa Jazz Fest, Lviv

23–27 June If jazz is your thing, Ukraine is the place to be. The festival is spread across three stages, two of which provide free entry (#win).

Watch out for the master classes held by experts. (www.alfajazzfest.com)

Summerfest, Milwaukee

28 June–2 July and 4–9 July Turning 50 this year, it promises the finest experience in live music. The act we're most excited about? Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers, who'll be on their 40th anniversary tour. (www.summerfest.com)



RULE BREAKER
by
shazé
JOIN THE LABELLION

WHERE CHEFS EAT: IN DUBAI

Indian chefs are making Dubai their playground. But where do they like to nosh? **Aatish Nath** finds out



ATUL KOCHHAR

of NRI and Lima in Mumbai, Rang Mahal at JW Marriott Marquis in Dubai

"I am a big fan of South American cuisine and **Coya** (www.coyarestaurant.com) really brings that South American spirit to Dubai. At **The Scene** (www.thescenedubai.com), the atmosphere and food are top notch and the views over the marina are really spectacular."



VINEET BHATIA

of Ziya at The Oberoi, Mumbai, Indego By Vineet at Grosvenor House Hotel, Dubai

"**Buddha Bar** (www.buddhabar.com) in the Grosvenor House Hotel has great music, ambience and Chinese food. When I want desi khaana then I head to **Old Dubai's Karama** area for chaat and dosas."



SAURABH UDINIA

of Farzi Café (which has an outpost in Dubai), Masala Bar, Masala Library, Made in Punjab, Pa Pa Ya

"**Zuma** (www.zumarestaurant.com) at the DIFC is my favourite Japanese restaurant. The food is simply outstanding and unique, with a fantastic ambience that is both casual and chic."



FARROKH KHAMBATA

of Joss, Uname, Amadeus and Café at NCPA in Mumbai, Jaan at the Sofitel Dubai Downtown

"**Nusr-Et** (www.nusr-et.com) for the lokum beef and lamb rack, **La Petite Maison** (www.lpm.dubai.ae) for salads and snails and **Zuma** (www.zumarestaurant.com) for its black cod and sea bass."



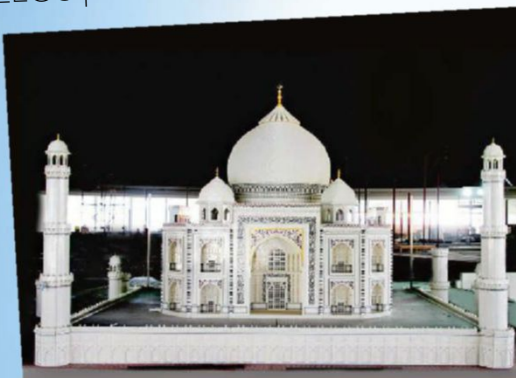
HIMANSHU SAINI

of TresInd and Carnival by TresInd, Dubai
"**Last Exit** (www.lastexit.ae), a street food truck park, would be my pick. Being a fan of street food, I like the fact that you get to pick from a variety of trucks, with different concepts including national and international street fare."

BLOCK PARTY

Dubai has built its own Taj Mahal (of course) out of LEGO pieces. How does it stack up?

The youngest of the LEGOLAND Parks, LEGOLAND Dubai has a lot to offer: six themed lands and about 15,000 models made with over 60 million LEGO bricks. You could go through ancient temple ruins and recover stolen treasure in the indoor Lost Kingdom Adventure ride or go on a factory tour and take home your own brick, fresh from the casting line. But its most stunning attraction is the model of the Taj Mahal in the indoor Miniland, which replicates the iconic monument using more than 2,80,000 white LEGO bricks with accents of gold, black and red. It weighs an astounding 6,45,000kg, and while the one in Agra took about 20 years to build, this one took just 84 days. And if you're feeling inspired, try your hand at Build A City, a 10m table where you can create your own skyline. Go on, play! (www.legoland.com) **RASHMI SHANKAR**



The secret paradise

We know. Hear the words: “private island”, and you think: the ultimate wish. What if we told you, you could cross this off your bucket list? Maldives uncovers its most beautiful secret—Velaa Private Island—where nothing is quite as it seems



If you thought you knew luxury, think again. If you believe you have experienced the unique at its most ultimate, you have no idea. It's time to re-evaluate your wildest travel fantasies and desires and get ready to expect the unexpected at Velaa—one of the most exclusive, sought-after private island resorts in the Maldives. Brace yourself. Because it WILL take your breath away.

The perfect tropical retreat. Where the cerulean sea gently kisses your toes. And the skies are always clear and sunny. This is all a dream come true at Velaa Private Island. A short 45-minute seaplane ride from Male will bring you to this paradise where natural bounty abounds—and doing nothing is simply everything. With just 47 villas and residences, 18 of them floating above the water, every accommodation here feels utterly private. Couples should vie for the Romantic Pool Residence, which can only be reached by boat, and has its own spa, beach and pool. And with a dedicated staff as charming

and quiet as the sound of the waves that surround you in this tropic idyll, discover the delight in never having to ask.

Even the most discerning travellers are left speechless, as they begin to uncover the secrets of Velaa. From state-of-the-art water toys like seabobs and a submarine—a private underwater vessel that allows guests to explore the mysteries of the Noonu Atoll underworld—to a Clarins spa with expert therapists and personalised treatments, an ocean-view sauna, snow room and snooze pad—yes this defines true bliss. And just when you thought, it couldn't get better. It does. There's even a nine-hole golf course developed by championship golfer, Jose Maria Olazabal, and tennis and squash courts, amongst other amazing sports facilities. There's also an extraordinary three-storey wine tower, an over-water, open-kitchen restaurant and an Indian chef that cooks up a storm of vegetarian delights.

Velaa caters to all kind of guests—the uber glam, the laid-back, the old and the young, the coupled and the single, and even to families with a boat-full of kids, who will especially love the Velaa Kids Club, designed by the owner's daughter herself.

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A WALK IN THE PARK

Rishna Shah embarks on a specially curated walking trail through Central Park and returns enchanted by the magic of its hidden gems

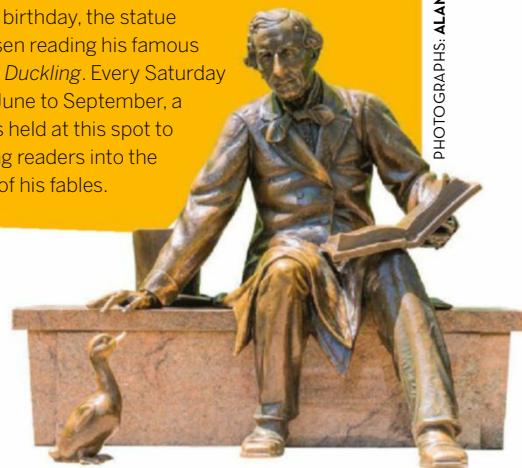


It's no doubt that Central Park is one of Manhattan's top tourist attractions. The massive patch of green sprawls across over 51 streets and more than 800 acres. First-timers will, of course, check off the expected points of interest: ice-skating at Wollman Rink, riding the vintage carousel and a horse-drawn carriage, seeing the snow leopards in the park's zoo. But that's just a fraction of what the park has to offer. To navigate the uncharted territory, we followed JW Marriott Essex House New York's hand-picked, family-friendly tour (www.marriott.com). It takes visitors to lesser-known but equally magical spots and then guides them right back to the hotel. Here are five of our favourites. →



STORYTIME AT THE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN STATUE It's hard to believe this fairy-tale spot is so close to the bustle of Fifth Avenue. Among the shallow banks of Conservatory Water, which is dotted with a fleet of model boats (sign up for lessons or rent a boat at Kerbs Boathouse), sits a bronze sculpture of Andersen. Built in 1956 to commemorate the Danish author's 150th birthday, the statue depicts Andersen reading his famous story, *The Ugly Duckling*. Every Saturday at 11am, from June to September, a book reading is held at this spot to transport young readers into the magical world of his fables.

Left from top: **a view of Central Park; the entrance of the hotel; a horse-and-carriage ride**



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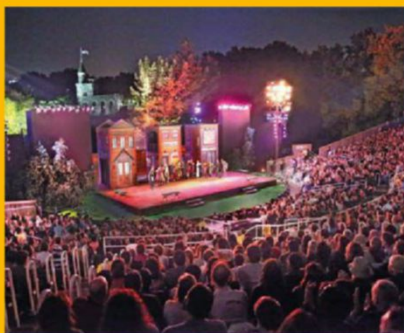
WORD OF MOUTH



2 PICNIC AT SHEEP MEADOW Even the fussiest eater will love the hotel's gourmet Central Park Picnic (available from April to October), filled with cookies, finger sandwiches, elderflower spritzer, quinoa salad and more. Pick a serene spot on this 15-acre idyll to spread out your blanket, amid sunbathers, kite-fliers, yogis, Pokemon Go catchers and fellow New Yorkers craving some downtime. The Manhattan skyline has never looked better than from this vantage point.

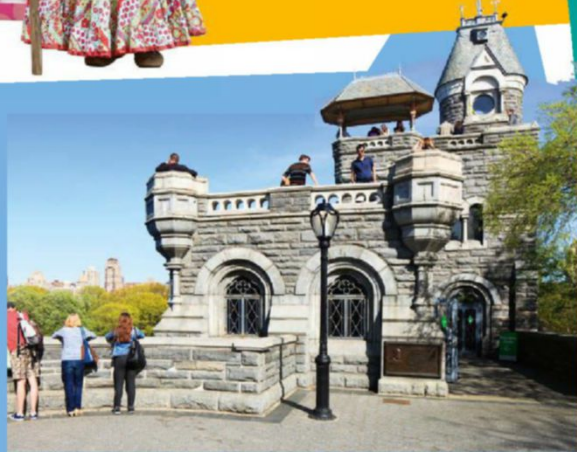
3 WHISPERING BENCH AT SHAKESPEARE GARDEN

More suitable for older kids who are familiar with the Bard's plays, this tranquil oasis houses plants mentioned in Shakespeare's works: primrose, cowslip, flax, wormwood and more. There are bronze plaques featuring famous quotes and a granite bench that carries sound from one end to the other. Play Chinese Whispers before you head to the open-air Delacorte Theater for a free viewing of Shakespeare in the Park (May to August).



5 WATCHING A HOLLYWOOD FILM PRODUCTION This one is purely based on luck, but given how many films have been shot in Central Park, never say never. The elm-lined Mall and Literary Walk served as a backdrop in *Maid in Manhattan* (2002) and *Friends with Benefits* (2011), while the Loeb Boathouse restaurant allowed filming for *27 Dresses* (2008) and *When Harry Met Sally* (1989). Another iconic depiction of the park was in *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992). But even closer, the JW Marriott Essex House New York was featured in a recent episode of the television show *Modern Family* as well as CNT's cover with actor Priyanka Chopra. So keep your eyes peeled for some star-studded action.

4 PUPPET SHOW AT SWEDISH COTTAGE Close to the dramatic Belvedere Castle, you'll find this picture-perfect structure that was transported from Sweden over 140 years ago and converted into a marionette theatre. Performances based on tales like *Hansel and Gretel*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Jack and the Beanstalk* take place every day, with themed shows for special occasions like Christmas and Halloween. If you aren't up for the walk, the cottage is a short bike ride away from the hotel and cycles can be arranged through the front desk.



CHILD'S PLAY

There's loads for little ones to do in the Big Apple. Here's a list

American Museum of Natural History Don't miss the Butterfly Conservatory seasonal exhibit (on till 28 May 2017) that flutters with 500 live varieties of the beautiful bugs. (www.amnh.org)

CoolMess Get ready for a sugar high at this sweet spot where you can make your own ice cream. (www.coolmess.com)

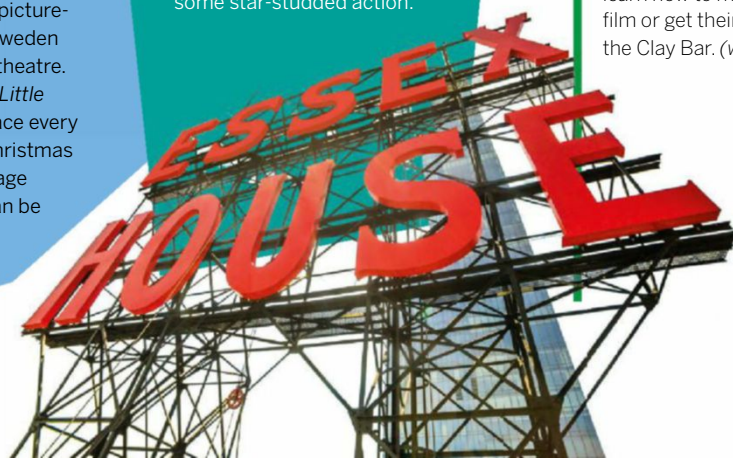
American Girl Café Your little ones will have a blast at a tea party above the Fifth Avenue super store, with reserved seating available for their beloved dolls too. (www.americangirl.com)

New York Transit Museum A good reason to visit the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge, this exhibit takes you back in time to vintage subway and bus systems. (www.nytransitmuseum.org)

Taste Buds Kitchen Junior masterchefs will enjoy cooking classes in this fully stocked, child-sized kitchen that transforms into a BYOB for adults after bedtime. (www.tastebudskitchen.com)

Broadway From *Aladdin* to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, kids will love what's showing these days. (www.ticketmaster.com)

Children's Museum of the Arts Budding creatives can learn how to make an animated film or get their hands dirty in the Clay Bar. (www.cmany.org)



WHAT'S YOUR ANDAZ?

In Hindi, Andaz means personal style. At the newly opened Andaz hotel in Aerocity, Delhi, it means that guests get to create and colour their own hotel experience from a palette of their choosing – soaking in inspiration from the vibrant hues, sights and sensual experiences of India's capital.

Hyatt's first Andaz-branded hotel in India, Andaz Delhi is only the 16th in this exclusive line of luxury lifestyle hotels created by Hyatt. "We are pleased to introduce Andaz Delhi to a city synonymous with style and local history, two elements that are core to the Andaz ethos," said Heddo Siebs, General Manager, Andaz Delhi. "With our 401 guestrooms (including 45 suites); 129 serviced apartments (expected to open next year), stylish, innovative restaurants and expansive function spaces, we hope to offer our friends in Delhi dining and event options that have not been available before."

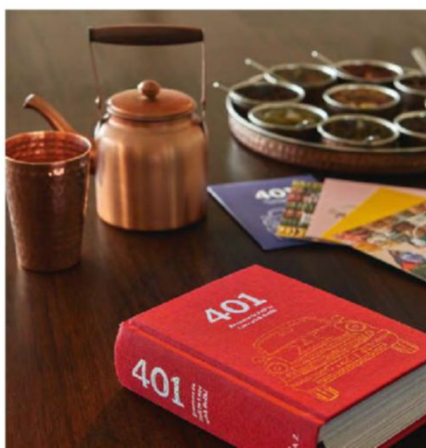
Andaz Delhi's public spaces house a stunning display of experimental Indian art by Rajeev Sethi while each guestroom features a unique curated piece of art that celebrates a reason to "fall in love with Delhi." The collection is skillfully integrated into a book displayed in each room called "401 Reasons to Fall in Love with Delhi".

Taking an innovative approach to dining

options, the hotel emphasises consciously-sourced ingredients and local artisanal produce in the uniquely conceived European food hall – AnnaMaya. At the hotel's gin bar, Juniper Bar, guests can enjoy a relaxed evening while mixologists pour their imagination into the creation of signature cocktails. The hotel also offers a spa and fitness centre, an outdoor pool and 37,500 sqft (3,484 sq m) of innovative meeting and event spaces with fluid layouts and functional design.

Similar to the brand's other hotels, Andaz Delhi offers inspiring experiences through the neighbourhood's rich history and culture, helping guests get to know their surroundings more intimately so that they arrive as a visitor – but leave feeling like a local.

For more information on Andaz Delhi, please visit delhi.andaz.hyatt.com





Going places together

Every moment of your time together is precious. That's why we're dedicated to providing a premium service from the minute you check-in, to the moment you land in any of the more than 150 places we fly to worldwide. Together we can create experiences to cherish and memories that last a lifetime.



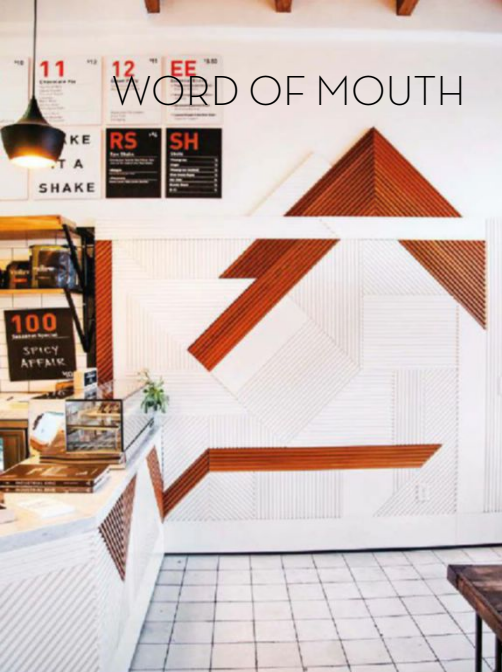
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GOING PLACES TOGETHER



WORD OF MOUTH



LOCAL
FAVE



PHOTOGRAPHS: ISSY CROKER; GARETH GARDNER; BETHANY NAUERT; TESKA OVERBEEK



JUICE BARS

Drink your way to detox at these super-hip and healthy hang-outs



Top row, from left: the first branch of **Juice Served Here, in Los Angeles**, is an all-white temple to raw foods; the group also has an outlet in **Venice, California**; fruity blends reign supreme at the zesty-coloured **Juice Truck Café in Vancouver**; **Pressed Juices** works with a nutritionist to create each of the juices available at its stores across **Australia**; fruit from organic farms in upstate New York is cold-pressed for juices at **The Butcher's Daughter in Manhattan**.

Middle row, from left: at **VIBE Liquiteria in Mumbai**, you'll get delicious salads and imaginatively named smoothies; **Miami's Juice Café** at the Standard Spa Miami Beach suggests starting the day with a citrus juice to balance pH levels in the body; the Be Berry Berry Quiet smoothie at **VIBE Liquiteria in Mumbai**; besides Red, Green and Amber juices, **SLA in Amsterdam** serves organic wine; **SLA's 'LAB'** also hosts talks and workshops by health gurus.



Bottom row, from left: the ticket booth at the 1920s theatre at **Los Angeles's Ace Hotel** is home to **Moon Juice**; you can't miss **The Juice Truck in Vancouver**, thanks to its neon-pink exterior; a shot of cold-pressed wheatgrass is the fastest way to get a vitamin hit at **Juice Baby on London's King's Road**; pick up a green blend at **Pressed Juicery**, then click over to the Chalkboard, the California group's wellness blog featuring tips, recipes and fitness advice from Jamie Oliver and Kate Hudson; shelves stocked with pretty jars and pots at **The Butcher's Daughter in Manhattan**.

HAZEL LUBBOCK





PICTURE PERFECT MOMENTS TO TOAST WITH FRIENDS IN SOUTH AFRICA.



BEST OF SOUTH AFRICA

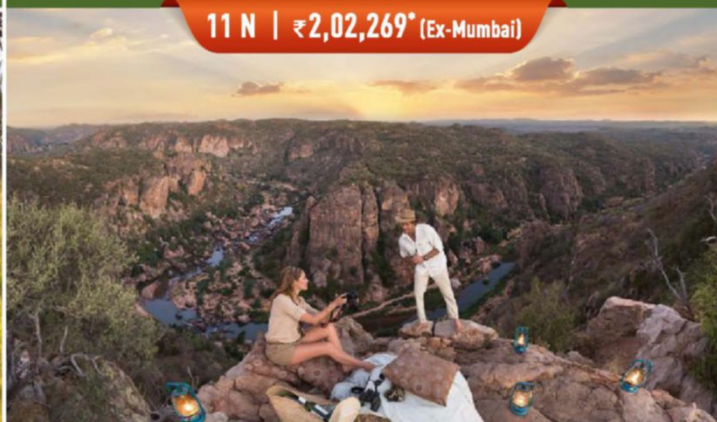
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INTERNATIONAL GROUP TOURS: Above mentioned rates are Starting From per person rates on Twin Sharing Basis. Holiday Price Includes: Accommodation with breakfast, All transfers & Sightseeings. International & Domestic Air Ticket, Airport Taxes, Visa, Over-seas Travel Insurance upto the age of 70years. Holiday Price Excludes: Govt. Service Tax of 4.50%, and any expense of personal nature. Holiday price calculated on ROE 1 ZAR = 5 INR. Rate of Exchange on the day of the booking will be applicable. Surcharges will be applicable at the time of confirmation in case any. Above rates are not valid during the blackout period. T&C applicable. Terms & Conditions may change without any notice. Offer can be withdrawn without prior notice. The tour price mentioned is applicable provided there are 20 full paying adults on a tour departure. If the mentioned group size is not met passengers will travel on FIT basis. In such a case, FIT supplement will apply and travel arrangements may change or passengers may be given an option to travel on alternate dates with prevailing surcharges. *Conditions apply.

valentine's special

Sushant Kumar tells you

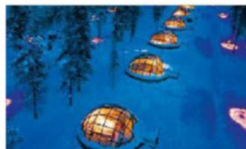
where to
celebrate when
you're in love



Venice What better way to say ti amo than a gondola ride?

Hotel Amour, Paris Have fun with disco balls, sex toys and erotic novellas at this hotel

FINO, Australia Nothing says romance like wine. Have a lazy brunch overlooking Seppeltsfield, one of the country's oldest wineries
Fregate Island, Seychelles The seven secluded beaches are ideal for a cosy hideaway



Finland Tick the Northern Lights off your bucket list as you cuddle in bed at the Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort and look up through the glass roof

and where to
break up when
things aren't going
too well



Eiffel Tower Deck, Paris

Break the news and get lost in the crowd of tourists

Sapphire Las Vegas Mourn your loss and then go play at this gentlemen's club

Haunted Mansion, Tokyo

Disneyland Just a little revenge for all the sleepless nights you had

Kingda Ka, New Jersey

The iconic roller coaster ride is a great metaphor for the bumpy ride you've had

Sulabh

International Museum of

Toilets, New Delhi If the relationship has been sh*t all along, it's best you dump it at the right spot



ALL IN GOOD HOPE

The story of South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600



This spring, Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum will present a major exhibition about the relationship between South Africa and The Netherlands. *Good Hope. South Africa & The Netherlands from 1600* (17 February—21 May) will portray about 400 years of history in 300 items: including Dutch artist Robert Jacob Gordon's

landscape panoramas of 18th-century South Africa and striking portraits, by photographer Pieter Hugo, of children born in the country post-apartheid. Look at 18th-century furniture with Dutch, Cape and Javanese influences and 19th-century flags of the Boers. Peep through spyholes in the walls to see photos of the Boer war against the British and admire a series of works that illustrate the fierce anti-apartheid campaigns in the Netherlands. For more details, you could opt for an audio tour by Dutch writer and Africa specialist Adriaan van Dis, who connects the various periods and recounts interesting anecdotes. The tour is downloadable free of charge on the Rijksmuseum app and available on rent at the museum. (www.rijksmuseum.nl)



A photograph of Nelson Mandela during his welcome at Amsterdam's Leidseplein square in 1990

BAGS FROM THE DEEP

We love the fibre-optical, luminous, sea-urchin-like creations of marine-biologist-turned-accessory-designer Ken Samudio. Crafted in his home country, the Philippines, Samudio's beautiful designs include a mix of upcycled beads made from plastic water bottles, recycled sea glass and other sustainable materials indigenous to the area. (*Clutch bag*, £975; www.saltresortwear.com)

WITH INPUTS FROM: RASHMI SHANKAR
PHOTOGRAPHS: AMY CURRELL; ALAMY;
MAURICE BOYER/RIJKSMUSEUM

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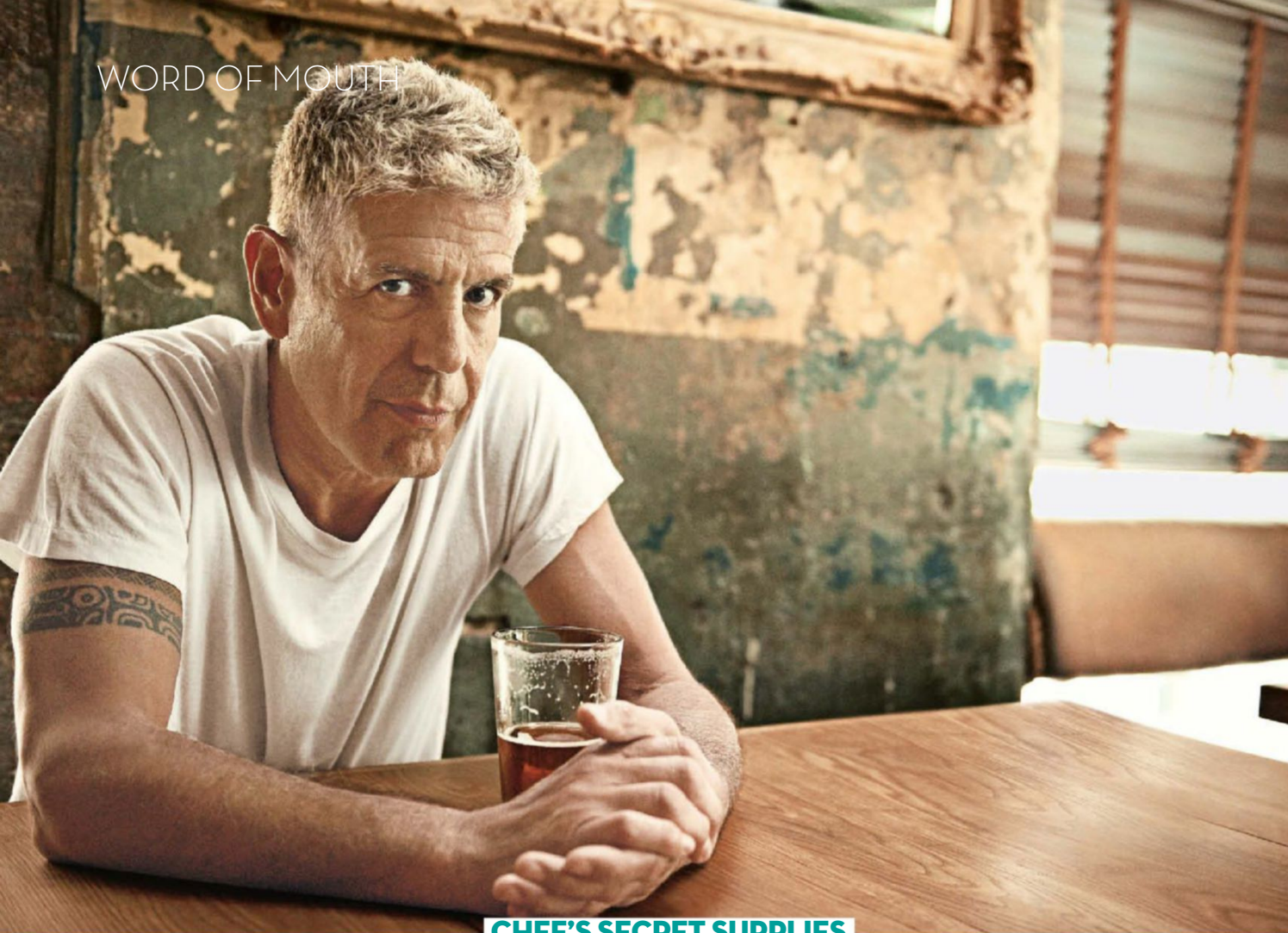
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CHEF'S SECRET SUPPLIES

ANTHONY BOURDAIN

The outspoken, offal-fixated king of the kitchen has won three Emmys, written 12 books and is opening a huge food market on New York City's Pier 57. He reveals his favourite global finds

TINNED SEAFOOD FROM BARCELONA

"I cannot resist Espinaler's tinned seafood. You couldn't imagine that oysters and mussels in a tin could be as amazing as this. The high-end tuna belly? Incredible. As are the prices."

MEZCAL FROM OAXACA

"A good, village-made mezcal from Oaxaca is wonderful and still largely under-appreciated. But hipsters are onto it. Production of the stuff is pretty limited, and it will all be gone in a few years. I'm stockpiling."

PEPPERCORNS FROM CHENGDU

"You can buy Sichuan peppercorns in New York, but only after they've been irradiated. There's nothing like the flavour, the aroma, the mouth-numbing, endorphin-flooding pleasures of these things fresh and untouched in Chengdu."

KRAMER KNIVES FROM OREGON

"It can take five years to even get the chance of buying one from legendary knife-maker Bob

Kramer, who is based in Portland. It can cost as much as a sports car. But if you're lucky enough to get one, you shall know that no finer, entirely handmade, one-of-a-kind chef's knife exists on Earth."

PATA NEGRA FROM SPAIN

"Cramming an entire leg of jamón Ibérico—say from Salamanca—into my suitcase would be, I believe, illegal. But I am sorely tempted. If God made ham, this would be it."

PIRI-PIRI SAUCE FROM MOZAMBIQUE

"The name is Swahili for 'pepper pepper'. I love this homemade hot sauce. It's good on anything, but particularly great with fish. I'm not far from putting it on my Cheerios for breakfast in the morning."

BOURBON FROM KENTUCKY


"Sean Brock, a chef who specialises in American Southern cooking, has converted me to the thrills of bourbon. But due to the arcane and unpredictable distribution process,

it's almost impossible to find a bottle of Pappy Van Winkle in Kentucky (where it's actually made). I'm always on the lookout for it, and for its precursor, Very Old Fitzgerald."

BALSAMIC VINEGAR FROM MODENA

"If I'm anywhere near Modena, I'll hunt down some very old, top-quality balsamic vinegar. As I have come to learn, there's balsamico and then there's balsamico. Acetaia Pedroni is one of those really brilliant houses that has been making it for generations."

RED KARA-AGE KUN FROM JAPAN

"I'm addicted to these deep-fried chicken cutlets, specifically the ones from Lawson convenience stores in Japan. It makes no sense. It's a guilty pleasure. I know exactly where to find a Lawson in Narita International Airport, and I never get on the plane without loading up on these bad boys." 

Appetites: A Cookbook by Anthony Bourdain (Bloomsbury; ₹2,170) is in stores now.

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GO GOA like a local

Sabreen Sukthankar, restaurateur and owner of Black Sheep Bistro, shares her tips



Pub crawl through Panaji It's one of the most fun things to do with a group of friends. Start with a shot at each watering hole, then tank up on your drink of choice before heading on to the next stop. By the third stop, you'll have built just enough

of an appetite to devour some Goan fried shrimp or chorizo—perfect to line your stomach for a long night. Begin with the inconspicuous **Pinto - Bar & Restaurant** (098600 30842), just opposite St Inez church, then move on to central Panaji, where you will find such venerable institutions as **Godinho Bar And Restaurant** (098221 00315), **George Restaurant & Bar** (0832 242 6820), **Top Gear Pub** (098221 20520) and my favourite, **Casa Xetio** (098230 49650).

Visit Divar Island It's a place that's often overlooked. The experience starts with the ferry ride over, which almost instantly puts you in a relaxed, 'Goa' state of mind, which continues as you drive past the beautiful old Portuguese-style houses and the stunning green landscape. All you have to do is find a nice little spot to park and unpack your picnic basket.

Head to the beach It's a bit clichéd, I agree, but one of my favourite things to do on a day off is grab a book and head to the beach. I really do enjoy going to the Anahata Retreat on Ashvem, which has an elevated sitting area overlooking the sea. 📖



'JARRING' LANDSCAPES

In his experimental project *Jarred and Displaced*, photographer Christoffer Relander captures the Finnish countryside of his childhood—in mason jars.

Hit his website to see how he does it. (www.christofferrelander.com)

THE FIVE STAGES OF LONDON

Karina Verma lists the theatrical productions to look out for on your next trip

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

Daniel Radcliffe stars in this 50th anniversary celebration of Tom Stoppard's *Hamlet* spin-off. Witty, dark and full of existential meanderings, the show is a treat for lit nerds. (www.oldvictheatre.com; 25 February—29 April)

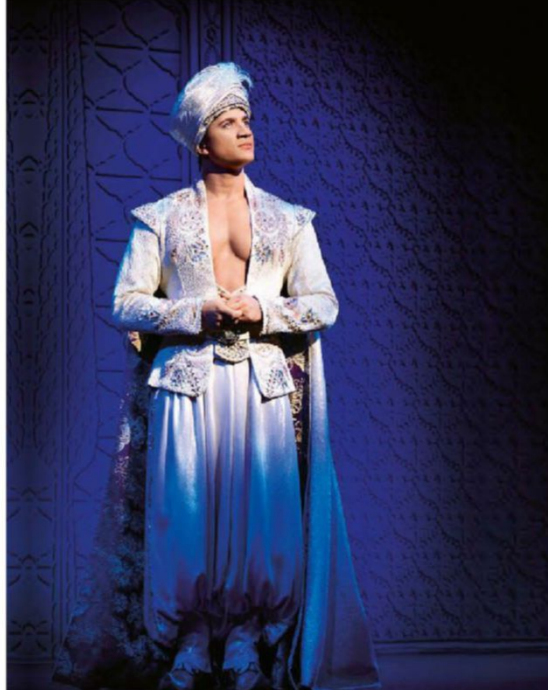
ALADDIN Composer Alan Menken and lyricist Tim Rice, with 11 Oscars between them, have teamed up again for this glittering show (pictured), which features all the songs from the film plus a few new ones. (www.princeandwardtheatre.co.uk; 19 December—3 June)

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

Multi-award-winning Imelda Staunton and *Game of Thrones* star Conleth Hill in Pulitzer- and Tony-winning playwright Edward Albee's classic about the breakdown of a marriage. You will marvel at the genius of the storytelling even as you squirm deliciously in your seats. (www.haroldpinter.theater; 22 February—27 May)

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL - AMALUNA Those extravagant thrills that one associates with this show are amplified by the grandeur of the Royal Albert Hall. Otherworldly, imaginative and utterly extraordinary, this troupe continues to exceed expectations and defy the limitations of the human body. (www.royalalberthall.com; 12 January—26 February)

HAMLET BAFTA-winner Andrew Scott (of the BBC's *Sherlock* fame) stars in this retelling of Shakespeare's classic tale at the small, ultra-trendy and experimental Almeida. (www.almeida.co.uk; 17 February—8 April)



PHOTOGRAPHS: ADRIAN LOUW; RADHIKA RAJ DEEN VAN MEER

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The glory that's Kashmir

From its snow-kissed peaks to its full bloom flower beds, whether you're an adventure seeker or a nature-lover, discover all kinds of paradise when you arrive at Jammu & Kashmir



Kashmir, the 22,274 sq km region in the country's north, is the very definition of the words picture perfect. Its stunning alpine appearance, with green, cloud-scraping mountains, vast blue lakes and fields sprigged with wild lavender. Its quiet charm and captivating surroundings. Its babbling brooks, sweet shikaras selling flowers and local-crowded dhabas. Its white winters and full bloom summers. Kashmir—it is simply mesmerising.

There are many reasons to visit this destination. But one of them certainly is to be completely exhilarated—by skiing

down the majestic Himalayan slopes. And while **Sonmarg** and **Pahalgam** offer beautiful wintery sights, **Gulmarg**, just a two hour drive from Srinagar, is the nation's definitive skiing destination, and what we consider the Switzerland of the East. Stay in the town's luxury hotel—**The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa**, where its Ayurveda spa will indulge your senses, its restaurant's steak and salmon will tantalise your taste buds and its bathtubs will offer you panoramic views of the mountains.

Unlike ski resorts in the Alps that have dozens of stylishly groomed slopes,

Gulmarg is raw. It has five international-level Poma ski-lifts on the lower slopes, and one of the highest cable cars in the world, the **Gulmarg Gondola**, which travels a distance of 2.7km ferrying tourists 13,000ft up **Mount Apharwat**. The 'powder' is also comparable to the finest in the world—soft and fluffy snow—which is what an experienced skier looks out for. There are six bunny slopes, with different gradients and levels for beginners, and the higher slopes are for professional skiers. From the top you can see the jagged **Pir Panchal** rise like an open jaw across the horizon. You can choose to drop onto hundreds of miles of

Snow or sun. Cold or colourful.
Kashmir is only one—nothing like it exists.
And just like the Mughal Emperor Jahangir
once wrote: “If there is heaven on earth,
it is here, it is here, it is here”.



backcountry powder or take to the inbound slopes. Beginners can also ski from the gondola's mid-station. Get your equipment from **Kashmir Alpine Adventures**, which has been renting out ski gear since 1988. It stocks all the equipment you would need: from skis, boots, poles and helmets to goggles and ski suits. It also provides guides, heli-skiing opportunities and hotel packages. You can enjoy skiing in Gulmarg before Christmas, around mid-December and continue up to mid-April.

If winter in Kashmir is about gliding down slopes coated in fresh snow, then summer is all about walking up grassy knolls and watching the valley come alive, rife with many hued flowers and graceful Chinar trees. Kashmir has always been famous for its gardens and Chinar orchards—from the **Mughal Garden**, **Nishat Garden** and the **Chashma Shahi** gardens or the **Shalimar Garden**, but the most ethereal sight altogether is the magnificent **Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden**, located to the eastern bank of **Srinagar's** world-

famous **Dal Lake**.

Opened in 2007, it is the largest tulip garden in the world. With the captivating **Zabarwan Mountain** providing the perfect backdrop, as soon as you walk in, your eye will get riveted to the numerous parallel running rows of more than a million multi-coloured tulip flowers. One popular variety is “Takee Butin” which has been fertilized with a wide variety of bulbs, resulting in the generation of Hybrid Tulips. And while there are around 15 collections of Tulips in the world, the garden here features eleven groups with almost 60+ varieties on display, and more than 2.6 million bulbs. From Water Lillies to the Single Late Tulip, the stand out is the rare black coloured Queen of the Night Tulip. The flowers bloom only for about 15-30 days in a year, and depending on the temperature, the blooms may be delayed or arrive early, between end of March and early April, so plan your summer sojourn accordingly.

Make a day out of it and carry a picnic basket placed with goodies from Srinagar's

famous bakeries—walnut cookies are very popular as is their bread. For a better ringside view of the garden, as well as the shimmering Dal Lake, drive to the **Kral Sangari** hill, located close to the charming village of **Brein**. There are plenty of vantage points from there. The entire Tulip Garden when viewed from this hilly area seems like a well spread out colourful carpet. Time permitting, embark on an enchanting boat ride on the lake, have dinner at Char Chinar, a spot right in the middle of **Dal Lake** where four Chinar trees rise on a small island and indulge in a specially prepared Kashmiri wazwan feast. Finally, live in a houseboat for the most authentic experience.



Sydney: food's paradise

Once upon a time, beach-loving Sydneysiders were happy to leave the hotshot cooking to Melburnians. But now, the city is known as one of the world's great foodie destinations.

Michael Snyder reports from Macleay Street in Potts Point



9.30AM BREAKFAST

Yellow, No 57

Arrive early on weekends to beat the pre-beach rush: although this bistro serves a refined and ambitious dinner menu, its brunch—especially the grilled liquorice bread—brings in the crowds. (www.yellowsydney.com.au)

11AM SHOP

Bottega del Vino, No 1/77, and The Farm Wholefoods, No 3/81

Go up the road to the beautifully curated Bottega del Vino for cheese and wine from the New and Old Worlds. Then stop at The Farm Wholefoods to get a taste of Sydney's obsession with all things prettily packaged and organic, such as raw coconut-and-date rolls. (www.bottegadelvino.com.au; www.thefarmwholefoods.com)

12.30PM DELI AND DRINK

Fratelli Fresh, No 81

Top-notch groceries—cured meats, fresh pastas, eye-poppingly pricey olive oils—and a bar under one roof. Grab a Negroni, stroll the aisles and use the booze as an excuse to buy things you shouldn't. (www.fratellifresh.com.au)

1.30PM LUNCH

The Apollo, No 44

This elegant restaurant (*pictured*) is a wonderful combination of minimalist design (raw concrete, marble counters) with hearty Greek food: baked lamb shoulder, fatty and luscious under its crisp skin, and little glass jars of creamy taramasalata. (www.theapollo.com.au)

3PM COFFEE

Coffee Tea & Me, No 87C

Everything closes in Sydney around this time. Everything, that is, except coffee shops. This minuscule joint—there are just nine seats—serves up Campos Coffee amid the homespun décor. (www.coffeeteaandme.com.au)

6PM APERITIF

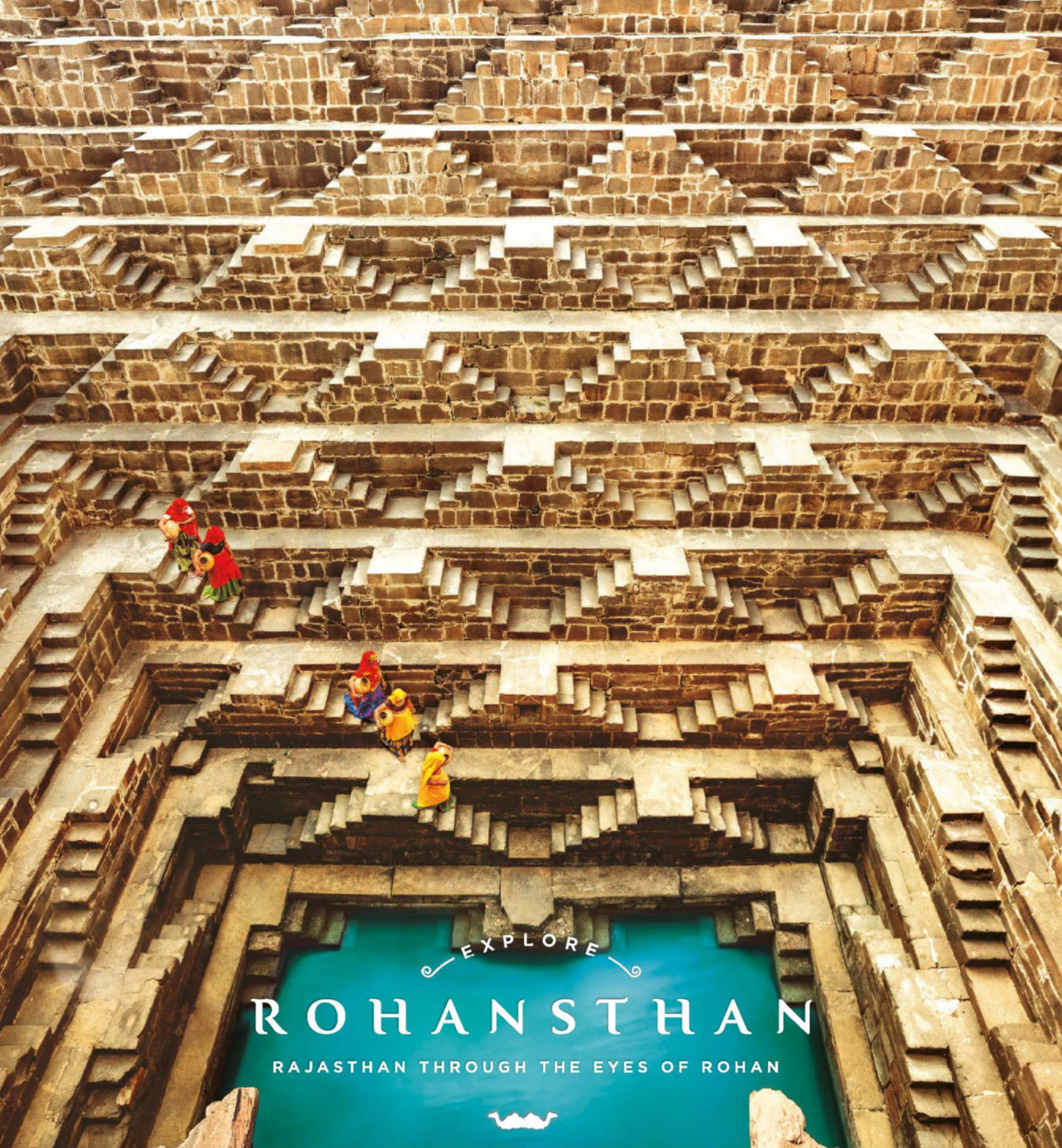
Monopole, No 71A

All low lighting and slick dark wood, this sexy spot is run by Brent Savage and award-winning sommelier Nick Hildebrandt. Let the knowledgeable staff guide you through the 500-strong wine list as you snack on beef pastrami and a kangaroo tartare. (www.monopolesydney.com.au)

7.30PM DINNER

Billy Kwong, No 1/28

Star chef Kylie Kwong turns out modern Chinese fare created using indigenous Australian ingredients. Think caramelised wallaby tail with black bean and chilli. (www.billykwong.com.au)



EXPLORE
ROHANSTHAN
RAJASTHAN THROUGH THE EYES OF ROHAN

"It was surreal! The geometry of the place, the criss-crossing complex design of Chand Baori made me wonder how someone could even think it up! It's like a maze in a step well!" – Rohan Chattopadhyay, Ranchi.

www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

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RAJASTHAN
JAANE KYA DIKH JAAYEI



In and out

Here's your perfect express, booze-fuelled itinerary for Charente in southwestern France. By **Raj Aditya Chaudhuri**

Day 1: Skip the bigger towns and stay in the charming countryside. We recommend the 17th-century **Le Logis mansion** (www.brownandhudson.com; €1,246 or ₹88,000 per person for a two-day visit) in the quaint hamlet of Juillac Le Coq, about 115km from Bordeaux. It is the spiritual home of Grey Goose vodka, so you know there will be plenty of great cocktails at all hours of the day. Walk around the property's vineyards with cellar master Francois Thibault and ask him to show you his stash of Cognac, too. After a lazy lunch by the beautiful pool that overlooks the surrounding vineyards, you can sign up for a class on how to make your own bread from the same wheat used to make Grey Goose vodka. Take a sunset bike ride around the area or play some petanque. Head north to the town of Gensec-la-Pallue and go say hello to Yann LaFond at his sturgeon farm. And do not leave without some of his delicious caviar.

Day 2: Head into Cognac and stop by the 11th-century Chateau de Cognac, a museum to the golden liquid and have a few sips of the house brand, Baron Otard. Take a walk around the town centre and stop for lunch at Le Coq d'Or, a 110-year-old brasserie. Relax on the banks of the Charente River before heading back to Le Logis for cocktail hour, and learn how to make a Vesper, a classic concoction of Bombay Sapphire, Grey Goose and 57-year-old vermouth garnished with lemon zest. 🍹



Top row from left: **the hamlet of Roissac; Thibault relishing a glass of Cognac; biking is a great way to explore Roissac.** Second row from left: **Luisa from Le Coq d'Or; the Le Logis grounds; a ballroom inside Chateau de Cognac; lunch at Le Logis.** Third row from left: **on the banks of the Charente; the house special at Chateau de Cognac.** Right: **making a Vesper at Le Logis**





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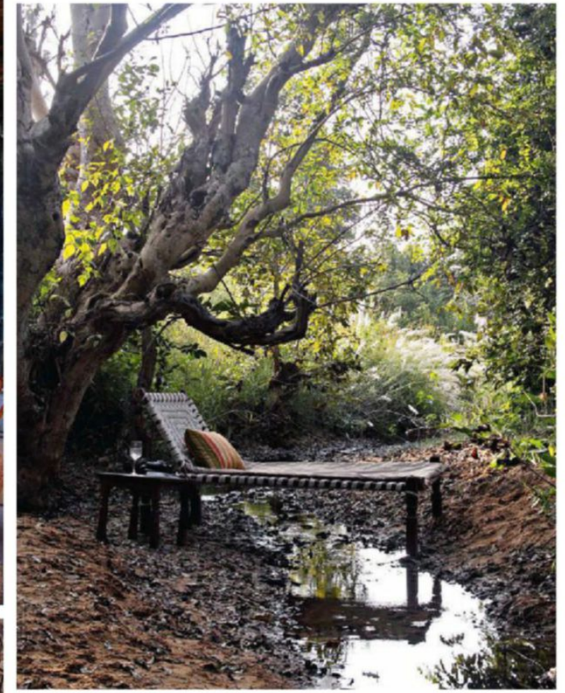
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

HOTEL BREAKFAST

BABYLONSTOREN, SOUTH AFRICA

At Babel, the hotel's cowshed-turned-restaurant, the question "What's for breakfast?" is best answered by taking a look at the eight-acre garden. Your double-cream yogurt might come loaded with guava and Cape gooseberries, nut, fennel and curry powder granola and a spoonful of blue gum honey from on-site hives. Top the wood-fired country loaf—made with wheat from the farm—with heaps of salty Serrano-style ham and Gorgonzola (or just a slab of hand-churned butter). And if you had a glass too many of Babel red the night before, a shot of ginger in your fresh-pressed beetroot and blood orange juice should do the trick.

SARAH KHAN



Entering the tiger's lair

Visiting the native feline community at Bandhavgarh National Park is something you've always wanted to do. But while you're at it, feel like royalty by hibernating at the Samode Safari Lodge

Maharaja Martand Singh of Rewa was the first to capture the beautifully dangerous white tiger, in the jungles of Madhya Pradesh. What started off as a private game preserve for the Maharajas and their guests, later came to be known as the Bandhavgarh National Park.

A step into the 400 sq km park and you're in the midst of exotic birds, butterflies and mammals alike. Above all that, Bandhavgarh has the highest density of tigers in the world, making it a mecca of tiger safaris. But at the heart of this flora and fauna is a place that reeks of luxury – the Samode Safari Lodge. This is where your adventures are spiced with opulence. This lodge of 12 private villas is built around a tastefully furnished lounge, with wooden floors leading to

an open-air deck, crackling fireplaces, a pristine swimming pool, jogging trails, an avant-garde gymnasium and sonorous nature walks. Besides, you can also retreat into the well-equipped spa or explore the near-by Mardari village.

The Samode Safari Lodge organises adrenaline-gushing, morning and evening safaris in its customised 4x4. You are attended by an expert local tracker and a professional guide who give a human voice to the jungle's sounds and sights,

allowing you to comprehend them better.

And once you're back from your trip, you find yourself safely ensconced in a private villa bedecked with amenities like a spacious lounge, an open-air bath court and a private verandah overlooking the forest to name a few.

Whether it's a meal at the restaurant, a barbecue campfire under the canopy of a starlit sky, a romantic set-up in your villa or an adventurous picnic into the wild, dining at the lodge is an experience in itself.

So, if you're contemplating a vacation in the wild, consider Samode Safari Lodge. You'll thank us later for suggesting it.



For more information, visit www.samode.com



Saltwater crocodile with fermented mangrove seed and black ant salt at Orana in Adelaide. Opposite page: the open kitchen at Central in Lima

GET AWAY
TEL AVIV OSAKA THANJAVUR LIMA BELFAST

WHERE TO EAT IN 2017

Great holidays are inseparable from great food. **Sona Bahadur** lists this year's 10 most delicious destinations





ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

Sydney and Melbourne might be Australia's official culinary stars, but Adelaide is quietly stealing the show with its 'off-the-eaten-track' appeal, stunningly diverse wine country (Barossa in the northeast, Clare Valley in the north, Adelaide Hills in the southeast and McLaren Vale in the south) and world-renowned produce. Not to mention the legendary chef Maggie Beer. The city has more restaurants per head than anywhere else in Australia. From pintxo bars to an African menu at **Africola** (www.africola.com.au), there's a place and dish for every mood and taste. Besides, few regions on the globe care so deeply about a territory's produce and its providers. Chef Jock Jonfrillo's modern Australian diner, **Orana** (<http://restaurantorana.com>), which champions indigenous food and has a foundation to help the Aboriginals, is the perfect case in point. Love food festivals? Plan your visit around **Tasting Australia** (30 April—7 May 2017), South Australia's most happening foodie event.

Clockwise from top left: **the bar at Street ADL by Chef Jock Jonfrillo of Orana; prawns and plums at Orana; Victoria Square in Adelaide; grilled sausages are a popular snack in Taiwan; octopus and meat skewers at Taipei's Shilin Night Market; tourists at the market**

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

The secret is out. Taipei is seriously cool. Interactive opera, incense-hazed temple ceremonies, panoramic views from the towering Taipei 101 and stunning Chinese jades at the National Palace Museum—the city has it all. The capital of Taiwan is also taking over as the world's go-to destination for street food (sorry, Beijing, Bangkok). At **Shilin Night Market** (www.shilin-night-market.com), kerbside cooks whip up a palate-tingling variety of xiaochi (street food) or tapas such as stinky tofu and fried chicken balls. Slurp up a pile of noodles or some broth, demolish a sweet-spicy grilled sausage or an oyster omelette, then start again. Global dim sum chain **Din Tai Fung** (www.dintai fung.com.tw) is an obvious choice, but don't miss the soup dumplings at **Kao Chi** (www.kao-chi.com), either. Beef soup shows up everywhere, but you'll taste the best at Yong Kang Street. At upscale **RAW** (www.raw.com.tw), Taiwan's 24 micro-seasons inspire stunners like tomato salad dressed with ohba sansho and sashimi and the perfect egg and wild vegetable salad.



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GET AWAY



PHOTOGRAPHS: PER-ANDERS JÖRGENSEN; PABLO TERZ

MODENA, ITALY

Modena is charming and riddled with little joys. Located in the Emilia Romagna region of northern Italy, this hidden gem is steeped in medieval history, as exemplified by its magnificent Romanesque cathedral. A short train ride from Milan, this is the home of Chef Massimo Bottura's **Osteria Francescana** (www.osteriafrancescana.it), ranked on the San Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants list as the planet's best restaurant. But there's more to Modena's food scene than fine dining. Its quaint neighbourhoods contain a world of deliciousness—small panini joints, cool aperitivo pit stops, giant stuffed tortellini, flavourful Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and an astounding array of cured meats. The indoor food market, **Mercato Albinelli** (www.mercatoalbinelli.it), beckons with peak-season produce like lush Vignola cherries. You'll be hard-pressed to find a purer expression of balsamic vinegar anywhere on the planet, so check out one of the area's many vinegar cellars. And on a different note, don't miss the Ferrari museum, a testament to Modena's stellar car legacy.

SKÅNE, SWEDEN

There's a reason the food cognoscenti has been tracking every move in Skåne, the southernmost province of Sweden. About an hour's drive from Malmö, which is itself a 30-minute train ride from Copenhagen, this bucolic town, where farm-to-table is more than a trendy catchphrase, is the source of some of the most interesting meals in Scandinavia. Studded with medieval manors and castles, the rural landscape is all lush farmlands, gently rolling hills and leafy forests. The food is just as pristine, and refreshingly free of fads. At the 25-seat **Daniel Berlin Krog** (<http://danielberlin.se>), you can taste just how much love the namesake chef puts into the thoughtful dishes he creates—like the cold, smoked mackerel with red seaweed and beets—using foraged ingredients and freshly hunted game. Trendy spots like **Bastard** (www.bastardrestaurant.com) and **Bord 13** (www.bord13.se) are redefining culinary cool. So is **Ängavallens Gårdsbutik** (<http://angavallen.se>), Sweden's first farm shop, offering organic delicacies. But the most exciting thing about Skåne is its culinary traditions. Think goose dinners, eel parties, egg cake and Spettekaka, a party cake made using potato flour batter, sugar and egg.

A table at Osteria Francescana in Modena. Opposite page: Chef Andreas Dahlberg of Bastard in Skåne





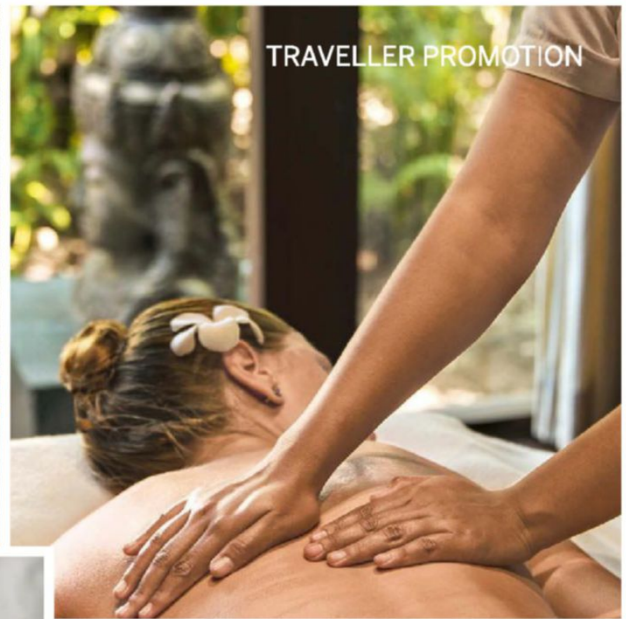
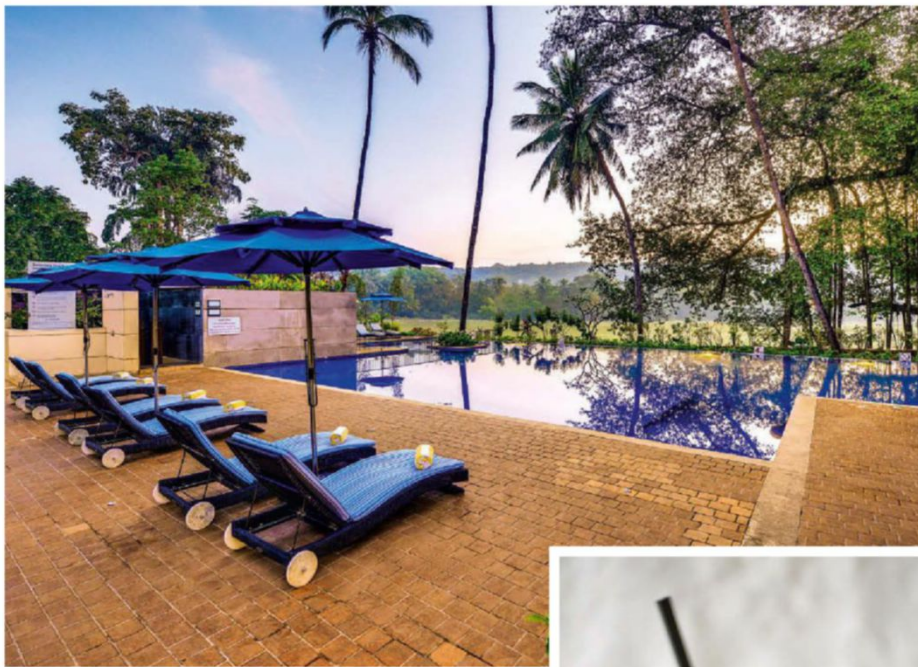
TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

With influences from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and the Mediterranean, Israel's multi-ethnic cuisine shines with eclecticism. Yet the food scene here has not always been an easy sell. Of late, though, a new hipster food culture is emerging in Tel Aviv, rooted in quality ingredients and shaped by the vivid imagination of chefs. The result is a genuinely exciting foodie destination, a city in culinary bloom. Witness its uber-chic cafés and bars, and bustling markets like **Levinsky** and **Serona**, which overflow with boutique olive oil and wine and everything gourmet. Among restaurants, **Santa Katarina** (www.facebook.com/santakatarina2) by Chef Tomer Agay, which offers Mediterranean cuisine, is a standout in a crowded field. Tel Aviv's recent wave of vegan and vegetable-forward eateries, like **Café Anastasia** (+972 3529 0095) and **Nanuchka** (www.nanuchka.co.il), is fast earning it the reputation of being a vegetarian's paradise. The revived cocktail scene is adding to the allure of Israel's most cosmopolitan city. But the hot new trend? Israeli food with an Indian twist. Check out **DOSA BAR** (www.facebook.com/DOSABAR) and **Captain Curry** (Rehov Aluf Kalman Magen, Sarona Market).

"Tel Aviv's recent wave of vegan and vegetable-forward eateries is turning it into a vegetarian's paradise"

Clockwise from left: **a beach bar in Tel Aviv;**
Chef Tomer Agay at Santa Katarina;
tofu and herb cutlets at Nanuchka





TRAVELLER PROMOTION

On your mark. Backpack. Goa!

You're always looking for excuses to visit Goa. Novotel Hotels & Resorts, Goa gives you two more reasons to return to your favourite holiday destination



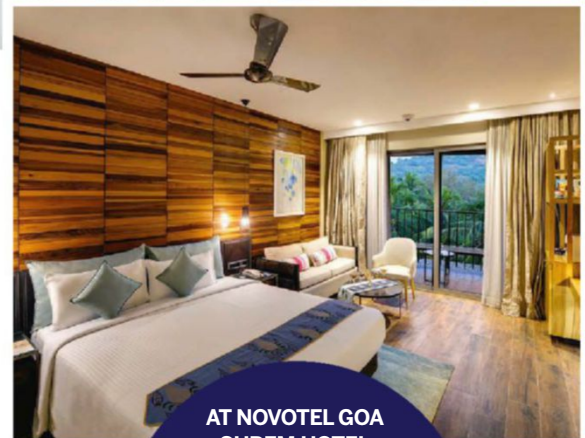
Every time you take a trip to Goa, you return with a story worth reminiscing. The next time should be no different. With two five-star properties Novotel Goa Resorts & Spa and Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel by AccorHotels, you're bound to have a whale of a time. Centrally located 300 metres from Candolim Beach, it is surrounded by hip restaurants and bars.

Together they offer a whopping 270 rooms with a freshly launched luxury wing. 64 of these luxury rooms loom over views that can stun your senses, some overlook an azure pool, while others offer scenic vistas of Candolim's hillocks.

While beaches and sunsets are synonymous with the place, Novotel's exclusive fitness centre is well-equipped with a state-of-the-art gymnasium. And if you're a thrill-seeker, besides zip lining and zorbing, you could also choose to go on an early morning cycle trek with your kids. Beach bums have more options to choose from as the hotels regularly organise beach volleyball, excursions to the Sinquerim Fort close

to the Candolim beach and relaxing fishing sessions in a traditional boat by the Nerul river. On the other hand, beer fans can cheer to the Asian themed bar at Novotel Goa Shrem Hotel which boasts an exquisite collection of Asian beers, cocktails and bites—waiting to be sampled. But that's not the end of it. Vero Cibo, a mediterranean restaurant at Novotel Resort & Spa dishes out international flavours that make you relish life while a trip to the Balinese styled Warren Tricomi Salon & Spa offers rejuvenating treatments. Whether it is a wedding sangeet, a sundowner, or a private party, Novotel leaves no stone unturned for you to experience luxury at its finest.

All in all, when you stay at Novotel, a little bit of Novotel stays with you, even when you leave. Experience it and you'll agree.



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BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

The capital of Northern Ireland is awash with Norman castles and picturesque valleys, besides being home to Titanic Belfast, the world's largest *Titanic* exhibition. But it is also where you get artisanal products of such succulence that it will make you dizzy. Grass-fed meats, cheeses, duck-liver paté, smoked salmon—one could go on and on about the city's top-notch produce. The Taste of Ulster platter at **Robinson & Cleaver** (www.robinsonandcleaver.com) allows you to sample the finest products from across Northern Ireland (like Irish ham hock hash and Madeira wine jelly) as does the historic **St George's Market** (www.visitbelfast.com). The city's fast-growing restaurant scene is becoming increasingly posh. Feast your way through some standout places: **OX** (www.oxbelfast.com) is known for its seasonal menu and food and wine pairings, while **DEANES EIPIC** (www.deaneseipic.com) offers knockout fare like duck egg yolk and lobster with sweetcorn purée. Incidentally, last year was officially celebrated as the year of Food and Drink in Belfast. The feast continues in 2017.

LIMA, PERU

Some of the most interesting (and awarded) places to dine continue to pop up in Peru's sprawling capital. At **Central** (www.centralrestaurante.com.pe), ingredients from the Amazon's lush ecosystem are used to create reimagined masterpieces like *tallos extremos*, an inspired tuber dish made with wild oca and Andean yams. **Maido** (www.maido.pe), Chef Mitsuharu Tsumura's Nikkei (Japanese-Peruvian cooking) sensation and Chef Gaston Acurio's modern Peruvian eatery **Astrid y Gaston** (www.facebook.com/AstridyGastonLima), are both excellent. There's a gazillion more delicious reasons to visit: Peruvian-Chinese Chifa cuisine, charming family-run restaurants, Pisco-themed mixology and characterful cevicherías like Acurio's **La Mar** (www.lamarcebicheria.com), which does a knockout sole ceviche, and **Canta Rana** (Genova 101, Distrito de Barranco), which offers 17 varieties of the dish. When you're not noshing, gape at Museo Larco's astounding collection of pre-Colombian art, or get a glimpse of Peru's ancient civilisations at Museo de la Nacio.



PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER TESTANI

Diners at Santa Rana, a ceviche restaurant in Lima. Opposite page: a dish of stewed apples at OX in Belfast

GET AWAY



LYON, FRANCE

Located at the confluence of the Rhone and Saone Rivers in east-central France, Lyon boasts an embarrassment of culinary riches: its many bouchons, or inns, dating to the 19th century, its top quality regional produce, its farmers markets. Two hours by train from Paris, the birthplace of French gastronomy far outshines the French capital in all matters foodie. At establishments like **Café Comptoir Abel** (www.cafecomptoirabel.com), such Lyonnaise delicacies as andouillette (chitterling sausage) and quenelle (pike dumpling) abound. Chef Paul Bocuse's **Auberge du Pont de Collonges** (www.bocuse.com) is known for old-school French classics like lobster salad and crayfish in Pouilly-Fuisse, while **La Mere Brazier** (www.lamerebrazier.fr) does inventive riffs inspired by seasonal ingredients. Hit **Les Halles de Lyon Paul Bocuse** (www.halles-de-lyon-paulbocuse.com) for high-end produce. Lyon also has a vibrant arts scene: an outstanding art collection, a major opera house and centre for ballet and Institut Lumiere, dedicated to the Lumiere Brothers. But back to food, Lyon's already considerable culinary credentials will get a further boost in 2018, when it launches an International City of Gastronomy, a space that will house a hotel, restaurants and shops that convey a "modern vision of gastronomy". Bon appetit!

OAHU, HAWAII

Hawaii's sugar-white beaches and turquoise waters make for the perfect escape. But it's the central Pacific archipelago's versatile food that offers you a gateway into its unique culture. Successive waves of immigrants—Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Japanese, Filipino and others—brought their own distinctive food cultures to this tropical paradise, resulting in a melting pot of cuisines. On Oahu, there's a sea of unexplored dishes and flavours begging to be savoured—kulua pork, chicken long rice, poi and lau lau (pork wrapped in taro leaf), manapua (meat-filled buns), spam (or spiced ham) and sensational shaved ice. **Eating House 1849** (www.eatinghouse1849.com), a new restaurant concept from Chef Roy Yamaguchi, is a nod to Hawaii's plantation days, with strong Portuguese and Filipino accents. Try the plantation paella, made with tiger shrimp, clams, chicken, rice and Portuguese sausage, and served in a cast iron skillet. For real-deal local fare, head to **Helena's Hawaiian Food** (www.helenahawaiianfood.com). Honolulu's **Chinatown**, with its tangle of noodle shops, herbalists and temples, is always a riot of tastes and smells.

Clockwise from top left: a street in Old Lyon; Les Halles de Lyon Paul Bocuse, a gourmet food market; shaved ice is a speciality on Oahu; Wakiki Beach in Honolulu; a display of fruit at Honolulu Market



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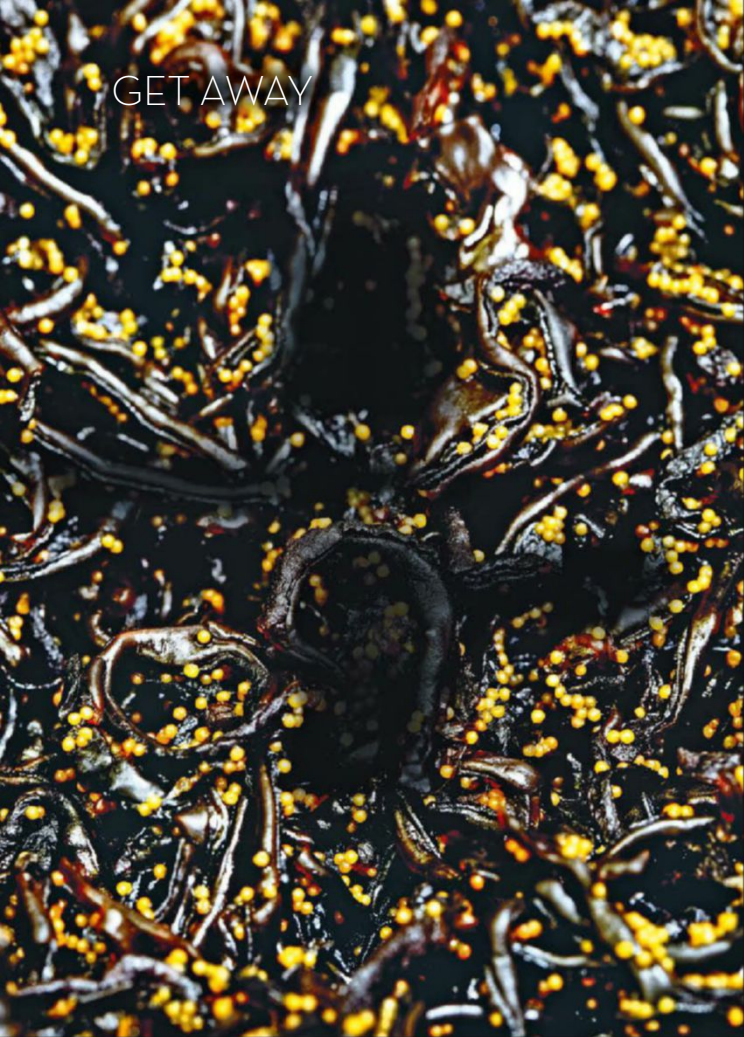
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GET AWAY



OSAKA, JAPAN

A short flight from Tokyo, the largest city in western Japan is among the globe's great dining destinations. Visit Osaka and you'll discover just how versatile it is. The birthplace of kaiten sushi and instant ramen stands out for its endless array of comfort food: okonomiyaki (thick, filled pancakes, made with yam flour batter, seafood, pork and kimchi), takoyaki (octopus-stuffed dough balls) and kushikatsu (deep fried, breaded skewers). With its incredible number of Michelin-starred restaurants (96 and counting), the city's fine-dining scene is currently exploding. A must-try is Chef **Hajime Yoneda's eponymous restaurant** (www.hajime-artistes.com), where he gives you a taste of his unique philosophy with dishes like chikyu, meaning planet Earth, made using 110 different vegetables, grains and herbs all arranged around shellfish foam. Then there's chef Tetsuya Fujiwara's **Fujiya 1935** (www.fujiya1935.com), a modern Spanish restaurant with three Michelin stars. When you're not admiring the beautiful traditional architecture, potter around neon-lit **Dotonbori**, lined with cool eateries. And don't forget to experience one of Osaka's depachikas or food markets located in the basement of department stores.

"Chef Hajime Yoneda gives you dishes like chikyu, made of 110 vegetables, grains and herbs, all set around shellfish foam"

Clockwise from top left: **seaweed at Fujiya 1935; diners at a restaurant in an Osaka food market; a chef preparing takoyaki**

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHARYN CAIRNS; RAYMOND PATRICK

A Pop-up Gourmet Paradise

The Elitaire Lounge at Leela Ambience, Gurugram takes you on a culinary journey with a special menu and one-of-a-kind dishes, crafted and curated by executive sous chef Abhishek Gupta



How many times have you walked into a fine dine restaurant only to find a menu with average dishes, listed under exotic names? Thankfully, The Elitaire Lounge at Leela Ambience, Gurugram brings you a unique set-menu created by the executive sous chef Abhishek Gupta. Bursting with flavour, it features Asian and European classics, as well as, offbeat dishes that will delight and thrill your taste-buds. From using unique preserving and curing techniques to incorporating a mix of ancient and modern preparation styles, like slow-cooking and sous-vide methods, Gupta has used his culinary prowess to give each dish a unique flavour.

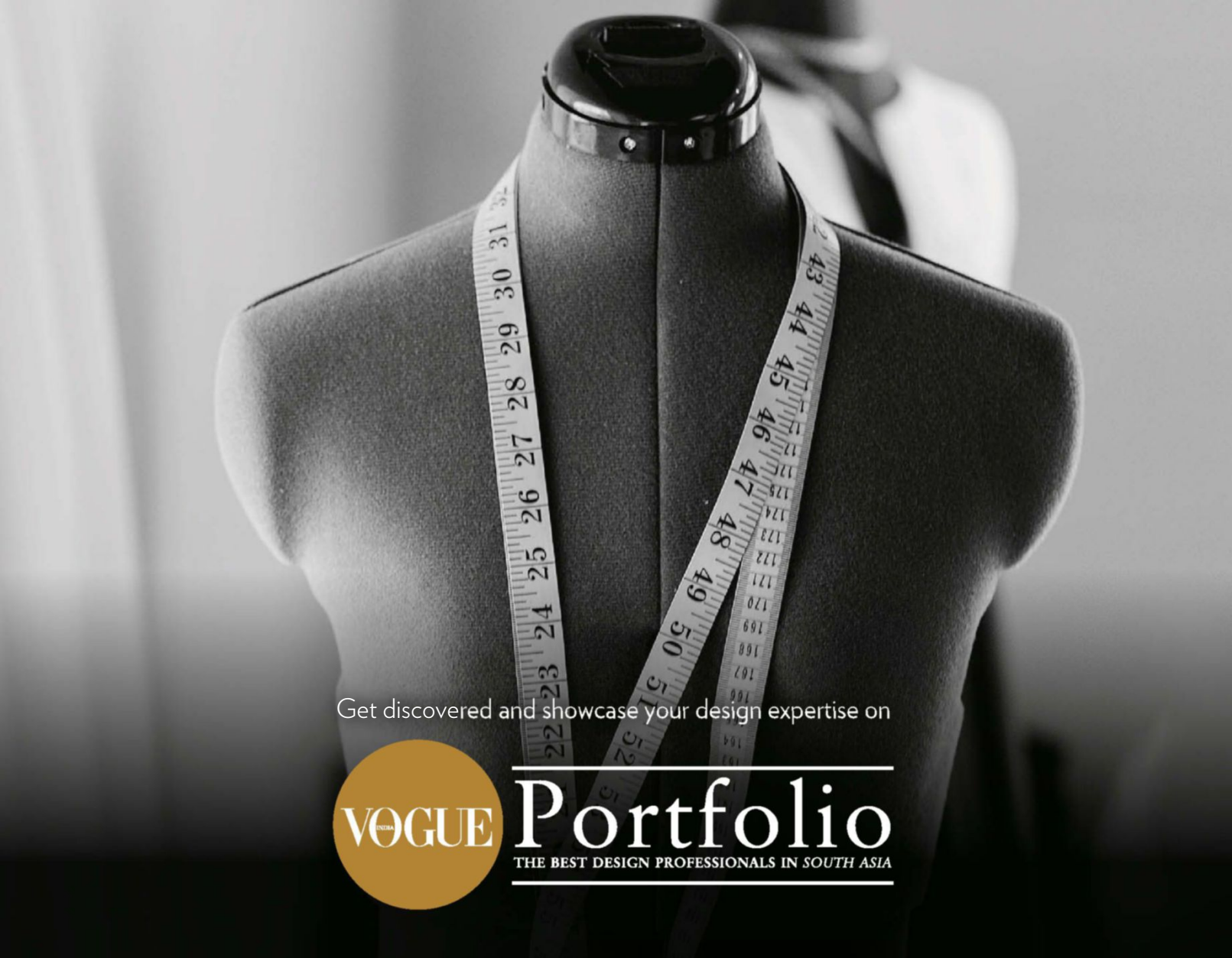
Known for his versatility in the kitchen, Gupta gathers influences from global food cultures to craft signature dishes of his own. He has worked with some of India's finest gourmet brands and his talent has taken him from Kolkata and Mumbai to Jaipur and now Gurugram. His talent was recognised in 2005 during his aspiring years at IIMH, Kolkata, where he received the 'Student of the Year' award. He then went on to win the James Beard Foundation Scholarship in 2013. Always working toward honing and fine tuning his skills, he is currently pursuing a Pro Chef Certification from the Culinary Institute of America, New York. His cooking also reveals the influence of celebrity chef Rene Redzepi, who he trained under at

the two Michelin-star restaurant Noma in Copenhagen.

So, if you're looking for an exclusive epicurean experience, step into The Elitaire Lounge. The flavours will stay with you long after you've gone home.

- Eight-course set menu (with gourmet juices) for ₹5,250+taxes per person
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GET AWAY

THANJAVUR UNRAVELLED

Maratha history, Tamil food, art and architecture—**Janhvi Acharekar** discovers that the exquisite southern city is the result of a historical fusion that few know about

GET AWAY

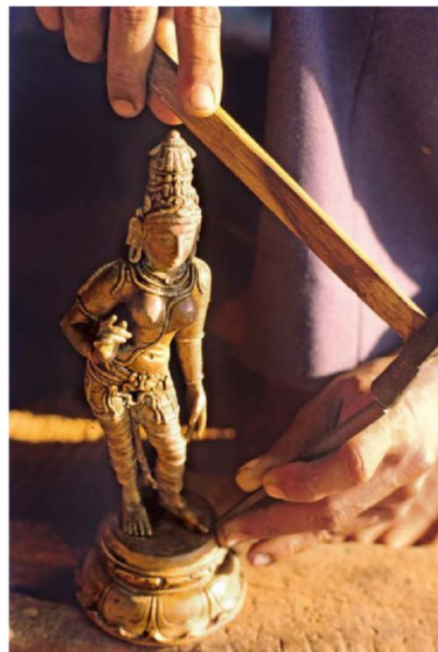
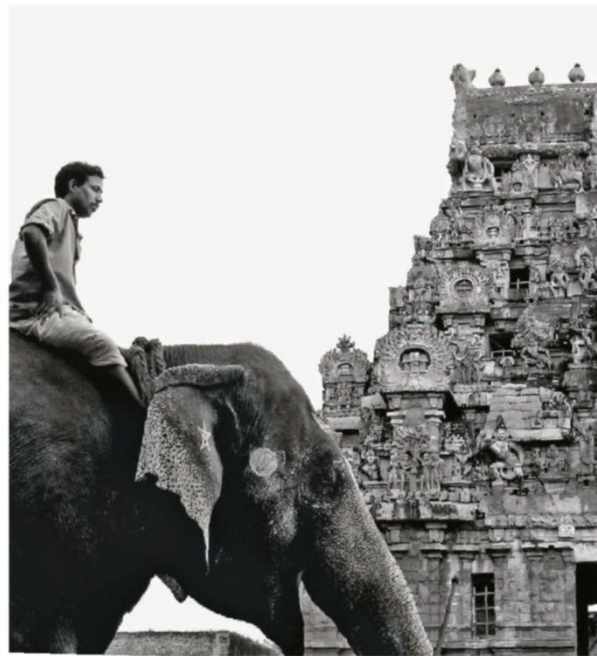
I'm a Maharashtrian in Thanjavur. Uninteresting trivia but for the fact that this small city in Tamil Nadu was once ruled by the Marathas, and a residual population still calls it home. So in my quest for the familiar, I learn about sunthi, a traditional Maratha dish of spiced meatballs delicately strung together with banana fibre. During weddings, after the ceremony, the groom is invited over by the bride's family, offered some sunthi and challenged to unthread the fibre without allowing the meat to disintegrate. Blasphemous as it may sound in a temple town, the meat preparation seems like the perfect metaphor for Thanjavur—a place whose diverse past is held together by the common threads of religion and art.

Thanjavur (or Tanjore, as it was once known), on the banks of the Cauvery River, is a city with a dazzling history. Presided over by the great Brihadeeswarar temple, over 1,000 years old and a UNESCO World Heritage site, it is where much of Chola art and architecture reached its pinnacle. The birthplace of the famed Tanjore Quartet (the four brothers responsible for the development of Carnatic music and Bharatnatyam), the city is synonymous with Tanjore painting—a style that uses gold leaf, precious and semi-precious stones. Today, it is where some of the last makers of the veena survive. But few know that the Maratha king Shivaji's legacy lives on in Thanjavur. For it was Shivaji's stepbrother Ekoji I (also called Venkoji) who wrested power from the Nayak kings in the late 17th century, giving the city its unique culture that survives through the descendants of the Bhosale clan that the warrior-king belonged to. Interestingly, it was under the patronage of the second last Maratha king, Serfoji II, that many of Thanjavur's famous arts flourished. However, the only visible Maratha influence today is seen in the City Palace, where the royal family continues to be in residence.

Although referred to locally as the Maratta Palace, the surreal royal complex was in fact built by the Nayak kings in the 17th century and extended by the Marathas, whose Durbar Hall is adorned with colourful frescoes.



Beautiful Chola bronze and stone sculptures in the palace's art gallery vie for attention with the gigantic 92ft skeleton of a whale washed ashore in Tharangambadi in 1955 and now housed in the Arsenal Tower. The Saraswathi Mahal Library which exhibits over 50,000 palm leaf and paper manuscripts, displays, alongside Serfoji II's eclectic European book collection, ophthalmological case sheets from 1860, human physiognomy charts and illustrations of Chinese torture methods. The peaceful playground adjoining the palace is believed to have once been the site of a zenana that burned down with its resident queens. Adjoining the palace on East Main Street is Kalyana Mahal, a dilapidated building where the many wives of the last Maratha king, Shivaji II, once lived. Today, the first floor is illuminated by the shine of Tanjore paintings—mythological scenes of Ganesha and baby Krishna line the walls as the artistic tradition is carried on by the descendants of the Bhosale family. The dwindling Maratha population that once lived in and around the palace has, by now, integrated into the city's culture, but retains its identity in the form of cuisine, customs and a dialect of Marathi entirely its own. The Maratha presence may also be felt in an unlikely place—Thanjavur's Schwartz Church. Serfoji II was interested in theology, and this otherwise unremarkable →



“Thanjavur is a place whose diverse past is held together by the common threads of religion and art”

Clockwise from top left: the ornate Durbar Hall of the City Palace or Maratta Palace features arches, pillars and frescoes; an elephant and its mahout at Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur; bronze-casting is an ancient art and here, the process of creating an idol is underway



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church is adorned with a sculpture commissioned by the ruler, of himself at the deathbed of his mentor, the missionary Reverend Christian Schwartz.

And this Maratha presence is felt across religious sites. Thanjavur's grandest structure, the Brihadeeswarar temple, is managed by the current scion of the clan, Babaji Bhosale.

The temple's attractions are many. Chennai-based historian Pradeep Chakravarthy, author of *Thanjavur: A Cultural History*, casts light on some. "The temple is known for its grand vision and

minute details. The personality of Raja Raja Chola I [the ruler who built it] is writ large across the architecture. Be sure to run your hands over the inscriptions," he tells me. "I'm going to give you a task," he adds. "The tiny Durga temple close to the northern gate of the city is Tanjore's oldest Chola structure. I want you to zoom in on the idol's earrings and tell me what you see in their design." I'm reduced to a schoolgirl with a puzzle. But more on that later.

How the massive Shiva temple complex—one of three Great Living Chola Temples →



Ancient inscriptions at the Brihadeeswarar temple

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY



Ajit Bhawan—India's first heritage hotel and the erstwhile home of Maharadhiraj Sir Ajit Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Umaid Singh of Jodhpur—surrounds you with the imperial luxury that was once only enjoyed by kings

Luxury is almost synonymous with royalty, as the former has always been the consort of noble lineage. But what if we told you that you don't need to be blue-blooded to savour opulence? And all you really have to do is stay at Ajit Bhawan—India's very first heritage hotel. It was built in 1927 as the royal residence of Maharadhiraj Sir Ajit Singh, the younger brother of Maharaja Umaid Singh of Jodhpur. Decades later, in the '80s his son, late Maharaj Swaroop Singh, along with his wife Rani Usha, pioneered the "heritage hotel" concept in India, and opened its doors to travellers. Located in the heart of the Blue City, it has lush gardens and ornate porches, which are adorned with ancient artefacts and art-deco vestiges. Coupled with state-of-the-art amenities, luxurious accommodation options and a traditional brand of hospitality, it will more than fulfil

your *Jodha-Akbar* fantasy.

While each room here is a work of art created by celebrated designer Raghavendra Rathore who has beautifully incorporated Rajasthan's cultural ancestry, the operational aspects of the hotel are overseen by his brother, Suryaveer Singh Rathore, who has taken Indian hospitality to the next level. You can stay at one of the beautiful Deluxe Rooms, Vintage Suites

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and Luxury tents. But if you're looking for a true Rajputana experience, we recommend one of the Ajit Suites that comes along with a private butler and gives you access to the Maharaja's private rooms, which are still used by the existing royal family.

While Jodhpur Café is a multi-cuisine indoor restaurant, Garden Restaurant is where you can enjoy an alfresco meal to Langa folk music and Kalbelia dances in the evenings, after a tippie or two at J Bar. You may even relish Rajasthani cuisine at Dhani Restaurant. Once you've pampered yourself at the Ajit Spa, the hotel will be happy to organise excursions, desert and village safaris, and vintage car rides through Jodhpur with a personal butler.

So, if you're in this city and are looking to immerse yourself in regal splendour, consider staying at Ajit Bhawan. You'll thank us later for suggesting it.

GET AWAY

(the other two are in Darasuram and Gangaikonda Cholapuram near Thanjavur) was built, is, in itself, a bit of a puzzle. Consecrated in 1010 AD, its soaring vimanam (the tower above the sanctum sanctorum) can be seen from afar. And both the cupola atop the vimanam and the enormous Nandi statue within the temple are monolithic. The granite used in the temple's construction is believed to have been transported from Tiruchirappalli, 57km away, and lugged by elephants, which were made to climb atop planks to the higher levels of the structure. Today, the architecture combines various styles, with additions under the Pandyas, Vijayanagr Kings, Nayaks and Marathas, all of whom, by turns, ruled this glorious kingdom. It is beautiful on a moonlit night when sculptures of the Nataraja, once symbolic of Chola power, loom large over devotees gathered there for the evening prayers.

I see more of these sculptures in Swamimalai, another temple town 35km from Thanjavur, where the fine tradition of Chola sculpture is kept alive. Here, Chola bronzes continue to be sculpted with the ancient lost-wax technique known as madhuchchishtavidhana in Sanskrit. In the workshop of Sambandamurthy, sthaphathis (bronze-casters) make a mould with a mixture of clay, plaster and husk applied to a figure sculpted in beeswax. When heated, the wax melts out of the mould, leaving it hollow for molten metal to be poured in. When the metal has cooled sufficiently, the mould is destroyed and the sculpture is finely chiselled to perfection.

Further on, in Sickalnayakanpet, are the last of the Karuppur Kalamkari textile artists. National award-winning artist Emberumal's family arrived in the Nayak court 600 years ago, from what is now Andhra Pradesh. "Their figurative art on textiles, also known as Chithira Paddam, is distinguished by black outlines of mythological scenes and intricate borders," says artist VV Ramani. Known for his work on textiles, he's my companion on this journey along with his writer wife, Hemalatha. Interestingly, the black dye is made with a mixture of iron rust and jaggery.



From left: **the entrance of the City Palace; a 100-year-old Tanjore painting depicting Lord Ram and Sita**



And in Thiruvaiyaru, the birthplace of musician saint Thyagaraja and the site of an annual Carnatic music festival in his honour, traditional knowledge is getting a boost from the Marabu Foundation. The NGO, led by Carnatic musician Rama Kausalya, is dedicated to the education of underprivileged children from nearby villages. Along with computer lessons, students also learn old Tamil nursery rhymes, music and board games like pallanguzhi, which is played with tamarind seeds or cowrie shells.

Back in Thanjavur, the shops are lined with Tanjore dancing dolls. Known as thalaiatti bommai, these three-tiered, painted terracotta figurines of dancers with their moving bodies were originally made of coconut shell. The colourful dolls are unique to the city and I pick one from the workshop-residence of doll-maker Bhupathy. "In Tamil, someone who waggles their head [in agreement] a lot is called a thalaiatti bommai," laughs Hemalatha, as we stop for some refreshments.

"Thanjavur's grandest structure is the massive Brihadeeswarar temple, managed by the current Maratha scion"

The city is a vegetarian's paradise with its variety of poriyal (vegetable preparations), pachadi (curried/pickled salad), rasam, sambar, traditional rice dishes such as puliyotharai (tamarind rice) and thayir saadam (curd rice) and desserts such as payasam and peni (crispy vermicelli). Disappointingly, Maratha cuisine is scarce. I turn to Chakravarthy for help. "I only dine at the homes of Maratha friends," he says before asking, "Have you seen Durga's earrings yet?" I haven't. First, I must seek a rare musical intervention.

A small passage off South Main Street leads to the workshop of veena-maker M Narayanan. Here, wood from the jackfruit tree is fashioned into the age-old musical instrument, then carved, polished and decorated before stringing, then sold to musicians in India and overseas. Serendipitously, a veena concert has been organised at Svatma, the charming hotel where I'm staying. One man's craft is transformed into another's sublime art as the strains of Raga Hamsadhvani, played by musician Ramadoss, fill the air.

It seems only appropriate that I stay in a heritage property here, and the city offers two. Svatma stands as almost an emissary of Thanjavur, and one that is entirely worthy of it. A luxury hotel that has been built around a heritage home, it derives its aesthetic →

A man with a beard, wearing a white shirt and a brown vest, stands in a doorway. The doorway is framed by a wall made of hundreds of small, stacked, miniature houses or dollhouses, creating a dense, textured wall. The background shows a modern building with large glass windows and a curved facade. The floor is made of large, light-colored tiles.

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 A MEMBER OF DESIGN HOTELS

GET AWAY

sensibility from the region's art, architecture and spiritual beliefs (think heirloom veenas, sepia photographs of Bharatnatyam dancers, Chola motifs). Svatma's owner, architect and Bharatnatyam dancer Krithika Subrahmanian, has restored and designed the property to reflect the city's ethos in a manner befitting this erstwhile kingdom of wealth and culture. Its two vegetarian restaurants serve delicious Tamil and European fare and there's a wonderful open-air terrace bar. But, here, too, Maratha cuisine is not in my stars. In the lounge adjoining my room, from across an antique dining table and love seat, a glittering portrait of Serfoji II appears to look at me (in kinship, no doubt) with a hint of a smile.

In contrast, Tanjore Hi is high on kitsch. A short walk from the palace, this quirky hotel is a refurbished royal home with trippy, backlit photo collages in shades of pink and blue that ensure psychedelic dreams through the night. Its rooftop restaurant serves a mélange of French and Indian cuisine created for an international palate, and offers a variety of organic coffees and other items from the group's own plantations and farms. Maratha cuisine continues to elude me, but local fare is close at hand at the Venkata Lodge (known for its pattinam pakoda and patronised by the likes of Indira Gandhi and Sivaji Ganesan back in their day), Sree Ariya Bhavan (where the Chettinad cuisine is to die for) and Sathars, which offers meaty delights in this temple town (try the Ceylon egg paratha and biryani).

Finally, it's time to find the answer to the task set to me by Chakravarthy. The Nisumba Soodhani (Durga) temple stands close to the palace complex and Tanjore Hi. The goddess's silver earrings gleam teasingly, but my telephoto lens isn't powerful enough to view their details and my eyes fail the test. I text Chakravarthy to concede defeat. He reveals the mystery: hidden in the design of each earring is a skull.

Tanjavur, like the sunthi, has neatly unravelled itself before my eyes. "Did you like the city, Madam?" inquires the driver as I crane my neck for one last glimpse of the Cauvery River. In response, I nod my head vigorously. Just like a thalaiatti bommai. 🕉



A veena-maker
in Thanjavur

NEED TO KNOW: THANJAVUR

GETTING THERE

Fly to Tiruchirappalli via Chennai with Jet Airways (www.jetairways.com) from major Indian cities. Thanjavur is 57km from the airport.

STAY

Svatma

The 38-room boutique hotel features artworks, three vegetarian restaurants, pool, spa and yoga centre. (www.svatma.in; doubles from ₹10,000)

Tanjore Hi

This 15-room heritage boutique hotel is located near the City Palace complex. (www.dunecogroup.com; doubles from ₹6,600)

EAT & DRINK

Sree Ariya Bhavan

Known for its Chettinad cuisine, 100 varieties of dosa, and set thali. Try their Madakathan dosai. (04362 230 457)

Venkata Lodge

Established in 1947, this is a Thanjavur institution, known for its home-style thali and pattinam pakoda. (Gandhiji Road, Attar Mohalla)

Sathars

Sathars offers multicuisine non-vegetarian fare. (04362 231 041)

SEE & DO

Brihadeeshwarar temple

This UNESCO World Heritage site is a fine example of Chola architecture. (www.thanjavurpalacedevasthanam.tnhrce.in)

City Palace Complex

It comprises the grand Durbar Hall, Raja Serfoji Memorial Hall, the Royal Palace Museum, an art gallery, the Arsenal Tower and the Saraswathi Mahal Library. (www.tnarch.gov.in)

Schwartz Church

Founded by Danish missionary Christian Friedrich Schwarz and built with the support of Raja Serfoji II in 1779, this church has historical marble tablets and sculptures. (Giri Road)

Nisumba Soodhani temple

This temple to the goddess Durga is where Chola kings came to pray before going to war. (Poomal Ravathan Kovil Street)

Art & architecture tours

The grand Chola temples of Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram, both UNESCO World Heritage sites, are a short drive from Thanjavur. Ask your hotel concierge to arrange visits. Also visit the Karuppur Kalamkari artists of Sickalnayakanpet and the bronze sculptors in Swamimalai.

Sambaji Bhosale

The studio of this royal descendant is located in a part of the palace complex. Tanjore paintings don't get more authentic. (Kalyana Mahal, East Main Street)

Choza Nadu

This is one of the many places near the palace complex where you can find Thanjavur's famous dancing dolls called thalaiatti bommai. (642/A, East Main Street)

Kandiya Heritage

Its deceptive façade leads into a large, dingy space filled with antiques, bronzes, collectibles and furniture. (634, East Main Street)

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★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★

Alila Fort Bishangarh

Weekend escapes just got more royal with this new hotel in a heritage fortress just outside Jaipur. **Prasad Ramamurthy** has the scoop

WHERE TO STAY


MALDIVES **LONDON** MAURITIUS **GSTAAD** NEW YORK



High up on a granite hill, in the midst of the rolling Aravalis, sits Alila's second Indian property (after Goa), that's been seven years in the making. That much effort has gone into striking a balance between conservation and construction becomes obvious when you consider that the 59 suites have 22 different layouts. The aim was not just to work within the confines of the existing heritage structures (former royal residences and soldiers' quarters), but also to ensure that visitors get the most out of the spectacular location. Grand windows in each suite open out to jaw-dropping views of the countryside, while inside, rooms are fitted with mod-cons that will be much appreciated—comfortable daybeds, wi-fi and large bathrooms with standalone tubs.

This part new-build, part heritage hotel has five F&B outlets including Kachhawa Lounge, that serves chai, coffee, cakes and Champagne, and Madhuveni, a bar with a cigar and cognac spot hidden in a turret. On the wellness front, an organic garden provides produce for the kitchens. And a spa, offering the programmes Alila

is famous for, lies hidden away in the dungeons. Haveli, at the foot of the mountain, houses some of the public spaces, including a pool, recreational areas for children of all ages and expansive lawns that are perfect for hosting events.

Given that the fort is a good 60km from Jaipur (200km from Delhi), it's a destination unto itself; great for both weddings and weekends away from the city. You could spend the day riding horses in the hinterland or visiting marble artisans and carpet weavers in nearby villages. Or you could do nothing—curl up on a daybed by the pool, with a book for company and a drink in hand. Lying there, being waited on hand and foot, looking out at the undulating landscape below, you might just begin to understand what it would have been like to live the life of a royal. 

ALILA FORT BISHANGARH

Off NH-8 at Manoharpur, Bishangarh, Jaipur (www.alilahotels.com); doubles from ₹27,000)



The St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort

The island idyll unites the brand's global ethos with lovely local touches. **Samira Sood** reports

The first thing you notice about the Maldives' beautiful new resort is that it is a departure from the classic, traditional look that the St. Regis brand is known for, and takes its cue from its surroundings. So chandeliers are made of seashells, much of the furniture and artwork features wood reclaimed from disused boats, the overwater villa section is shaped like a manta ray and the spa resembles a lobster. But what hasn't changed is the thoughtful, detail-oriented service and facilities that give St. Regis properties across the world that inimitable stamp. You feel it at the airport in Malé, where the hotel's dedicated airport butlers make sure you're taken care of and safely delivered to the seaplane that will take you to your not-so-humble abode, and in the attentiveness of the personal butler assigned to each villa. You feel it in the rooms, which are entirely iPad-controlled—you don't even have to get up to turn the TV in your direction. #thegoodlife

Occupying 22 acres of Vommuli Island, the 77-key resort includes a variety of accommodation types, from Garden Villas to Sunset Overwater Villas, each with a private pool, a Bang & Olufsen TV, free wi-fi and a

mirror-embedded TV in the bathroom (take it from me, there is bliss in watching *Friends* reruns while soaking in the tub). The pièce de résistance, though, is the 16,500sq ft John Jacob Astor Estate. Named after the founder of the original St. Regis in New York, the three-bedroom overwater pad features everything the other rooms do, plus an infinity pool, a mini-theatre, an exercise space, spa treatment rooms and staff quarters.

With all that, it's tempting to just wake up late, order room service, float in your pool (the deep end of which is only 4ft, so even non-swimmers will feel safe) and stare at the 100 shades of blue—but that would be a mistake. Because then how would you experience the joy of watching the sun burst into a reddish glow over the dancing waves as you breakfast on poached eggs with a seafood twist at Alba, the all-day restaurant? Or of watching the sky turn a burnished purply gold as you sip a perfectly spicy Island Mary (the hotel's take on the brand's signature Bloody Mary) out of a seashell at the Whale Bar? How would you know what it's like to hold a 261-year-old bottle of wine at Decanter, the elegant underground wine cellar that houses more than 2,000 bottles

and is so cold because of the wine-friendly temperature, but so warm thanks to the gorgeous shawls you're given if you need? Or to stare at the ocean as your spa therapist's magic hands melt away those knots after a day spent parasailing, diving or striking the perfect yoga pose mid-air?

As you walk back to your room at night, the white sand cool beneath your feet, a blanket of stars above, the breeze messing up your hair, you realise that the satisfied fullness you feel isn't just because of the exquisite meal you just devoured, but because of a deep sense of gratitude. That you're here, that, for just a few days, this paradise is yours. **T**

THE ST. REGIS MALDIVES VOMMULI RESORT

Vommuli Island, Dhaalu Atoll, Maldives
(www.starwoodhotels.com; doubles from MVR30,430 or ₹1,33,340)

GETTING THERE

Fly to Malé with SriLankan Airlines (www.srilankan.com; stopover in Colombo) or SpiceJet (www.spicejet.com; stopover in Kochi) from Mumbai or New Delhi. The hotel is a 45-minute seaplane ride away and arranges transfers. Indian passport-holders get visas on arrival in Malé.

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★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★

Constance Belle Mare Plage

A major facelift has visitors returning to this luxe Mauritius resort, says **Prasad Ramamurthy**

Square your shoulder," says Rakesh, my golf instructor, as he uses the length of a club, held against the back of my shoulder, to show me how. I'm a rookie learning how to better my swing at the newly refurbished driving range at Legend, the Constance Belle Mare Plage's European Tour golf course. Earlier this year, Barry Lane outshone Colin Montgomerie and declared himself king of this course for a second time. Not surprising, then, that the resort's primary clientele consists of Europeans, many of whom return year after year with families in tow, to play on its two 18-hole golf courses. My visit, though, is prompted by a successful renovation that this east coast resort, which first opened in 1975, has undergone.

Apart from the driving range, the other big beneficiary of the resort's makeover is

the haute cuisine Blue Penny Cellar. It now has a newly minted wine cellar, complete with a private dining space, and houses over 15,000 bottles from 1,300 international wineries. Plus, its wine list has already won a *Wine Spectator* excellence award. Here, I fare better than on the golf course, distinguishing between a Chilean Merlot and a Spanish Sangiovese with ease.

Beyond the tree-covered public areas—eight restaurants and bars, four of which make excellent use of their outdoor seaside setting, four pools, a spa and two putting greens—all the 278 rooms, suites and villas have been given a serious colour-coded sprucing up. Hibiscus-red artwork and furnishing in the rooms, aquamarine in the suites, royal blue for the villas. Noticeably so, it's the basic Prestige category rooms that have the best blue views. #valueformoney

And while you can spend your time waterskiing, windsurfing or wakeboarding, the 2km white-sand beach is dotted with ample loungers for those who prefer bumming over breaking a sweat.

While I do take all of this in, today, green's my colour of choice. Time to work on that swing again, I think. 🏌️

CONSTANCE BELLE MARE PLAGE

Belle Mare, Poste de Flacq, Mauritius (www.constancehotels.com; doubles from MUR17,200 or ₹32,000)

GETTING THERE

Fly direct to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport with Air Mauritius (www.airmauritius.com) from Mumbai. The hotel is about 60km from the airport and can arrange transfers. Indian passport-holders receive visas on arrival.



PHOTOGRAPH: PRASAD RAMAMURTHY

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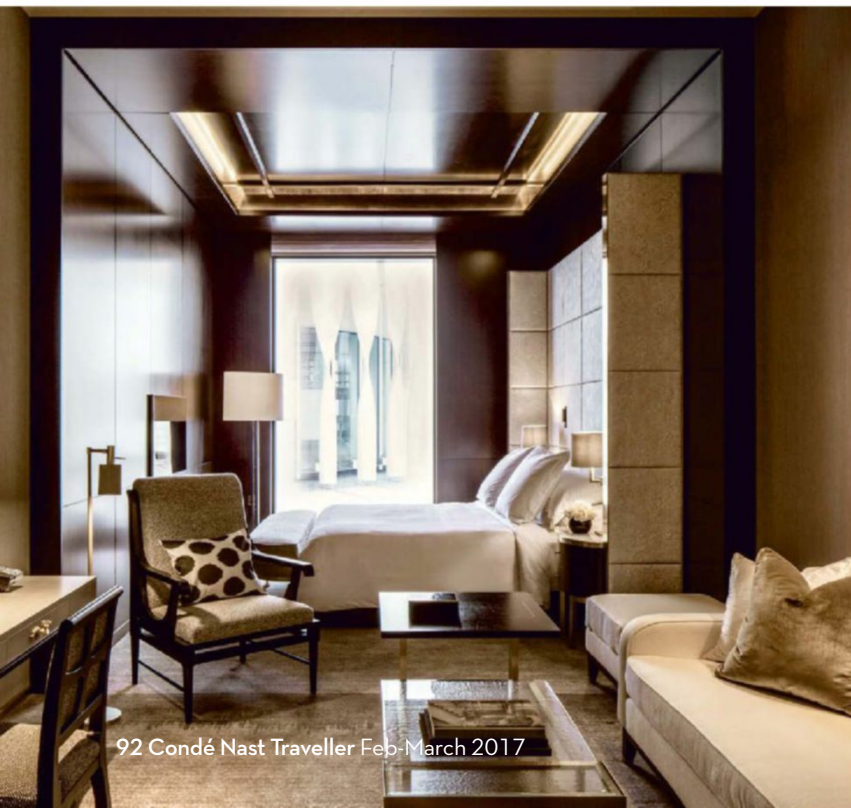
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SNEAK PEEK



★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★

Four Seasons Hotel London at Ten Trinity Square

On your next trip to London, stay at a historic address. **Raj Aditya Chaudhuri** gets the first look

You cannot help but feel the weight of history while you are in Central London. You are surrounded

by it. Look south and you see the spires of the Tower of London; just beyond it is Tower Bridge. Trinity Square itself has seen events that have shaped the fate of the city, the country and even the world. The Romans settled around these parts more than 2,000 years ago and established the city of Londinium. The Great Fire that essentially razed the city to the ground and forever altered its character started not far from here. And now, the brand new Four Seasons Hotel London at Ten Trinity Square has moved in to a heritage Beaux-Arts building that was bombed during Hitler's blitzkrieg and hosted the inaugural reception for the United Nations General Assembly in 1946.


The ultra-luxe hotel chain opened its doors to guests on 26 January. It includes 89 rooms and 11 suites, of which the Heritage Suites, with their stunning 16ft-high ceilings, delicate, original plasterwork and inviting fireplaces, are definitely the finest.

It is hard not to reflect on the structure's awesome history as you pass through the colonnade on your way to your room. The building's deliciously Art Deco dome is now home to The Rotunda Bar and Lounge, while the UN Ballroom has been painstakingly refurbished to its former glory. Its rich walnut-wood panelling and crystal chandeliers (in addition to the circular ballroom, Merchant's Hall) is just perfect for

a high-profile, elegant, 200-party wedding. Of course, the hotel's proximity to the city's financial district in Canary Wharf will ensure that high-powered deals are made in its many meeting and conference rooms. The hotel shares the address with 41 private residences and the Ten Trinity Square Private Club, a prestigious members' club.

But more exciting is the culinary front: three-time Michelin-hatted chef Anne-Sophie Pic, the only current French female chef whose work has won so many stars, will open her only UK restaurant right here. La Dame de Pic will serve up French food in a relatively casual setting (think classic Paris brasserie meets English dining room) and, of course, the wine list promises to be superb. An Asian restaurant is also in the works.

To work off those calories, you can hit the beautiful 46ft-long indoor pool or work up a sweat at the fitness centre. Alternatively, you could indulge yourself in the luxurious spa inspired by the city's Roman past.

The thing about London is that there's history everywhere. But the best part about the Four Seasons Hotel London at Ten Trinity Square is that you don't even need to step out (or sacrifice an ounce of comfort) to experience it. 

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL LONDON AT TEN TRINITY SQUARE

10 Trinity Square, London EC3N
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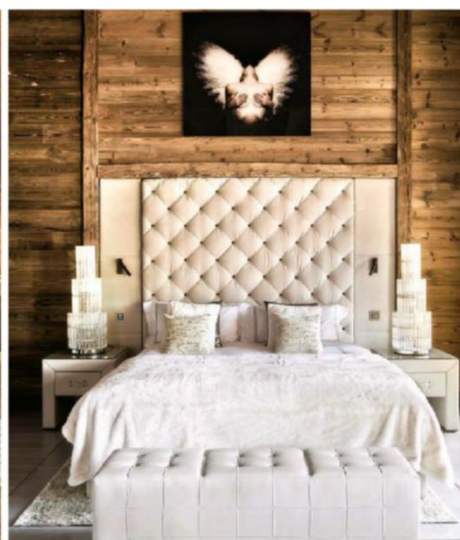
BEDS TO BOOK

From the mountains to the tropics, four new hotels promise to shake things up in 2017



THE NED London

This sensational hotel launch will cause the biggest stir in the capital. Opening in spring, it's a bold incarnation of what was once a branch of the Midland Bank (in its heyday, the world's largest clearing house). Located in Poultry, the Portland-stone building, designed in the 1920s by Sir Edwin 'Ned' Lutyens, will have 252 rooms with interiors inspired by a 1930s ocean liner, as well as nine restaurants and a rooftop bar and spa. With Soho House & Co and the Sydell Group (The Line, NoMad) at the helm, rates of interest—from London's creatives to cool-cat bankers—are pitched sky-high. (www.thened.com; doubles from £170 or ₹14,550)



PALÁCIO TANGARÁ São Paulo

The most talked-about opening in Brazil since Rio's Olympic ceremony, Palácio Tangará is a neoclassical 141-room fantasy of a palace in the tropical gardens of Burle Marx Park. The Oetker Collection's South American debut is pretty special: the group sets the standard for glamour worldwide (Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc and Le Bristol Paris). Named after a brightly coloured bird, its smart interiors will be magicked up by top Brazilian designers, with food by culinary whiz Jean-Georges Vongerichten, and a phenomenal Sisley spa. (www.palaciotangara.com; doubles from BRL1,170 or ₹23,620)



THE WHITBY New York

Kit Kemp's stylish London crashpads—from the Charlotte Street Hotel to Ham Yard—have won scores of loyal fans. She and her husband, Tim, who head up Firmdale Hotels, opened their first New York outpost, Crosby Street, in 2009; the second arrives this month. The long-awaited Whitby, in upper Midtown, will have 86 atmospheric loft-style rooms with floor-to-ceiling Crittall windows, plus a lovely orangery. The quirky bar is to be festooned with traditional English baskets, including a Northumbrian fishwife's creel and a Sussex trug. (www.firmdalehotels.com; doubles from US\$795 or ₹53,950)

ULTIMA GSTAAD Switzerland

The ski-chic landscape is getting even more polished with the arrival of Ultima Gstaad. Designed by architect G Hauswirth, the 10 suites and seven residences in three modern alpine chalets are cosy, fun and firmly high-end. You'll see plenty of fabrics by Hermès and Dedar, bronze fireplaces and, in homage to Alicia Keys (the owners are fans), a replica of her glass Schimmel piano in the entrance. (www.ultimagstaad.com; doubles from CHF1,830 or ₹1,21,990)

Top row: **light fittings and other details at The Ned in London.** Bottom row: **the cosy interiors of Ultima Gstaad**

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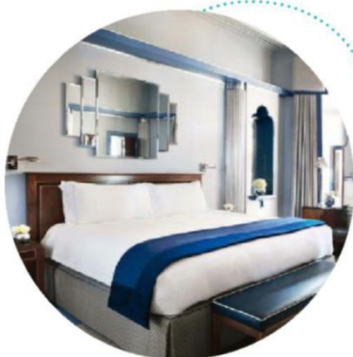
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WHERE TO STAY



CLARIDGE'S, LONDON

"I absolutely love this Mayfair hotel, because it's such a classic!" (www.claridges.co.uk; doubles from £540 or ₹45,560)

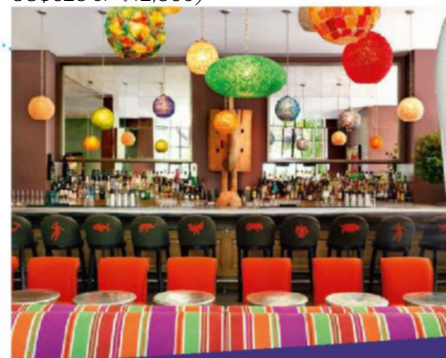
DESTINO PACHA IBIZA RESORT

"The rooms aren't the best, but I love everything else about the place and I've had some super-memorable times there." (www.destinoibiza.com; doubles from €235 or ₹16,650)



CROSBY STREET HOTEL, NYC

"I stayed here over one Christmas and New Year's. It was my first time in a place like that in NYC—until then, I'd only stayed in the more mainstream hotels and at friends' houses. It's a special place: a little artsy, a little sexy. And it had the best bed linen I've experienced in any hotel." (www.firmdalehotels.com; doubles from US\$625 or ₹42,360)



"The Crosby Street Hotel in NYC is special: a little artsy, a little sexy. And it has the best bed linen of any hotel I've stayed at"

Bed-hopping with **AYAN MUKERJI**

The film-maker tells **Samira Sood** about his favourite hotels



THE TAJ MAHAL PALACE, MUMBAI

"I have very special memories associated with this hotel. It's such an iconic place and I love that it gives me a different flavour each time I go, which I do quite often. I sometimes just go for a staycation for a couple of days, if I can afford it." (www.tajhotels.com; doubles from ₹13,420)

SUR LA MER, GOA

"It's been a home away from home. I like that part of Goa [Morjim] a lot. I've done a lot of writing there and it's a place that I've developed a personal bond with, because I go pretty often. I know the owner really well and he treats me like a son. It's very nicely built and has a lovely boutique-y vibe and loads of character. The food is amazing and the pool is lovely." (www.surlamergoa.com; doubles from ₹13,000)



PET PEEVE "It really annoys me when those key cards to the rooms don't work"

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AND YOUR FAVOURITE MEAL IS...

No one knows a hotel like its GM. So when they name their favourite meal at their property, you know it's got to be incredible. Keep this list



Shobhit Sawhney, general manager, Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa

"Ever since I moved to Goa, my favourite meal has been the Goan fish curry with rice at Casa Sarita." (www.goa.park.hyatt.com)

Tristan Beau de Lomenie, general manager delegate, Pullman Novotel New Delhi Aerocity "The grilled spicy miso salmon with fine herbs, maple and olive served at our avant-garde modern European & contemporary Indian restaurant, PLUCK." (www.pullmanhotels.com)

Yugdeep Singh, general manager, Samode Haveli, Jaipur "I love the murg ka sula, a rich, traditional Rajasthani chicken dish with khoya, almonds and red chillies that's served at our restaurant." (www.samode.com)

Chandrashekhar Joshi, general manager, JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa

"Gahat (horse gram) dal with mandua (finger millet) roti at JW Café. It's a speciality of Uttarakhand and Garhwalis swear by its nutritional value: it helps with weight loss and diabetes, and keeps the body warm in winter." (www.marriott.com)

Shrikant Wakharkar, general manager, The Westin Chennai Velachery "The tapas assortment at Sunset Grill provides diversity, from a spicy Moorish dish to a simple bowl of olives, Italian prosciutto, smoked salmon on freshly toasted baguette, spiced-up chicken wings and classic sweet crab-cake patties." (www.starwoodhotels.com)

Abhimanyu Lodha, general manager, Trident, Bhubaneswar "The chinguri bhaaja (pan-fried tiger prawns) served at The Restaurant (also on our in-room dining menu) has got a firm position in my favourite dishes' list. It's prepared from the freshest catch of Chilika Lake—the state's well-known brackish water lagoon. The prawns are marinated in lemon juice, ginger-garlic paste, mustard oil (to add the special eastern effect) and plenty of local spices." (www.tridenthotels.com)

Ajit Singh Garcha, general manager, The Park, Visakhapatnam "The martaban ka gosht, a dish on our Shack menu, is my favourite. The meat is sautéed and slow-braised for over 16 hours, followed by dum cooking in the martaban. The slow cooking is what gives the dish a nice, deep brown colour and complex flavour." (www.theparkhotels.com)



NC Somaiah, general manager, The Leela Kovalam "Kerala-style sardine fish curry with soft, fluffy appams served at The Club Café. Sardines (called mathi and chaala in Kerala) are one of the tastiest fish in South India. They are rich in Omega 3 fatty acids, which helps in reducing LDL Cholesterol levels and in turn aids in reducing heart problems, while nourishing skin and hair. The mathi also has tiny bones, which are rich sources of calcium." (www.theleela.com)

Anuraag Bhatnagar, area general manager, India, Marriott International and general manager, The St. Regis Mumbai "The Mamma Gusta's Chicken that's carved and finished tableside at Luna Gusta." (www.stregismumbai.com)

TJ Joulak, general manager, W Goa "The prawn balchao, a spicy preparation of tomato, caramelised onion and chilli, finished with dry shrimps is my go-to dish at The Kitchen Table." (www.starwoodhotels.com)

Clockwise from top left: **Goan fish curry with rice at Park Hyatt Goa Resort and Spa; mathi curry at The Leela Kovalam; prawn balchao at W Goa; miso salmon at Pullman New Delhi Aerocity; gahat dal and mandua roti at JW Café**

Rohan Sable, general manager, Novotel Goa Resorts and Spa

"I love the Contradiction burger at Vero Cebo—a vegetarian patty, buffalo mozzarella, smoked bacon and a sunny side-up egg in a brioche bun. The patty may be vegetarian but the burger has a generous amount of meat. It's healthy and not so healthy at the same time." (www.novotel.com)



Aseem Kapoor, area vice president, northwest India and general manager, Hyatt Regency Delhi "The China Kitchen's Peking Duck." (www.delhi.regency.hyatt.com)

Atul Bhalla, general manager, ITC Sonar "My favourite meal in Kolkata is the shorshe ilish (hilsa in traditional mustard gravy) served with Gobindobhog rice (Bengal's aromatic rice). It's a classic combination culled from the region's culinary heritage by the chefs at Eden Pavilion." (www.itchotels.in)



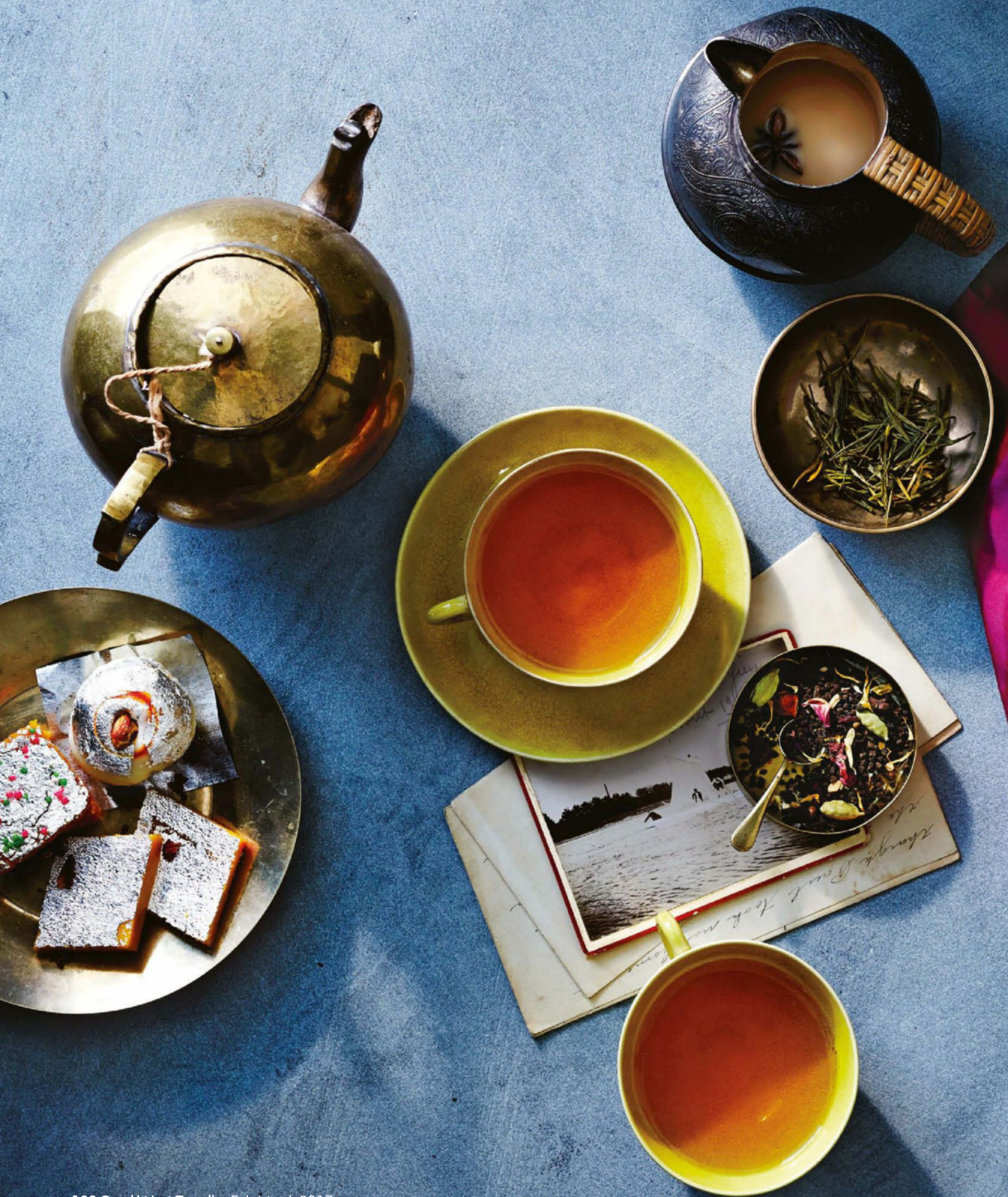
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WHY WE TRAVEL

BRITISH ISLES INDIA MOROCCO JAPAN

MASTERS OF CEREMONY

A cup of tea isn't merely a drink: it's a history of the world itself. We list our favourite tea rituals and presentations from around the world.

Photographs by **Anna Williams**. Styling by **Amy Wilson**

Before steel, before oil, before cars or guns or Coca-Cola, there was tea—one of civilisation's first truly global commodities as well as one of its most enduring and beloved. The idea of drinking tea is credited (as are so many other good things in life) to the Chinese, who are said to have discovered the curative, soothing effects of steeping leaves in hot water in 2737 BC. And although the practice quickly travelled throughout the Near and Far East via the Silk Road, it didn't reach the West until relatively late—probably the 16th century or so, when the Portuguese and the Dutch (and later the English) began establishing strongholds in Asia. But once it was introduced, it flourished: the English in particular went mad for tea, and today, even though their empire is long gone, an affinity for the drink remains in every country they once colonised—evidence of occupation served hot, in a cup. Indeed, to have a cup of tea means that you're yet another participant in a millennia-long tradition, one often freighted with significance far beyond simple enjoyment. In 16th-century Japan, for example, teahouses were constructed with very tiny doors that could be entered only on one's hands and

knees, and which necessitated leaving one's sword outside: a way for both parties to ensure their mutual humility, and a promise to each other that theirs would be a meeting of civility, not of potential violence. And although we (rightly) consider chai India's national drink, it didn't become truly ubiquitous until the 1950s, when the Tea Board of India (which owed its very existence to the British) began a campaign to popularise the beverage. In fact, it wouldn't be overstating the case to say that tea tells the history of the world: how different peoples travelled from continent to continent, bringing with them their own customs; how those customs were adapted and transformed.

So it only makes sense for us to pay tribute to our favourite tea rituals, from the pomp of English teatime to the subtle elegance of the Japanese tea ceremony. Offering insight into each tradition is one of our favourite tea resources, Heidi Johannsen Stewart, a co-founder of the beloved Brooklyn-based tea company Bellocq. So little in life is universal, and yet the simple pleasure of drinking a cup of tea (or a glass if you're in the Middle East) is an experience that unites virtually all cultures on Earth. →



INDIA

It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that the scent of chai might be India's signature fragrance. Every block in every town has its own chai vendor who makes his proprietary version of chai, a black tea that's slow-brewed with milk; sweetened with sugar, honey or jaggery and spiced with combinations of cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, star anise, fennel, peppercorn, nutmeg and cloves. "In India, they boil it down quite a bit, so it's very rich and creamy," Stewart says. "When I make it at home, I also add a slice of fresh ginger, which gives the tea extra nuance and heightens its warmth and sensuality."



JAPAN

Perhaps no culture on Earth loves rituals as much as the Japanese do. There, the things many of us consider forgettable, even mundane—the arrival of the full moon, the budding of spring's first blossoms, the changing of the leaves from green to gold—are cause for celebration and memorialisation. So it's little wonder that the drinking of a cup of tea should be treated with similar formality and elegance. "The tea ceremony was initially an elite pursuit, one that provided a forum for the rulers of ancient Japan to forge social ties," Stewart explains. "And even now, everything is always carefully considered: the type of drinking vessel, the palate, the season. There's a sense of harmony achieved from the balance of bitter and sweet." But beyond a perfect aesthetic experience, the tea ceremony is something more precious still: a moment out of time, when everything slows, and the only thing to concentrate on is the bitter taste of the green tea on your tongue.



MOROCCO

Anyone who's been to Morocco knows that there, a greeting is never a greeting without a glass of steaming hot mint tea, served in one of two ways: sweet or very sweet. "The preparation is traditionally done by the eldest male of the household," says Stewart. "The tea itself is a combination of Chinese gunpowder green tea and lots of dried or fresh mint, with sugar to taste." Her favourite part of the ritual is the actual pour: "It's served from standing height into the glass below," she says. "It's a beautiful, elaborate gesture, but it also aerates the tea, making it more flavourful and releasing its aroma throughout the room."

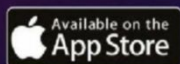
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CABIN PRESSURE

Among all the stresses of modern life, frequent flying is something we need to worry about. **Olivia Falcon** explains why, and tests the world's most futuristic medical check-ups for travellers.

For most of us, the thrill of travel trumps the trials; those red, itchy eyes are quickly forgotten when we feel that blast of cool alpine air as we step off the plane. But have you ever stopped to consider the long-term effects that taking a flight might have on your health? If you were aware there was a certain amount of radiation involved in flying, you might be slightly uncomfortable. Especially, if you were to discover that the higher and closer you fly to the North Pole, the greater is your exposure to cosmic rays. To put this into context: a return trip from London to Beijing easily exceeds the 100-microsievert dose from a chest X-ray. While not a problem for most travellers, it's definitely something frequent flyers should be aware of. And you might also think twice about the window seat if you knew there was a greater risk from UVA rays, which age skin and cause premature wrinkling. Throw in a cabin humidity level of about 10 percent →

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compared to the 50 our bodies need, airplane food loaded with sugar and salt to compensate for the fact that altitude dulls our sense of taste, and a few glasses of wine to steady your nerves, and you're heading towards Gobi Desert levels of dehydration. This raises blood pressure, increases the risk of DVT (deep-vein thrombosis) and clots, and causes problems for those with respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Thanks to low-cost airlines and globalisation, we're all jetsetters now, and a new type of wellness service is on the rise to counteract the corrosive effects of our adrenalin-charged lifestyles. Challenging old thinking that you only need to see a doctor when you're ill, health concierge services are sprouting around the world wanting to work their magic and supercharge your body. Employing cutting-edge tests to microanalyse your lifestyle and genetic predispositions, the doctors at these clinics give you a health strategy tailored to balance the fact that you ping-pong across the globe on business trips every month or juggle a gaggle of children with a 24/7 career. Or both.

So who do you go see and get a healthy leg-up? If you're prepared to risk the effects of cosmic rays, take a flight to South Korea. You can join a consortium of wealthy Russians, Chinese and a handful of clued-in Americans at the **Chaum Centre** (<http://en.chaum.net>) in Seoul. Part hospital, part spa, Chaum offers one of the world's most powerful health checks. The top-to-toe medicals, which include DNA blood screenings to check for genetic mutations and a host of investigations with the latest equipment, including MRIs and the newest CT scans (with the lowest dose of radiation, obviously), take five to six hours to complete.

Treatments at Chaum include sleep therapy in a Dreamer's Capsule that triggers brain waves for the deepest, most refreshing slumber—a 30-minute nap in the pod is said to be as restorative as five hours' ordinary sleep. The intravenous drips at the centre contain vitamins, antioxidants and a top-secret ingredient to help you retain more intravascular volume to counteract dehydration.



Chaum also has a stem-cell centre in Tokyo (South Korea prohibits such practices) that will harvest, culture and grow your white blood cells for reinjection into your body, which is claimed to boost the immune system. Starting at about £4,000 (£3.5 lakh) a pop, it's not cheap but, as Dr Richard Dawood, author of *Travellers' Health*, warns, "You are up to seven times more likely to catch a cold within a week of a trip than if you had stayed at home." So the treatment will be music to the ears of business persons who spend much of their time on virus-riddled flights.

Other impressive options include **Sha Wellness Clinic** (www.shawellnessclinic.com) on the Costa Blanca in Spain. It has a full range of genetic screenings and preventative treatments from DAO (diamine oxidase) enzyme migraine

"You are up to seven times more likely to catch a cold within a week of a trip than if you had stayed at home"

tests to heavy-metal detox programmes. The clinic is also pioneering cognitive stimulation with a 3D-machine that monitors brain activity, and can prescribe exercises to strengthen neural pathways and protect against early signs of dementia. Sha is on a mission to lighten travellers' bloat too, with two new Esenza mini-spas at Madrid airport that offer posture-correcting shiatsu massage, energy-boosting reiki treatments and a selection of fresh, organic food boxes as an alternative to airplane food.

Leading the charge in London is **Viavi** (www.viavi.com) in Devonshire Place, servicing high-flying clients who often arrive feeling lethargic, with weak immune systems and poor digestion. Viavi's chief executive is Dr Sabine Donnai, a general practitioner and former regional clinic director of Bupa. She says, "These factors can fast track the ageing process and increase the propensity to get diseases. People shouldn't have to accept feeling tired or unwell as a result of a busy lifestyle."

Of course there is a price to pay, and at £12,000 (£10.6 lakh) for a health evaluation, it's a pretty hefty one, but many clients, such as top chef Marcus Wareing, rhapsodise about the benefits and believe it's essential to improving the quality of a load-bearing life. Viavi also offers more streamlined anti-ageing detox programmes from £8,500 (£7.5 lakh) to address specific concerns.

So what do you get for your money? If you're up for the full whack, the physicians here will take a comprehensive medical history and run cutting edge tests to get a 360-degree view of your current health and where you're heading. The process starts at home, where clients may be asked to gather saliva and urine samples, which are used to measure stress and sex hormones levels, a good indication of how close you are to running out of steam. The hormone test involves spitting into a test tube at five-hour intervals, which is particularly challenging by torchlight at 3am, as turning on the lights wakes up the

body and tampers with your melatonin reading. This is a no-holds-barred medical that gets answers.

Most people are also asked to submit to a heart rate variability test. This means wearing a small monitor under your clothes for three days, which takes real-time readings of your heartbeat and nervous system to gauge the balance between stress and rest fluctuations. The results illustrate how simple lifestyle tweaks can have a huge effect. Every patient is asked to drink alcohol with dinner on one night →

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and abstain for the next two. The results are shocking. Angry red spikes of a disrupted alcohol-induced sleep all through the night are compared to calm blue waves of deep rest cycles when you lay off the wine.

“People get very hung up about how many hours’ sleep they get,” says Donnai. “But they are missing the point. The purpose of sleep is energy recovery, memory consolidation and the release of hormones. This monitor measures the nervous system to show how well your body is recovering. It dispels the myth that a glass or two of red wine will help you drift off, as we can see clearly it’s doing the opposite. If your body is never allowed to fall into the deeper parts of a 90-minute sleep cycle, you’re setting yourself up for total burn-out.”

At-home tests completed, it’s into Viavi’s plush HQ, where the medical team put clients through their paces. Everyone has their body composition analysed on bioelectrical scales that use a painless current to check the ratio of muscle to fat. This often flags up what Donnai calls ‘skinny fat syndrome’: a situation where a person might be size

zero or consider themselves a ‘normal’ weight, but dieting or a sedentary lifestyle has led to muscle loss, leaving an unhealthy percentage of fat even though they appear thin. This test often spurs people into changing their exercise regime, and Viavi works with top personal trainer Harry Jameson to review the data and create incredibly precise workouts.

Jameson’s regimes are fine-tuned by a cardio-pulmonary exercise test to measure cardio-vascular fitness. This involves donning a rubber face mask and pedalling hell for leather on an exercise bike. The mask allows the team to record intake of oxygen versus output of carbon dioxide, which not only shows how well the heart and lungs are functioning, but gives precise readings on how hard the person needs to work to use up fat (to keep them fit) rather than burning sugar (which makes you feel stiff). This test is repeated a few months later to prove how effective the training regime has been.

“Typically, my clients are successful forty-somethings who want their bodies to perform as well as their businesses,” says Jameson. “When it comes to

leisure, rather than the fly-and-flop holidays of old, the alpha gang wants adventure, be it hiking the Inca Trail or heli-skiing in Alaska. The kind of thorough testing that Viavi carries out lets them burn the candle at both ends in the safest possible way.” To prepare people for extreme physical challenges at high altitudes, they offer training and assessments in the hypoxic chamber in the Ham Yard Hotel in London. “We can simulate low-oxygen environments with a mask or give them an oxygen tent they can sleep in at home for the most targeted training,” he adds.

“This type of precision medicine is the future,” says Donnai. “It’s about giving people a strategy.” Test results are fed back in a colour-coded presentation: green (nothing to worry about), amber (let’s keep an eye on it) and red (immediate action). “We flag up a priority list so you can see the most pressing change you need to make to your busy schedule; the one that’s going to make a major difference. We give our clients a more in-depth understanding of their bodies and their trigger points so they can avoid crash and burn.”

The power of **pick-me-ups**

Six products that ship to India and bring balance and wellbeing to the depleted traveller



Magnesium works to relax the body and get rid of tension. Ideal for soothing cricked joints and helping you slumber like a bear. *Better You Magnesium Oil Soak*, £35 (₹3,100); www.betteryou.com



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This blend of roots, herbs and cordyceps mushrooms helps oxygenate the blood and boost immunity. *Living Nutrition Warrior*, £25 (₹2,200); livingnutrition.co.uk

SHOP & STYLE



A display at Raw. Clockwise from left:
Nilufar Depot furniture store; the
courtyard at 10 Corso Como; Piazza Gae
Aulenti near Corso Como. Opposite page:
Rossana Orlandi at her gallery-shop



SHOP & STYLE

UNISEX WATCHES **SARAH JESSICA PARKER'S BEAUTY TIPS**

Shopping in... **MILAN**

The Italian city has always had an experimental attitude to design. **Emma Love** finds creatives who are both reinventing furniture classics and breaking new ground



SHOP & STYLE



LOCAL TALENT

OSANNA VISCONTI Having made her name with jewellery, Visconti turned her hand to homeware. Most pieces are made from bronze and take their cue from organic forms: peony-shaped bowls, tree-trunk stools and a pair of tables with sun-ray tops. You can buy her work directly from the cosy atelier on the ground floor of her home. (www.osannavisconti.it)

GENNARO AVALLONE The artist who has previously exhibited his gold-leaf murals at London jeweller Pippa Small, in Notting Hill, has been creating his opulent, large-scale plaster works in a salami-factory-turned atelier in the south of Milan for more than 20 years. The four-floor building is huge: walk through the workshop to reach the lower-ground showroom where you will find black-concrete tables and wooden cabinets. The white walls are the backdrop for his vast hessian hangings. (<http://gennaroavallone.com>)

THE BIG HITTERS

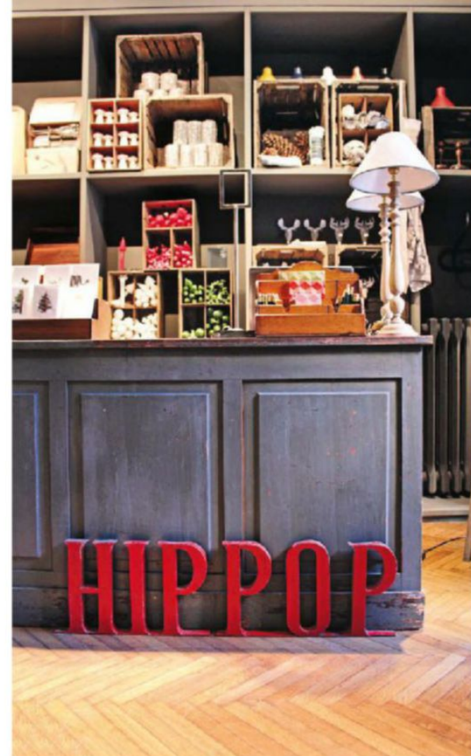
NILUFAR GALLERY Opposite Lanvin on the pedestrian-only street Via della Spiga (Milan's version of Bond Street), this is the go-to spot for quintessential 20th-century furniture, including rare conversation pieces. Highlights include '50s cabinets and tables by Gio Ponti, one of Italy's greatest designers, and specially commissioned one-offs by contemporary names such as Martino Gamper and Lindsey Adelman. Last year,

owner Nina Yashar opened Nilufar Depot, a warehouse split into rooms showcasing work by lighting designer Michael Anastassiades and rising British star Bethan Laura Wood. (www.nilufar.com)

CASSINA This is the flagship showroom of one of the most interesting heavyweight Italian design brands—the fact that it is the only authorised producer of furniture by modernist French architects Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier is just one of the reasons why. Many of the pieces on display have been created in the style of eminent 20th-century designers. The supremely talented new art director Patricia Urquiola is overseeing the 90th-anniversary celebrations, which include re-launching nine iconic pieces. The first to be released are Gerrit Rietveld's Utrecht (1930s) armchair in new fabrics and Carlo Scarpa's Doge table from the '60s. (www.cassina.com)

ROSSANA ORLANDI Part gallery, part shop and located in a former tie factory with a discreet doorbell, here's an address easy to miss. Inside, it is a higgledy-piggledy four-floor warren of spaces: one has ceramics by French studio Astier De Villatte; another has jigsaw-like reclaimed wooden tables by Dutchman Piet Hein Eek. Owner Orlandi, who has a bird-like frame and big white glasses, is a real doyenne of the creative scene: you might catch her having a meeting in Marta, the restaurant next door. (www.rossanaorlandi.com)

Clockwise from left: **the Gennaro Avallone store; an outdoor space at Rossana Orlandi; Lady armchair at Cassina; Osanna Visconti's atelier; a table at Rossana Orlandi.** Opposite page, from top left: **products at Raw; 10 Corso Como's focus on design extends to its packaging; a display at Raw**



HOMEWARE TO MATCH

10 CORSO COMO The city's original concept store was opened in a converted garage by former fashion editor Carla Sozzani more than 15 years ago. The ground floor houses clothing and beauty, plus a leafy courtyard café with ivy growing in terracotta pots. Upstairs is a gallery and specialist bookshop selling photography tomes, door-stopper art and carefully curated objects: a bird-illustration egg cup by Tracey Emin, a spot clock by Damien Hirst and trays with Keith Haring's Radiant Baby prints. (www.10corsocomo.com)

RAW Run by interior designer Paolo Badesco, this industrial-looking store is full of lovely little curiosities (there's another outpost on via Palermo). Thornback & Peel animal-print napkins are displayed in upturned wooden crates, vintage letters hang on the wall, bundles of books are tied up with string and there's a gorgeous old wooden chest in the corner with True Grace candles on top. This is the kind of place where you pop in for a brass candlestick and leave with a John Derian dome-shaped paperweight and a set of soup spoons that you suddenly can't live without. (www.rawmilano.it)

WHILE IN MILAN

STAY: ME MILAN IL DUCA The vibe here is fun and funky: music pumps out from the speakers everywhere, a blonde-wood installation in the reception lights up in different colours and the rooftop Radio bar buzzes with bright young things sipping Aperol spritzes. There is Molteni&C furniture

throughout and, next to the lift on each floor, are chairs by well-known Italian designers. Bedrooms are a sophisticated palette of taupe and brown, with detox kits in the maxi-bar and inspirational fashion quotes by Bill Blass on mirrors. (www.melia.com; doubles from €260 or ₹19,000)

VISIT: PRADA ARTS FOUNDATION

Here's a former distillery that's been transformed into a permanent home for the Prada Foundation's impressive collection of contemporary art. Masterminded by Rem Koolhaas, Prada's Miuccia go-to architect, the site has a handful of changing exhibitions, a cinema and a Wes Anderson-designed café. After a look around, pick up a tome on William Copley or Marc Quinn from the small bookshop behind the ticket counter. The final installation space, simply called The Tower, is close to completion. (www.fondazioneprada.org)

DINE: MUDEC RESTAURANT & BISTROT

Whether you're interested—or not—in ancient Islamic art, American native tribal artefacts and musical instruments from around the world, the two eateries at the recently opened MUDEC Museum of Cultures are reason enough to visit this cultural destination. Helmed by Enrico Bartolini—who's been awarded two-Michelin stars—they offer beautifully plated dishes that would look just as lovely on a wall and a pedestal. If the descriptions of meals on the à la carte menu leaves you puzzled, pick a tasting menu—Green Taste for vegetarians, Be Classic for the others—that tours the best on offer. (www.mudec.it)

LOCAL KNOW-HOW

BRITT MORAN, CO-FOUNDER, DIMORESTUDIO



"I love shopping in the **Brera Design District** because it has somehow managed to retain a small neighbourhood atmosphere. My favourite shop is **Santa Maria Novella** (www.smnovella.it); the products

[fragrances] are so beautifully packaged.

I also love rummaging around small markets and antique shops, such as **Raimondo Garau** (+39 02 659 9913). It's a great way to source pieces. A flea market is held along the Navigli Canal once a month—it's the best! I recently picked up a vintage Rosenthal vase. My business partner at DIMORESTUDIO (www.dimorestudio.eu) Emiliano Salci (pictured on the right) and I often visit **Museo Poldi Pezzoli** (www.museopoldipezzoli.it), which has a brilliant collection of paintings by Italian artists. We also go to **Massimo De Carlo** (www.massimodecarlo.com) gallery for works by Carsten Holler and Rudolf Stingel, and the '30s **Villa Necchi Campiglio** (+39 02 7634 0121) for its understated, timeless elegance."



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ISLAND BEAUTY KIT

SARAH JESSICA PARKER

The *Sex And the City* star shares her travel secrets with **Tabitha Joyce**

drinks a lot of juice. There's this fruit, tangelo, which is a cross between a grapefruit and a tangerine—there's no taste like it. We buy bushel loads in winter, hand press them and make litres of juice."

Do you watch your diet?

"I'm sure I should but I don't. For me, some of the greatest food in the world is the simplest—you don't have to think too hard about what you're eating. My favourite meal is a Greek salad with lamb chops straight off the fire. On a Greek island, ideally."

How do you stay fit?

"As I live in Manhattan, I walk everywhere. I wear a Fitbit bracelet because I've become obsessed with how many steps I take. It's not waterproof though, so when I go swimming, I forget all about it."

You're stranded on a desert island. Which beauty products could you not live without?

"I don't own much make-up. I would pack Laura Mercier's Caviar Stick Eye Colour in Jungle. I like the immediate impact it has on your look, but I might have problems applying it without a

mirror—can I have one of those too? And I do love a lip gloss (I never, ever wear lipstick). My favourite is Dior Addict or a Lancôme one in a very natural but shiny colour. That's all I would need, especially if I'm marooned!"

And what fragrance would you take?

"I think I'd wear my new fragrance, STASH, forever. It really is exactly what I wanted it to be. It feels like contraband, something verboten, that can be passed on as a secret. The smell is old and sexy, like a sweater from a guy who was Eurorailing for too long."

What's your favourite spa treatment?

"Maybe once a year I have a facial at this little place in New York, Mario Badescu. Going for a spa treatment gives you that moment to yourself. Suddenly when I'm there I realise why some people visit these places all the time. It helps you feel like you've left all your problems at the shore. As if you're on your own island for an hour. I should book in more often."

**Which island would you visit for sun?**

"I love the Greek island of Hydra—my husband and I spent a lot of time there before we had children, so it has many fun memories. I've been to quite a few Greek islands and they're all unique. Just because you've been to one taverna, don't think you've seen them all. In Greece, you can indulge in sloth-like behaviour, but you can also discover something amazing in a town that's hundreds of years old."

Do you like to sunbathe?

"I love the sun and the sea, but am equally drawn to culture. I always wear factor 30 when I'm out and about, but I'm not fussy about fancy brands. Coppertone

or Neutrogena are both fine by me. I just see what's available at the drugstore."

Where in the world is your favourite island escape?

"My husband's family has had a home in a little place called Slieve League, just north of Donegal Town in Ireland, since the 1960s. It's a small farming community on the edge of the highest cliffs in the country and it feels so wonderfully far away. I adore it. It's quiet and magnificent, a very cultured, kind, comforting place to be."

Have you ever done any kind of juice detox?

"The green-juice thing isn't for me, but my family

"In Greece, you can indulge in sloth-like behaviour, but you can also discover something amazing in a town that's centuries old"

Clockwise from left: SPF 30 sunscreen, **Neutrogena** (www.amazon.co.uk); Caviar Stick Eye Colour, **Laura Mercier** (www.spacenk.com); Dior Addict lip gloss, **Dior** (www.dior.com); Juicy Shaker lip gloss, **Lancôme** (www.lancome.co.uk); STASH eau de parfum, **Sarah Jessica Parker** (www.boots.com)

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FEATURES

JAPAN CALIFORNIA CHANDIGARH PARIS

魚也

A restaurant at the Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo. Photograph by **Marie Takahashi** for **Japan: it's all in the details** (p128)



PHOTOGRAPHS: RAYMOND PATRICK MARIE TAKAHASHI

焼酎



JAPAN: IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

At a time when Huge Questions, like climate change, terrorism, xenophobia, have consumed the world, why do Japanese people care so much about the little things? **Suketu Mehta** reports

Japan is a country of obsessives. I remember seeing a newspaper ad for a Japanese airline in the 1980s, featuring the crew standing in front of the plane, and the slogan, “Obsessed with Perfection.” I thought then that this was a stereotype, but became aware that it might be otherwise, before I even entered the country.

On the plane to Tokyo, after I finish my unremarkable Economy Class lunch, which arrives in a series of little boxes, my tray is a heap of trash. Then I notice the tray of the Japanese mama-san next to me: she’s carefully replaced each of the covers of the boxes after eating, folded up the napkin and placed the silverware just so. Her tray looks as pristine as when it got to her seat.

I had never been to Japan but always wanted to go, because I believed that very few other cultures have as deep an appreciation of—indeed, an obsession with—beauty. I go to Japan with a simple question: why do its people care so much about the little things, at a time when Huge Questions have consumed the world: climate change, terrorism, xenophobia? Why and how do they lavish so much attention on the details? Or is it all a myth?

* * * * *

For most people, a bar is a place to get liquored up, have a chat, flirt, relax. In other words, it’s a break from the serious business of the working day. Not so for the Japanese.

Tokyo’s **Star Bar** (www.starbar.jp) is “where businessmen cheat on their wives,” says my friend Nick, sometime editor of a Japanese magazine devoted to whiskey. It’s reputed to be the best bar in Japan, and when a television show devoted an episode to it, featuring two of its cocktails, the bartender was besieged by crowds wanting exactly those two drinks.

When we pop into the bar (a small, packed place), the 50-year-old bartender isn’t there. We walk a couple of blocks to its much bigger extension, Star Bites. We walk down a flight of stairs to a room lit with small lights in the ceiling, like stars, comfortable leather chairs and no screens anywhere. The soundtrack volume is kept low, sometimes playing the theme from *The Godfather*, which, Nick tells me, is much favoured in Japanese cocktail bars.

Since Yamazaki, the bartender, knows Nick, we are allowed in; otherwise we would be politely declined at the door. There are small knots of businessmen talking in hushed tones; when a party of three girls gets a little boisterous, Yamazaki goes over and politely requests them to keep it down. This is a bar for adult conversation, not adolescent bonhomie.

Yamazaki could be in his twenties or thirties—I can’t tell—and wears a white jacket with a pin in the shape of a cocktail shaker on his lapel. I order an Old Fashioned and he brings out an unmarked bottle: bourbon that has been infused with orange peel, and a smaller bottle of sugar solution. He puts one large cube of ice in a glass

and lets it rest there a while to chill it, while he mixes the cocktail with more ice in a plastic shaker. Some of the customers might think it looks cheap, but the plastic won’t chip the ice like a glass shaker might. Also, he explains, “It’s easier to wash plastic. That’s important.”

He shakes the cocktail with a long-handled silver spoon, takes the smallest sip of the drink to make sure it’s right and pours the contents of the shaker into my glass. He brings it to my table, along with a small strip of orange peel, which he waves around and over the glass like a magician, twisting it deftly so it perfumes the air around the drink, then rests the strip just so on the delicate wooden cocktail stirrer. Before I’ve taken the first sip, I can smell the fragrance of oranges. It’s the best Old Fashioned I’ve ever had.

He brings us kumquats from his hometown, preserved in gin. The bar makes its own bitters. When a lemon or lime is called for in a drink, he doesn’t just squeeze it. He cuts it into sections and gently massages it so that the bitter peel isn’t juiced.

Yamazaki apprenticed with the Master at the original Star Bar; it took him three years of patient learning before he was allowed to serve his first drink. Evidently, it’s not just the tea ceremony that the Japanese are obsessive about.

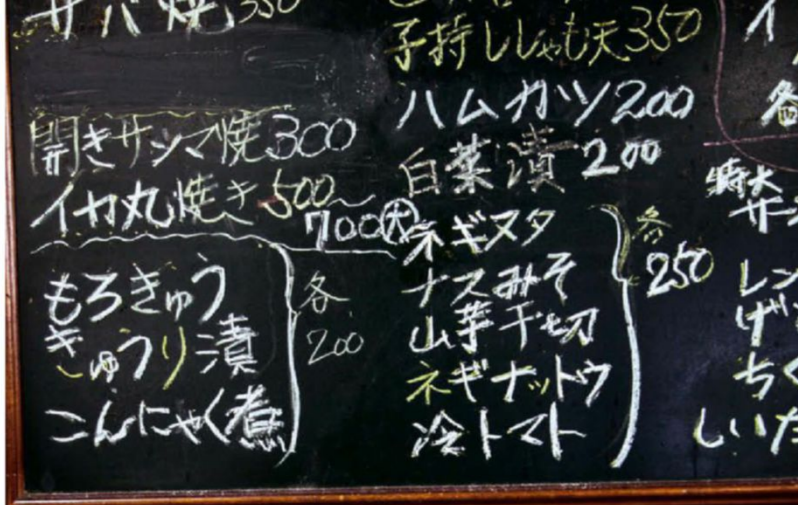
After Star Bar, I retire to my suite in the **Aman Tokyo** (www.aman.com; doubles from ¥75,000 or ₹46,000), one of the best hotel rooms I’ve ever stayed in. It has a toilet whose lid rises automatically at my approach. It is less a toilet than a throne: the seat is warmed, it cleans up without you having to lift a finger, then flushes and deodorises itself and closes when you leave. The hotel occupies the top floors of a skyscraper near the Imperial Palace, and the rooms have huge windows. I take a bath in the biggest bathtub I’ve ever seen, with a herb called Shobu-yu (*Acorus calamus*), which is supposed to improve blood circulation, and watch the office-goers slave away till midnight in the office towers all around.

Like everything else, the Japanese have elevated the act of putting the human body in water to an art form, which they call onsen. So stressful are their work lives that they will take every chance at relaxation—especially drinking, bathing or a combination thereof.

Every year, 20 million tourists visit Japan, a quarter of them Chinese. The 2020 Olympics will be in Tokyo, and the country is preparing, building hotel rooms, training staff to speak English. You notice the strain in a sedate city like Kyoto, where you can’t get five minutes to yourself to gaze upon a temple garden, but Tokyo, the world’s most populous city, can absorb a few million with ease. The faces in the Tokyo metro are overwhelmingly Japanese; there are far fewer foreigners than in most other world cities. The thing about Japan that a foreign visitor realises is that everything works. Few people speak English well, but if you have a smartphone, you can get around without asking for directions. In New York →



The Restaurant by Aman at the Aman Tokyo.
Clockwise from right: the menu at Fujiya in Tokyo; the writer, Suketu Mehta, at the Shibuya crossing in Tokyo; tomato salad, eggplant with miso sauce, sashimi and shallots at Fujiya.
Previous pages from left: Drunkard's Alley in Tokyo; a sake advertisement at Fujiya



“Sanjusangen-do temple has strong Hindu influences. I can clearly make out a Japanese version of Lakshmi, another of Garuda”

or Mumbai, you can't rely on the mass transit directions that Google offers, because the trains don't run on time. In Japan, you can set your watch by them.

As I take the airport train into Tokyo, various people come up to me, unbeckoned, to ask if I need directions in the train or on the street. As I'm getting out of the train station, the exit machine swallows up my ticket. A young woman stops in the harried scrum rushing to get home and asks me what's wrong. She goes to the gate agent to plead my case. He waves me through.

* * * * *

My friend, travel writer Pico Iyer, lives in Kyoto, but was travelling at the time, so he sent me a list of things to do and people to meet there. That's the nice thing about having writer friends, especially writer friends who travel for work: you can go way deeper than *Lonely Planet*.

So I take the Shinkansen train to Kyoto—it's clean, efficient, and fast. Like everywhere else in Japan, I am welcomed on board by an attendant offering me a wet towlette to clean my hands.

Pico has introduced me to a friend of his, Ken Rodgers. An Englishman who's married to a Japanese woman, he's lived in Kyoto for decades. He is an expert on temples, and Kyoto has almost 2,000 of them. One morning, Ken and I walk across the road from the **Hyatt Regency Kyoto** (www.kyoto.regency.hyatt.com; doubles from ¥24,000 or ₹14,700) where I'm staying, to see the incredible 12th-century **Sanjusangen-do temple**, an official Japanese National Treasure. The 120m-long main hall, the longest wooden structure in Japan, is home to 1,001 statues of the Buddhist deity Kannon, standing in serried ranks. The statues are made of Japanese cypress, and were originally adorned with gold leaf. Each face is different, “like my relatives,” observes Ken. There are 28 images in front of the statues, guardian deities with strong Hindu influences. I can clearly make out a Japanese version of Lakshmi, another of Garuda. In the centre is a 1,000-armed Kannon (who actually sports only 42 arms; two are the regular ones and the other 40 exist in 25 separate planes of existence, to make for 1,000 arms to fight human suffering). It is an awesome sight and I emerge from the temple dazed and humbled.

I walk up the path to the **Kiyomizu-dera temple**, past little shops and coffeehouses, and flocks of Japanese schoolchildren at this hour, just after school lets out. I see lots of young women wearing kimonos, for the rituals they will perform at the temple. Later I find out that most of them are Chinese tourists. The cobblestoned path is lined with souvenir stores selling soaps, sweets and ceramics, but they're Japanese, so they're nowhere as tacky as in other countries. I walk into a shop selling nothing but umbrellas in Japanese prints. I examine the labels; every last one of them is made in China.

The temple is mobbed, and I can't appreciate the beauty of the hillside. Then I see a path to the side leading up and away from the temple, and I follow it. There's a large, forbidding fence, but there's a small door open at its foot and I slip in. I walk uphill into a forest of towering sugi trees—enormous cedars which can grow up to 70m. Here, finally, I am alone, and all I can hear is birdsong and the gurgle of the stream to my right. Here is where the monks would have gone for their meditative forest-walking.

That night, I have dinner at the Italian restaurant at **The Sodoh** (www.thesodoh.com), an elegant event space set in a painter's house in the old quarter of Kyoto near all the temples. I'm served a seasonal green salad, bright and fresh with shisho leaves; a zucchini flower stuffed with mozzarella, tempura-battered and deep-fried. The pasta has fresh, shaved white truffles, and is just a bit too al dente, but better than the other way around.

As I'm walking back along the main road from dinner I pass a small Nepali restaurant, **Namaste Dhaulagiri**. There's a brown man wearing a Gurkha helmet standing outside. He smiles at me and we get into conversation. It turns out he's not Nepali, but from Delhi and has been living here seven years. He likes it here, he says. “Do you speak Japanese?” I ask. “Enough to take orders in the restaurant,” he responds.

The best part about the Kyoto temples is garden-gazing. Sit here, on the tatami-covered floor. Gaze out at the copper maples, the little hill meant to replicate a hill in China with its pilgrims path. Travel in space and time, right here. But it's hard to calmly contemplate a garden when there are 50 other people between you and the garden. You're basically contemplating tourists. Head for some of the sub-temples, like **Komyo-in** in Tofukuji, first thing in the morning and you might have it all to yourself. Perch on the ledge, and watch the maples swaying, hear the water trickling over rock, inhale the fragrance of azaleas. Observe the rock rising out of the circles of gravel in the dry garden next to the wet one. One of the greatest contemporary landscape designers was Shigemori Merei, whose 20th-century masterpieces can be seen in sub-temples like Komyo-in. Here you see the undulation of the ocean sculpted in pebbles and grass.

Ken introduces me to another Englishman-in-exile, John Dougill, author of the wonderful *Kyoto: A Cultural And Literary History (Cities of the Imagination)*. He leads me to a large, plain structure just after the huge gate of **Tofukuji** (www.tofukuji.jp), one of the biggest Zen temples. There's a ledge on which he invites me to stand and peer inside the latticework of the building. Within, there's a row of holes on the ground, a series of bamboo railings and nothing else. “There's the 100-man toilet!” he exclaims. It's where the monks did their business, 100 at a time during rush hour, under huge ceilings. And well might the structure be consecrated, for the monks →



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PHOTOGRAPH BY RAYMOND PATRICK

Tsukiji, Tokyo's famous fish market





A maiko (trainee geisha or geiko) in Kyoto.
 Clockwise from top left: a bowl of ramen;
 Tokyo Tower; the lobby of the Hyatt
 Regency Kyoto; the Mandarin Oriental,
 Tokyo; traditional Japanese footwear in
 Kyoto; the writer taking notes at Fujiya;
 beer at Fujiya; prayer tablets at the
 Kiyomizu-dera temple in Kyoto; the
 Arashiyama Bamboo Grove on the
 outskirts of Kyoto



“So many young Japanese travelled to Italy to learn how to make the world’s most perfect pizza. Then they returned home and outdid the Italians”

were industriously contributing to the temple as they went; the temple sold their excrement to the aristocracy to use as fertiliser for their vegetables. “It was one of their biggest sources of income,” says John. The palace of poop is directly adjacent to the Meditation Hall. Very Zen.

At 8am every day, Yoshihiro Imai goes to the Ohara market and sees what’s in season today: asparagus, chive flowers and more. Then he emails his restaurant, **Monk** (www.restaurant-monk.com) and they write the day’s menu on the mirror above the kitchen.

At Monk, you sit at the counter as Yoshi cooks in an oak-fired oven imported from Naples. Ever had fire-roasted lettuce? Neither have I. But here, it’s a revelation, charred to deliciousness.

I get talking with Naoki, a friend of Yoshi’s who owns a tech company that’s making one of the modules for Google’s new modular phone. Halfway through the three-hour dinner, he pulls out his phone and asks me to become Facebook friends. He hears I’m going to Tokyo and looking for restaurants to try out. He leaves the table and his dinner, and goes outside to make a phone call (Japanese are polite that way), and comes back, beaming. He’s secured me a reservation at Beard, one of the trendiest restaurants in Tokyo.

The food comes out: asparagus bathed in egg yolk, bright red chunks of bonito, pizza, glorious pizza. You have your choice of two toppings, one on each side, from the basic margherita to asparagus with anchovy sauce and mackerel. But best of all is the crust—simply baked and then daubed in sea salt and parmigiano reggiano. It turns out that the Japanese are making the greatest pizza in the world these days, because so many young Japanese, like Yoshi, travelled to Italy to learn how to make the world’s most perfect pie. Then they returned home and outdid the Italians.

When I leave the restaurant, Yoshi, Naoki and Yoshi’s helper all come out to see me off to the taxi and say goodbye, as if I’d been not to a restaurant, but to a dinner party at their house.

I had noticed that Yoshi prepped his food with a Global knife, one of the best known chef’s knives in the world. “Do you sharpen it every day?” I’d asked.

“Once a week. I don’t want to lose my knife.” He brought out two knives, one significantly smaller than the other. “It’s the same knife. I’ve had this one”—he indicates the diminished one—“for eight years.”

The Japanese are obsessive about knives, and even the foreigners who move to Japan become obsessive. In Osaka I drop in at **Tower Knives** (www.towerknives.com), where Bjorn Heiberg, a portly Dane, shows me the best of Japanese cutlery. I ask him how to sharpen a knife. He brings out a whetstone, marks it with coloured chalk and runs water over it. If the coloured water runs uniformly

over the stone, then it’s flat. So, before you even touch the knife to the stone, you have to make sure the stone is completely flat. After seeing how arduous the sharpening procedure is, I abandon any thoughts of buying a knife.

Another obsessive foreigner is Yoram, an Israeli who moved to Kyoto and is now one of the country’s foremost experts on its most famous alcohol. **The Sake Bar Yoram** (www.sakebar-yoramu.com) is a long, narrow, austere room. You step over a series of seven stones to get to where Yoram presides behind the bar, dispensing sake and vegetarian Israeli tapas.

As I sit on one of the eight stools at his bar, he conducts not just a sake flight, but a whole air show. He proposes that I sample “10 or 12 half-glasses” and I happily accept.

Sake is made from rice, water and a fungus named koji, which is sprinkled over the steamed rice. It is fermented in stainless steel or enamel. Sake is made in the winter. A good sake, from the milling to the bottling, takes only two to three months.

The way to taste sake is to take a sip and let it rest on the tip of the tongue for a couple of seconds before rolling it back. “What is the taste of sake?” asks Yoram. “Is it the materials? The method? Frankly, we don’t know. It depends on the person who makes it.” If 80 percent of the taste of the wine depends on the grape, with sake, 80 percent is technique, says Yoram. The region and terroir don’t matter. It takes 10 to 15 years to become a toji, or master brewer, Yoram explains. One of the best brewers he knows is another non-Japanese, Philip Harper, who brews a brand called Tamagawa, with a big mouthfeel, for the Kinoshita brewery.

My fellow customers are happily sampling the falafel and hummus that Yoram offers as an afterthought for people who want to nibble on something with their drink. “Sushi is the most boring thing in the world to pair with because it doesn’t taste like anything except soy sauce. Most people in the West don’t like fish but they like sushi because all they can taste is soy sauce,” observes Yoram.

On my return to Tokyo, Nick rounds up a couple of local characters to show me around. Tatsuya Mizuno, a Japanese writer and bon vivant, is handsome, well dressed and fond of drink, food and women.

We go first to **Fujiya**, a dive bar that’s been around for 50 years. The bar is underground, lit by bare fluorescent lights. There are some workers frying up little bites in the centre, in oil that looks like it hasn’t been changed for fifty years. Standing around them (there are no seats) is a raucous crush of people eating, drinking sake and beer, and yelling. Mizuno orders beer after beer, filling my glass without being asked to. Then we go to Drunkard’s Alley, two small streets lined with the smallest bars I’ve ever seen, each of them fitting six or eight people in two small rooms connected by a small staircase. →





The bartender at a bar in
Drunkard's Alley. Opposite
page: a lantern in Kyoto

Mizuno is one of the great characters of Tokyo. He's a veteran journalist and has just written a book about Japanese-Brazilians who've returned to Japan. Back in the '80s, when he was in New York, he spent a night with the homeless in Tompkins Square Park. He knows half the little bars in the Alley, and with a hearty "WHOOAAAAA!" he will greet people he might have met once, months or years ago—or even total strangers. All humanity is his friend, as long as they drink with him. He considers it a sin to let your glass go below the halfway mark; he will replenish it with whatever you've been drinking—or anything that's at hand at the time.

Two more women join us, a photographer and a sex columnist, Eri, who also runs a feminist website. She tells us about a club where the swingers are dressed in costume. 'Cos' is the word for Japanese who dress up in childlike costumes. Everyone has to wear a costume—except the (male) waiters, who are clad in a loincloth. As they watch the rabbits and schoolgirls go at it, they might experience a natural reaction, which would show under their loincloth. For each reaction, the other waiters insert a safety pin in the loincloth, to diminish their ardour. But the waiters are young and the scenes played out in front of them are exciting, so some of them have multiple reactions, in spite of the pins they get stabbed with. But relief is in sight for the most libidinous: if they get poked with 10 pins, then on the 10th time, all the pins are taken out and they start again from zero.

I ask Eri if we might visit this pleasure palace. Yes, she says, if I'm willing to pay US\$10,000—the entry price for men. Women go for free.

Through the evening, I am being introduced to people in every little bar in Drunkard's Alley by Mizuno, who insists on pushing me forward onto people.

Nick informs me that my first name, as Japanese people pronounce it, is 'Suket-su'. "Vinegar ass," he translates helpfully for me.

Mizuno corrects him, in Japanese.

"Okay, it's actually 'bare ass,'" says Nick.

The company laughs uproariously.

At the end of the evening, we all end up in a karaoke bar with seven seats. I essay Simon & Garfunkel's *Mrs. Robinson* and *The Boxer*. All seven of us sing along with the chorus: "Lai la lai! Lai la lai la lai la lai, lai la lai!"

Then a non-white singer comes on the screen. "Japanese Otis Redding! Japanese Otis Redding!" the people in the bar yell out.

The bar owner, a 72-year-old woman, takes the mic and proceeds to sing the most beautiful Japanese classics. It is very moving. That is, until we pay our bill and she tries to keep all the change—the first swindler I've met in Japan. She's hoping we're too drunk to notice.

In my entire two weeks in this country, I never once saw a person get angry. With so much drinking, one would expect that there would be bar fights. But no, when Japanese people drink, they get giggly rather than ornery. The love flows. →



It is well known that Tokyo is a great place to eat, but I find that it might be the world's best place to drink as well. It's not about the alcohol; it's about the camaraderie that alcohol offers. Drinking is an excuse to meet people, like-minded or perfect strangers. The bars I go to didn't have loud music or televisions; they had people and conversation. "I come here every night," said an IP lawyer drinking by himself in one of the little bars. "Eight days a week."

Why is Tokyo a good drinking city? Because people work so brutally hard. You might say they're obsessed with working. The office-goers are at work by 9am, and work till at least 9pm. There might be a family at home; but it has long since given up waiting for them to be home for dinner. So there are the people from the office, and there is the izakaya, loud, filled with fellow-feeling and little bites of octopus and pickles. So they drink till it's time to rush for the train, and then get home and everyone's asleep, and they might see their family's faces at breakfast or they might not, as they rush out the door for another day at work.

The last train home, just after midnight, is filled with drunks. If they miss the train and are stranded in the city, you can see them sleeping in alleyways, in their office clothes. The convenience stores sell underwear, which they can put on in the bathroom as they head back to the office at first light. But on Friday night everybody drinks hard, because it's on the company's money. Most people here drink with their colleagues, not friends or family. There is no border between youth and immaturity here; adult men are allowed to giggle like teenagers when they're out of the office.

You don't notice too many college students in the bars. Getting into a good Japanese university used to be even more stressful than getting into a good one outside; the long hours spent in tutorials were legendary, as was the suicide rate for those who failed to make the grade. But now, because of the population implosion, there are more university places than students, and as a result, life in the final years of high school is far less stressful.

One morning, I wake up early to visit Tokyo's famous wholesale fish market, which is soon moving to a remote location. **Tsukiji** (www.jnto.go.jp) is an edible aquarium, and people who are in the business can come in after 9am to watch the fishmongers sell the last of the catch: eel, tuna, oysters, sea cucumbers and more. The fishmongers aren't particularly interested in talking to the tourists, and they careen about in little blue golf carts carrying boxes of fish. Or they fillet the fish, taking a live, wriggling creature, making a gash in its neck with a knife and inserting a thin wire down its gullet to stop it struggling. What you immediately notice about the fish market is that it doesn't smell of fish. I've been to other fish markets, such as Hunts Point in New York, after which I couldn't get the smell out of my clothes for days. But here, all the floors are washed with hoses regularly, and you have to get very close to the wares to smell the tang of seafood.

Close by the market you can eat the day's catch as it is prepared in a variety of ways: as sushi, with ramen, in soup. Or you can venture on land and eat a stew of pig intestines, also fresh from the nearby meat market. As it was still breakfast time for me, I settled for a couple of steaming hot croissants fresh out of the oven at a little roadside bakery. How did the Japanese learn to make croissants this good? As they learned to make pizza this good, as they learned to make curry this good: with rigorous practice and an obsession with detail.

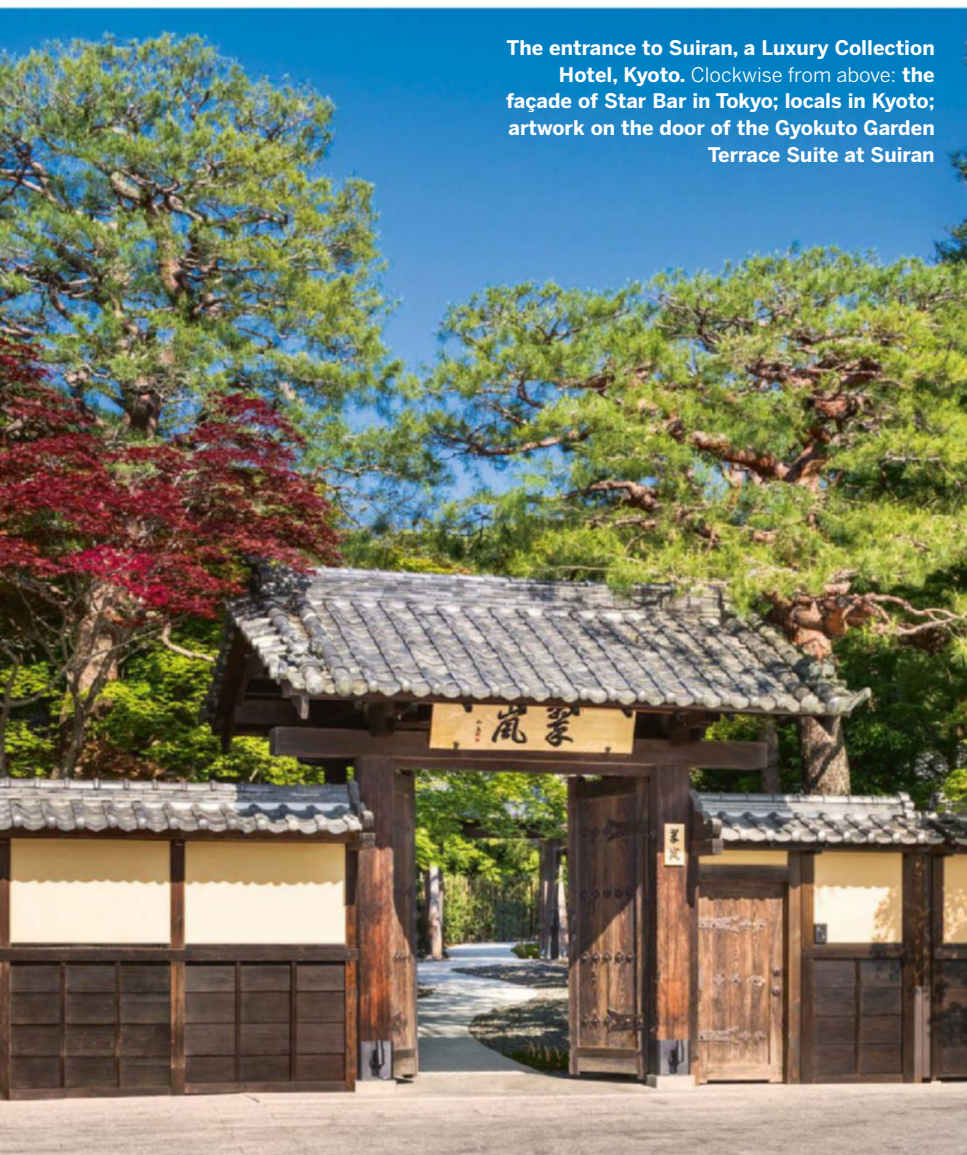
At another sake bar, I encounter a waiter who spent a couple of years in rural Bengal studying music with the Bauls, and now plays tabla when he's not waiting tables. He recommends, to go with my sake, one perfect small tomato, sliced into six wedges, its crown with the green stem kept to the side of the little glass plate for decoration. I ask for salt. "You won't need salt," the tabla player says. "Try a slice and if you need salt, I'll give it to you." I try it. I don't need salt. It complements the sake wonderfully.

Every little morsel in Japan comes in its own little bowl, dish, or wooden container. They have a horror of flavours running into each other—the opposite of, say, the Brazilian feijoada, where everything—rice, beans, sausage, farofina—is mixed together.

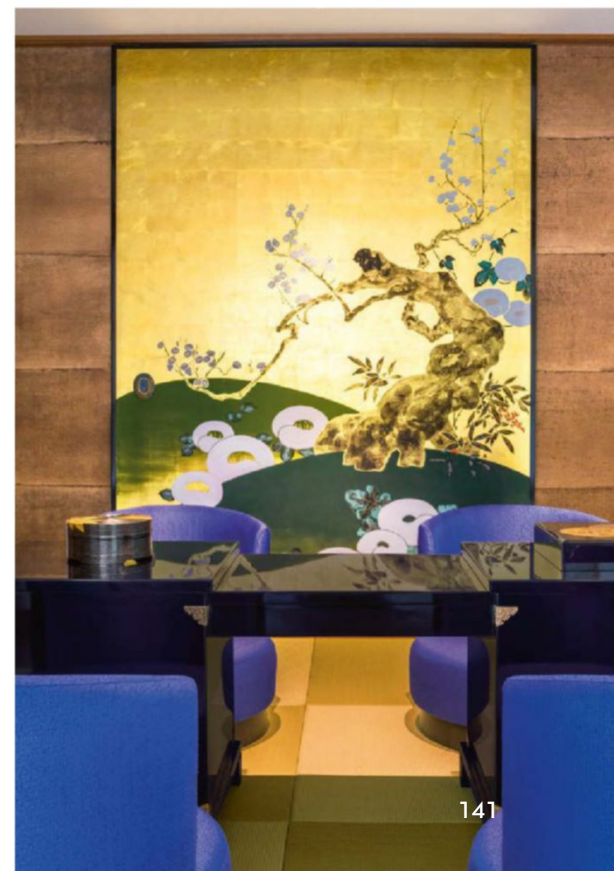
But sometimes, as I learn, even the Japanese can screw up. After the sake bar I try out **Beard** (www.b-e-a-r-d.com), the restaurant that the customer at Monk had gotten me a reservation for. It takes me an hour and a half to get there, far out in the suburbs. I sit at the counter, again, and the Swedish assistant serves me an onion extravaganza: cooked onions, raw onions, fried shallots, on a potato purée. It is a Jain horror show. Beard is a vegetable-focused restaurant, a little too much so. I am somewhat relieved to find a chink in the perfect Japanese armour.

Towards the end of my trip, I find the perfect illustration of Japanese obsessiveness.

I strike up a conversation with the manager of the **Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo** (www.mandarinoriental.com; doubles from ¥66,000 or ₹40,450). He happens to be from Brazil, a country I'm well acquainted with. I can't imagine two countries more unlike each other than exuberant Brazil and restrained Japan. He tells me that there's a store that sells handmade toothpicks—and only toothpicks. The next day, I find a little wooden box in my room, filled with delicate handmade toothpicks. They're from **Saruya** (1-12-5 Nihonbashi-Muromachi, Chuo-ku), a store which has aided dental hygiene in the capital since 1704. The wood comes from the Kuromoji tree, and a craftsman can make 2,000 of them a day. But so exquisite are the little sticks that I would never subject any of them to something so base as poking out bits of food stuck in my teeth. I'll just keep them on my coffee table at home to show people. Here is Japan in a box: its attention to detail and obsession with beauty, as well as a certain anachronistic quality to its culture, a people gloriously out of sync with time. 🍵



The entrance to Suiran, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Kyoto. Clockwise from above: the façade of Star Bar in Tokyo; locals in Kyoto; artwork on the door of the Gyokuto Garden Terrace Suite at Suiran





PARIS ON A PLATE

The French food scene was blinded by stars and over-stuffed on its own history until the bistronomy movement came to its rescue. Now, a host of young chefs are conjuring artful, seasonal food in small neighbourhood restaurants. Here's where to find the tastiest examples of the trend in Paris



Words by **Sophie Dening**. Photographs by **Alice Gao**



LA TÊTE DANS LES OLIVES

Given his charisma and knowledge, it's a shame Cedric Casanova himself cannot preside over the table d'hôte that takes place by night in his magical lock-up shop on the other side of Hôpital Saint-Louis. Cedric or no Cedric, you'll have to plan ahead if you want to squeeze in here, as a privileged party of up to six people, to taste wonderful ingredients from Sicily (where Cedric is usually to be found, consulting with more than 60 olive oil producers). It's all about flavour, beginning with antipasti of olives, aubergine purée, mushrooms stuffed with marinated carrots and ricotta and salad of orange and fennel. Move on to pasta alla Norma, or trecce ('braided' pasta) with amazing cherry tomatoes, mint and almonds. This showcasing of Cedric's sought-after finds works like a charm, and you'll gain as much pleasure later on at home from your shopping bag, filled as it might be with dried basil from Genoa, Sicilian almond cookies and nutty, buttery or delicately astringent olive oils. While wine is available, you can also bring your own. (www.latetedanslesolives.com)

JONES

Young Australian chef James Henry's daily tasting menu made Bones, down a side street in the 11th arrondissement, a food bloggers' favourite. Henry has since moved on, and the restaurant has now evolved into Jones, headed by original co-owner Florent Ciccoli and with the same lively bar atmosphere, stripped-back industrial look and classic rock soundtrack. The main change is the menu, which now features well-crafted snacks and interesting wines, and fits neatly into the city's current bar à manger trend. The wine list focuses on natural wines, without added sulphites, and has an unusually global selection for Paris: you can hop from Greece via Italy, Spain and Austrian fizz to the USA; from a lovely dry white Domaine de Bellivière to an Arlanza Vina del Cadastro red from Burgos. The tapas-size sharing plates are an imaginative combination of seasonal produce and cosmopolitan touches, and Ciccoli displays a deft hand at adding subtle pinches of fresh herbs in dishes such as burrata with mullet roe and sorrel, bonito tuna with ricotta, fried girolles with a delicate potato purée and mustard leaves as well as slices of onglet steak with shiitake mushrooms and Swiss chard. (www.jonescaferestaurant.com)

NATASHA EDWARDS





The interiors of Jones. Previous pages from left: a chocolate tart with cardamom at Le Servan; a booth at Clamato



LA BUVETTE DE CAMILLE

Giving idiosyncrasy a good name, Camille Fourmont's charming, unconventional piece of Paris pursues an age-old endeavour: to offer all visitors a friendly greeting, and refresh them a little before they go on their way. Owing to a strict licence, former Le Dauphin sommelier Fourmont is obliged to, first and foremost, sell (and pour) the selection of novel, natural wines. You'll only get a few snacks, conjured entirely from a minuscule prep area behind the neat, sweet 1930s oak counter. Expect flavours and combinations such as pork, apricot and pistachio terrine; haricot beans with wild garlic flowers; or andouille de Guémené, a lightly smoked Breton sausage; Aubrac ham; Bordier butter with smoked salt or a blue goat's cheese from Devon. Recent additions to the wine list include a floral, super-light 2014 Beaujolais Villages from Rémi Dufaitre and a 'springtime wine' from Bergerac: an aromatic blend of Sémillon Ugni blanc, Muscadelle and Sauvignon from Château Lestignac. There are very few seats, so stand and chat, or drop in alone with a book and enjoy the hospitality. The perfect spot for pre-dinner drinks, La Buvette is also within walking distance of other favourite joints like Le Chateaubriand, Septime, Clamato, West Country Girl, Jones and Le Servan. (67, rue Saint-Maur; 11th; +33 9 83 56 94 11)

TEN BELLES

You can still get bad coffee in Paris, but it's getting harder, thanks to go-getters like Thomas Lehoux, who co-owns the jaunty-looking Ten Belles with Anna Trattles, Alice Quillet and Anselme Blayney (the gang behind top brunch spot le Bal Café in Pigalle). In spite of Lehoux's know-how, they keep their enticements simple—such as chocolate-chip cookies, filter coffee and espresso that use beans from the nearby Belleville Brûlerie (another Lehoux joint), as well as guest coffees from, say, Drop Coffee in Stockholm. The clientele is young and international, with hard-core regulars who appreciate the frequently rotating blends and seasonal cakes such as mandarin and almond with yogurt frosting.

There are always scones, muffins and hangover-beating savoury breakfast buns, made in-house daily, sausage rolls at weekends and, on meat-free Mondays, toasties filled with mushrooms, Roquefort, kimchi or spinach. The merchandising—mugs bearing the cafe's tattoo-style logo, branded thermos flasks—is very good, too. This little corner next to Canal Saint-Martin feels much brighter since Ten Belles landed here three years ago; and conveniently, there's a florist next door to supply armfuls of fresh flowers. And if you're not a coffee drinker, the hot chocolate is fantastic.

(www.tenbelles.com)





Small plates at La
Buvette de Camille



The bar at Clamato



CLOWN BAR

One of the city's most thrilling recent openings, this is a renovation of a 100-year-old adjunct to the Cirque d'Hiver, with a painted glass ceiling over the bar, and tilework depicting graceful (not scary) clowns doing their frolicsome thing. As well as being very pretty, this Clown has talent: its new owners are Sven Chartier and Ewen Lemoigne of Saturne—the smart neo-bistrot near the Bourse championing fine low-sulphite wines—and the chef is Sota Atsumi, last seen at Vivant Table with Pierre Jancou. A burnished pithivier of Challans duck with date and yuzu purée is among the standout mains; the seabass with clams is also luscious. Small plates too exciting not to share might include scallops with Jerusalem artichokes, sea urchin and bacon or sea snails in breadcrumbs with aioli. At tables outside, 11th arrondissement kidults sit and smoke cigarettes, and there's a jazz-soul soundtrack to dinner, yet service is appealingly formal, in a hip sort of way. The tables are sleek and bespoke, in contrast with the Belle Epoque interior, and feature nifty secret compartments. Bubbles from Domaine Gramenon in the southern Rhône are a pleasing way to get started on an enticing, all-organic wine list. (114, rue Amelot, 11th)

CLAMATO

Seafood has become downright voguish in Paris, with young food entrepreneurs at Fish Club, Restaurant Edgar and the new VerreVolé Sur Mer all thinking beyond the old-school brasserie and its shimmering crustacea display. The owners of Septime, one of the big hitters of 'bistronomy', opened Clamato a few years ago as a more relaxed, no-reservations seafood bistrot, and it remains one of the hottest addresses in Paris. Snag a table or a perch at the bar, but come hungry so you can try as many small plates as possible. Start with oysters, when in season (wild from Normandy, cultivated from Maldon in Essex), XL clams from Mont-Saint-Michel or the finer pink clams from Glénans and live langoustines or prawns. Raw delights might run from generous mouthfuls of line-caught tuna sashimi with umezu (plum vinegar) and chives to fat marinated sardines with grelot onions. Try the monkfish with courgette flowers and mixed leaves, and if you see pétoncles (baby scallops), order two portions. The puddings, usually fruity and creamy, are magnificent. The cabin-style room, planked head-to-toe with reclaimed wood, is cosy and low-key and always full of happy people. (www.septime-charonne.fr)





WEST COUNTRY GIRL

An 11th arrondissement stalwart that is much loved by those in the restaurant trade, it provides good, straightforward sustenance without being cheffy. It does a few things very well. The savoury crêpes—fine, lacy, golden galettes—are made with demi-sel butter that comes from Verneuil-sur-Indre in traditional wooden tubs, and (naturally gluten-free) buckwheat flour from Quimper in Brittany, whisked by hand and griddled until crispy at the edges. Flour for the sweet crêpes comes from the same family-run mill.

The classic order is a complète with ham and cheese, crowned with a sunny-side-up egg, or swap the ham for Montbéliard sausage. Once your plate's clean, you can top up with a salted caramel and apple number with vanilla ice cream. Vegetarians are courted with combinations such as Sainte-Maure de Touraine goat's cheese, spinach leaves and sultanas, or sautéed leeks and melted cheese. The scuffed, retro, diner-style interiors chime nicely with WCG's indie appeal: the name is taken from a Nick Cave paean to PJ Harvey. Oysters are delicious Gillardeau from France's own west country. To drink: cider, of course, a doughty organic one from the Manoir du Kinkiz. (www.westcountrygirl.com)

LE SERVAN

There's been a certain buzz around Le Servan since it opened back in April 2014, thanks to Tatiana Levha's auspicious resumé: she was mentored by two of the world's most influential chefs—Alain Passard at L'Arpège, and Pascal Barbot at L'Astrance.

With Tatiana's sister Katia guiding front-of-house, this former café, seating 38 and replete with wall-sized windows and ceiling frescoes, makes a fresh and friendly addition to the local scene. Two things mark it out from its fellow bistrotts around the 11th: the à la carte menu, and Levha's knack for globetrotting flavours. Breaded pig's trotters are paired with harissa, asparagus might come with tandoori butter, clams with Thai basil. Mains, always seasonal and usually deceptively simple, might include beef paleron (a shoulder cut) with miso or tuna with peanuts, celery and pak choi. Come at lunchtime, when the room is flooded with light, and nab one of the best-value lunch menus going. A bottle of Fanny Sabre Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Beaune 2012 will keep you going until you've polished off the chocolate profiteroles. (www.leservan.com)





Forme des Landes sec	2,5	12,5€
VINS ROUGES		
Vin du pays du Gard	2,3	15€
Bordeaux "Les Rambants"	4	22€
Val de Loire	5	25€
Côtes du Rhône Jaboulet	5,5	27
VINS BLANCS		
Côtes du Rhône	2,3	15€
Côtes Catalanes	3,8	20€
Sr Vérau	4,5	25€
VIN ROSÉ		
de Provence bio	3,8	18€
CAFÉ ILLY		
Expresso / Occa		2€
Crème		3€
THÉS "110 l'autre thé"		3,1€
Jus de Pommes bio	3	9€
Sodas		3,2€
BIÈRE 166h		3€

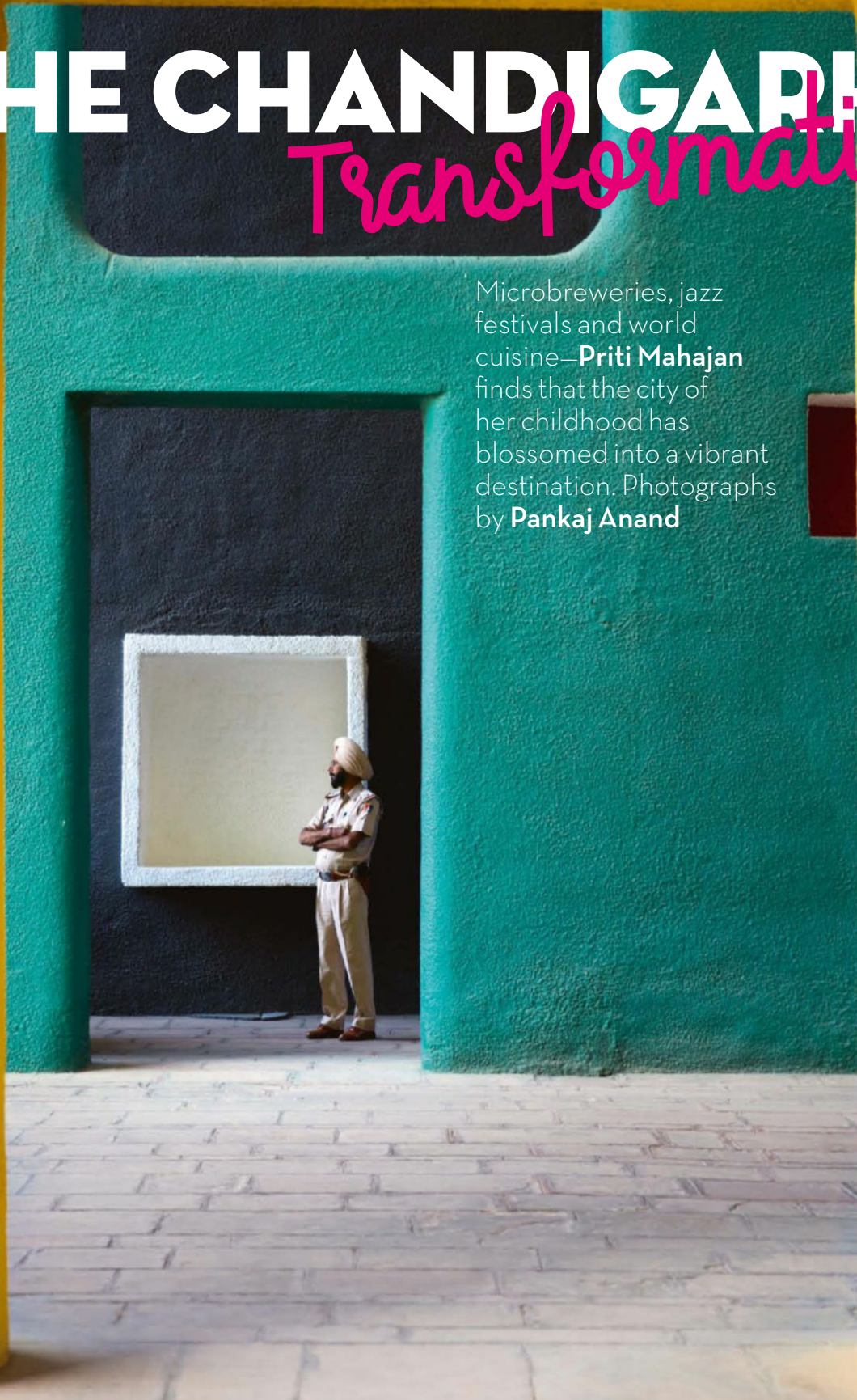
The interiors of West Country Girl

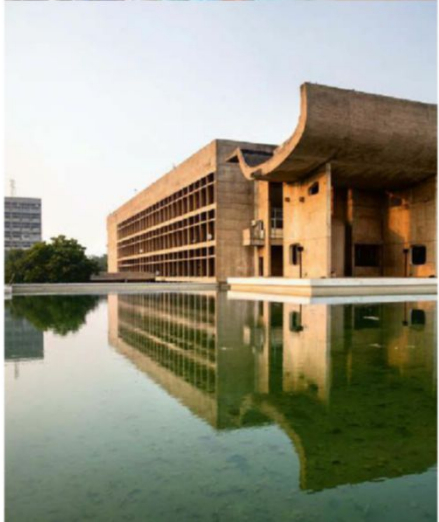


THE CHANDIGARH

Transformation

Microbreweries, jazz festivals and world cuisine—**Priti Mahajan** finds that the city of her childhood has blossomed into a vibrant destination. Photographs by **Pankaj Anand**





One of my earliest memories of Chandigarh is from when I was about five. It was a morning ritual in early summer to spring out of bed and rush straight to the terrace. The amaltas in the garden would be in full bloom and the breeze would be showering the tree's delicate golden petals all over the terrace and beyond. I would bathe in the gentle fall with outstretched arms and an upturned face. Then, there was the blazing saffron of gulmohars, the lavender of jacarandas, the mauve of kachnars... Chandigarh is a city to fall in love with. Wide, tree-lined boulevards, gardens for all seasons and reasons, a perennial lake flanked by the majestic Himalayan foothills—there's a beauty in its simplicity that the residents love and embrace on a daily basis. Morning routines vary from mountain biking in the hills to boot camp at **Sukhna Lake**. The social fabric of the city is closely linked to its many parks. I talk to Chandigarh-based maker of customised bikes, Ranjit Randhawa, whose grandfather worked with Le Corbusier, a French architect known for his egalitarian and slightly eccentric take on urban design and architecture. Randhawa loves the fact that key roads are planted with unique flowering trees to give each sector a colour-coded identity: amaltas trees in Sector 16 and pink cassia in Sector 27. My favourite parks include the gorgeous **Zakir Hussain Rose Garden**, with its astounding varieties of roses, the **Bougainvillea Garden**, with its profusion of colours, and **Shanti Kunj** for the quiet it offers, with its gently trickling stream and undulated terrain. But the most unique and fascinating of them all is **Nek Chand's Rock Garden**, a wonderland of more than 2,000 sculptures built entirely out of industrial and home waste, laid out in mosaic courtyards linked by gorges and human-made waterfalls.

The original city remains delightfully untouched, preserved by the sheer discipline and dedication of its citizenry and, to a great measure, by the intrinsic strength of the very purpose it was created for. It was more than just an attempt to create a capital for the ruptured state of Punjab. It was a bold experiment. A planned city for a newly independent India. For this significant task, Nehru's team chose Le Corbusier, who is said to have conceptualised the city as an analogy to the human body. The Capitol Complex—declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2016—housing the High Courts, Secretariat, Assemblies of Punjab and Haryana and the much spoken about monument of the Open Hand (signifying peace and openness), was designed as the head. The shopping, entertainment and business area in Sector 17 was the heart of the city while the educational and cultural institutions were the intellect. The vast expanse of Leisure Valley was to be the lungs while the city itself was organised into different sectors, divided geometrically by a network of perpendicular roads, devised as the circulatory system. Each sector was designed to be self-sufficient, with residential areas, schools, markets and a park.

Le Corbusier summed up the project in his 'edict' with these words: "The seed of Chandigarh is well sown. It is for the citizens to see that the tree flourishes." And the tree is flourishing with aplomb. The Chandigarh of my early youth is witnessing a renaissance. There is a conspicuous energy that is gripping the city. This gateway to Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh is now a tri-city, flanked on the Punjab side by Mohali, a budding metropolis that boasts a world-class cricket stadium, an international airport and luxurious high-rises. And on the Haryana (and Himachal) side, there's the growing city of Panchkula. Shopping, which was mainly restricted to the market in Sector 17, has now progressed to the Elante Mall in Chandigarh's Industrial Area (Phase I). →



Rice fields near The Oberoi Sukhvilas Resort & Spa.
Opposite page from top: **Neelam Mansingh, theatre artist;**
Rose Garden in the morning; clothes at Raya; Palace
of Assembly in the Capitol Complex. Previous pages from
left: **Simran Gosal, the owner of Anaha Emporio & Attic;**
a guard at High Court



Its children are returning to the city from their travels abroad, to help redefine its character. Abhay Jagat, for instance, moved back after stints in Australia and Jaipur, to open a small, cosy nook called **Backpackers Cafe** with his wife, Priya. Audaciously offering scrambled eggs, sausages and coffee to an audience brought up on home-made stuffed parathas and lassi, the café was a runaway success! Now the prolific couple have a variety of dining outlets, such as **The Willow Cafe**, **Café Nomad** and even a tea place called **Tattlers**. My favourite is **Whispering Willows** on the outskirts of Chandigarh, an event venue with a farm-like atmosphere. Its restaurant, **Dak Bungalow**, serves Indian grills, best enjoyed al fresco. Sehej Sidhu, a young entrepreneur, was equally bold, introducing the city's first microbrewery, **Brew Estate**, with a huge selection of beers from Belgium and Germany, in this heartland of whiskey. "Locals are developing a taste for global cuisine and they are willing to experiment with their drinks as well," says Sidhu. The newest entrant on the scene is **F Café** (an F&B extension of Fashion TV), with an eclectic, diverse menu. Gunkaran Singh, who calls himself an "accidental bartender", is also launching F Bar, a members-only club with a focus on quality entertainment. At F Café, Singh recommends the wasabi mutton sliders and ginger turmeric coffee. Another gourmet adventurer, Ambar Mehrotra, started **Whistling Duck** in 2013 presenting pre-plated world cuisine, a concept unexplored here. Mehrotra says, "the focus at the restaurant is on mixing unusual flavours with a strong emphasis on regional cuisine." He also feels that people are ready for a new music sensibility, and recently introduced the annual **Chandigarh Jazz Fest**.

The city is also witnessing the rise of the lounge movement, with spots like **Satva Bar & Lounge** and **Orchid Lounge**. Satva is popular for the Sufi bands it promotes, but it was at the Orchid that acclaimed duo Hari and Sukhmani started to perform. Their genre of music fuses traditional Punjabi folk with ambient electronica and is fast becoming an endearing bridge between old and new. Hari reminisces, "Growing up in Chandigarh, social interactions were limited to the living rooms of extended families, where we would sing old Bollywood classics and Punjabi folk songs." His music is steadfastly loyal to that nostalgia on one hand, while on the other, it is constantly exploring new horizons through collaborations with international musicians such as israj player Arshad Khan and guitarist Thu Le.

The success of these ventures is an encouraging reflection of changing times and people. But don't be fooled into thinking that there is even the slightest waning in the unadulterated love Punjabis have for their own food. Dhabas remain an essential meeting point and a must for any visitor to the city. Growing up, the cream chicken curry from **Tehal Singh's** was a weekly ritual I enjoyed with my dad—we'd order take-away and relish it in the car in companionable silence. The much acclaimed **Pal Dhaba** now has large seating areas, air-conditioned as well as outdoors. During my last trip to Chandigarh, I also discovered a young start-up chef, who specialises in Amritsari kulchas and delivers them fresh to your doorstep. On another evening, we ordered in a delicious, lamb curry. And let's not forget the sweet shops. **Sindhi Sweets** has a lip-smacking array of fresh barfis and baby rasgullas, and the paapdi chaat and chana kulcha at **Gopal's** are personal favourites. **Monica's** in Sector 8 continues to be the go-to place for fresh fruit cakes whilst **Nik Baker's** has an ever-evolving range of savouries.

In Chandigarh, farm-to-table is a way of life. Most homes have a vegetable patch, and I have to admit that nothing—absolutely nothing—comes close to garden-fresh sarson da saag slow-cooked in an earthen pot on the lawns of your own home. Add some freshly →

The Chandigarh of my early youth is witnessing a renaissance. There is a conspicuous energy that is gripping the city



Ranjit Randhawa at his garage. Opposite page from top: sculpture at the Rock Garden; the entrance to the Punjab and Haryana High Court; juttis from JUTTIGRAM; Vaneeta Kang, owner of travel company Go Boundless



Cyclists of the Chandigarh Cycling Club on a hilly trail to Morni via Mandhana



*With beautiful roads, fresh air, mountains and fields
in its backyard, Chandigarh has almost as many
walking and cycling paths as it has roads*



A display at Raya. Opposite page from top: tandoori chicken on the tandoor at Pal Dhaba; a waiter at Indian Coffee House; Brew Estate; Priya Jagat, co-owner of Backpackers Cafe

chopped turnips and hot makki roti with home-churned butter and happiness takes on an entirely new meaning.

While food has always been a thing here, shopping is really coming into its own. Harinder Singh's **1469** offers a curated, often quirky collection of phulkari scarves, kurtas and more. At her store, set in the garden of her beautiful home, **Roopa Lamba** does bespoke Punjabi outfits in gorgeous colours and textures. Lifestyle store **Raya** offers a well-curated selection of womenswear designers. **JUTTIGRAM** is another homegrown venture whose vibrant, embroidered slip-ons ensure its online presence is burgeoning. The not so faint-hearted could jostle through the **Sector 22 market** and check out little stores selling silver jewellery. Across the block, head to **Talwar Jewellers** for contemporary diamond jewellery or **Jagdish Jewellers** for more traditional settings in gold. **Anaha Emporio & Attic** is another popular stop for hand-crafted kundan: big maang-tikkas and chaand baalis.

At a time when every urban centre bemoans a deterioration, locals here say there has never been a better time to live in the city. Cultural outposts such as **Tagore Theatre** are bringing in a new wave of entertainment—comedy evenings, world-class plays, poetry recitals and more. **Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi** and **Chandigarh Arts Council** also host art and classical music showcases. Neelam Mansingh, a stalwart of Punjabi theatre and a Padma Shri awardee says, “the city is young. And the apparent lack of past provides me with limitless possibilities and avenues for expression.” One of her favourite spots is the amphitheatre at the Rock Garden. “It’s a magical venue and speaks directly to my soul”

A city with beautiful roads, fresh air, mountains and fields in its backyard is bound to attract a lifestyle that celebrates the outdoors. Chandigarh has almost as many walking and cycling paths as it has roads. Horse riding, bicycling and superbiker clubs are a norm. Vaneeta Kang who used to be a keen rallyist, now owns a travel company, Go Boundless, which creates customised adventure holidays for families. “For adventure-seekers, Chandigarh offers off-roading options,” says Kang. “**Gerrari Offroaders** is a popular club that frequents the tracks at Mullanpur and Siswan Dam.” Similarly, for those interested in road trips, Randhawa recommends the scenic drive on the Himalayan Expressway, from Chandigarh to Timber Trails. With the hills next door, driving is another passion and locals often head to Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh for an after-dinner drive, or to Jabali (also in Himachal) for a paratha breakfast at the drop of a hat. It is almost as if the city lives and loves under the aegis of these hills.

Chandigarh embodies the true spirit of Punjab—abundant and brimming with vitality, with a unique character—gentle and inclusive. It may be known by many statistics and descriptors—highest per capita income, happiest, smoke-free, clean—but to me, it will always be summed up by one beloved word: home. 🏡

WHERE TO STAY

The Oberoi Sukhvilas Resort & Spa A spanking new 60-key resort with a stellar spa surrounded by 8,000 acres of forests. (www.oberoihotels.com; doubles from ₹35,000) **Hyatt Regency Chandigarh** With over 36,000sqft of meeting and banquet space, it's popular with wedding and event planners. (www.chandigarh.regency.hyatt.com; doubles from ₹7,600) **The Lalit Chandigarh** In the Rajiv Gandhi IT Park with rooms overlooking the verdant slopes of the Shivalik Hills, its club Kitty Su is the best party spot in town. (www.thelalit.com; doubles from ₹8,500) **JW Marriott Chandigarh** A gorgeous rooftop pool, 164 spiffy rooms with complimentary wi-fi and a spa that pampers—all within a short driving distance from the shopping district in Sector 17. (www.marriott.com; doubles from ₹8,600)





Insider's guide to Chandigarh

SEE & DO

Best for the outdoors: For the most scenic fitness trail, head to **Leisure Valley** in Sector 10B. The nicest walking trail is the **Lakeside Walk** (Sector 6). Nearby, the **Rock Garden** has amazing sculptures. For a moonlit drive, hit Morni Hills. Go on an adventurous drive with **Gerrari Offroaders** (www.facebook.com/gerrarioffroad). For those who don't mind the exercise, join the **Chandigarh Cycling Club** (098888 90617). Harkirat Singh runs **Citrus County farmstays** (www.citruscountyfarmstays.com; doubles from ₹14,000 including all meals) at his ancestral orchards in Hoshiarpur, 135km from Chandigarh.

Best for culture: Take a guided walk around the UNESCO-listed **Capitol Complex** (www.admsr.chd.nic.in). The **Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi** (www.lalitkalachandigarh.com), **Punjab Arts Council** (www.punjabartscouncil.org) and **Tagore Theatre** (0172 272 4278) are great places to catch some visual and performance art.

EAT AND DRINK

Best for breakfast: **Backpackers Cafe** (084370 41459) is a great spot for eggs and sausages. Also try **The Café@JW**, the **JW Marriott Chandigarh** (www.marriott.com).

Best for coffee: **F Café** (www.facebook.com/pg/fcafechd), Fashion TV's Indian F&B outpost, brews excellent coffee, creates Instagrammable freakshakes and DIY sandwiches, while **Indian Coffee House** (0172 270 2804) is a blast from the past. **Café Nomad** (084370 31469) and **The Willow Cafe** (084370 43234) are great people-watching spots.

Best for tea: At **Tattlers** (www.facebook.com/tattlers9), the high tea menu is Europe-inspired and lists desserts like Eton mess and berry trifle.

Best for lunch and dinner: **Whistling Duck** (www.whistlingduck.in) serves global cuisine in a modern Indian setting.

Oregano Restaurant & Bar plates excellent Italian (www.marriott.com) as does **Piccante at Hyatt Regency Chandigarh** (<https://chandigarh.regency.hyatt.com>). For Indian food, there's **Tahal Singh's** (098037 37555)

and **Pal Dhaba** (www.paldhaba.in). For a more upscale experience head to **Dak Bungalow** (www.thewhisperingwillows.com). And you can order in the best kulchas from **Amritsari Kulchas** (098884 87408).

Best for sweets and savouries: **Monica's** (www.monicas.in) for cakes, cookies and soufflés, **Nik Baker's** (0172 5062 257) makes excellent desserts and savoury dishes, including sandwiches, waffles and quiches. **Gopal's** (0172 5072 794) and **Sindhi Sweets** (0172 5075 222) are local favourites for their traditional chaat and mithai.

Best for nightlife: **Satva Bar & Lounge** (www.facebook.com/SatvaLoungeChd) and **Orchid Lounge** (098559 66479) offer live music, **Brew Estate** (9888788887), the city's first microbrewery, offers a range of beers. And **Kitty Su at The Lalit Chandigarh** (www.thelalit.com) is perfect for a night on the town.

SHOP

Best for local handicraft: The state emporium, **Phulkari** (0172 270 6246), has the best of traditional craft, while **1469** (www.1469workshop.com) offers a modern take on it with its Punjab-inspired t-shirts, phulkari jackets and saris. **JUTTIGRAM** (www.juttigram.com) is where locals pick up their shoes. And for bangles and ribbons, **Chhotu Motu** (0172 270 9074) is the best. **Elante Mall** (www.elantemall.co.in), the city's largest, is a trove of international and local brands.

Best for designer wear: **Raya** (www.rayalifestyle.com) curates interesting pret for women. **Roopa Lamba** (No 34, Sector 9A) offers bespoke tailoring. And for delicate heirloom jewellery, try **Jagdish Jewellers** (www.jagdishjewellers.com), **Talwar Jewellers** (www.talwarjewellers.com) and **Anaha Emporio & Attic** (www.facebook.com/pg/ANAHACHandigarhEmporioAndAttic).

GOOD TO KNOW:

For a glam hairdo, take an appointment at **Headmasters** (www.headmasters.in), while **Looks Unisex Salon** (0172 4011300) does great pedis. And for the most fragrant flowers try **The Green House** (0172 274 2834).

Despite a whole new culinary landscape, there is not even the slightest waning in the unadulterated love Punjabis have for their own food



The popular Pal Dhaba. Previous page from top: a view of the performance area at The Oberoi Sukhvilas Resort & Spa; the chefs at Whistling Duck; a painting in the bar of The Oberoi; cupcakes at Monica's





ON THE FOOD TRAIL IN HEALDSBURG, THE NEW NAPA

The great American cookbook has a new chapter sourced from California, where the farming town of Healdsburg is prodding Napa's reputation with its pitchfork. By **Sybil Kapoor**. Photographs by **Julien Capmeil**





The sun drops like liquid gold below the horizon. The surrounding Californian hills turn from amber to deepest purple. On a rooftop garden in Healdsburg in Sonoma County, birds whirr above as the sky darkens. Below, the town's lights start to twinkle in the tree-lined streets. This is the time when the terrace will be filled with eager diners exploring its tiny greenhouse, sniffing great pots of lacy, peppery-scented kinome herbs and fragrant-fruited yuzu trees before dipping into exquisite plates of crispy pattypan squash blossoms stuffed with spot prawn, and locally gathered sea urchin with roasted Benimaru potato cream, scallion custard and caviar. But for the moment, I have it to myself. I'm here to take a pre-opening peek at **SingleThread Farms** (www.singlethreadfarms.com)—a 55-cover restaurant-with-rooms, plus five acres of working farmland nearby, that is set to make Healdsburg a new culinary hotbed to rival New Orleans and Portland.

The town, about 100km north of San Francisco, is the secret darling of American foodies, many of whom have grown tired of Napa Valley's vast, rose-hedged

Rooted in the American ideal of living off the land, SingleThread is set to make Healdsburg a new culinary hotbed to rival New Orleans and Portland

vineyards, wine tours and motorway jams. Once a sleepy agricultural area, Napa was transformed into a world-class wine-tourism destination in 1966, when Robert Mondavi launched the area's first new winery since the repeal of Prohibition in the 1930s. It ignited a wave of openings, and the region—an easy drive from the Bay Area and with world-class viticulture—attracted visitors in droves. Superb restaurants followed; most notably, Thomas Keller's pioneering The French Laundry, in 1994. His style of complex food, made up of tiny courses in which the same ingredient was never used twice, has won numerous awards including three Michelin stars. It was unlike anything else being cooked in the USA. Today, almost 4.5 million people visit some of the 450 wineries in the county every year, many of which are now owned by global conglomerates.

By contrast, Sonoma County, between Napa and the Pacific Ocean, has a mixed agricultural economy and a left-leaning culture that attracted hippies and artisans in the 1970s. It was a natural progression for →



Left: **inside Zazu Kitchen + Farm**. Right: **décor at SingleThread Farms**. Previous pages, clockwise from top left: **an aubergine dish at SingleThread; Zazu Kitchen + Farm; red onions at Healdsburg Farmers' Market; flowers for sale; a tea platter at SingleThread; Katina Connaughton of SingleThread; a vintage truck**



Here in Sonoma, pigs rival boutique vineyards in the affections of the

its restaurants to develop the farm-to-table ethos championed by chef Alice Waters when she listed her farm suppliers on the menus at Chez Panisse in Berkeley. Since then, the movement has gained considerable momentum, not just in California but worldwide, with the rise of the slow-food movement, locavore culture and lengthy details on the provenance of your food available everywhere from fancy-schmancy restaurants to McDonald's. Here in Sonoma, pigs rival boutique vineyards in the affections of its inhabitants, and values of self-sufficiency and mutual support thrive.

Arriving at SingleThread, I realise I have been waiting for this moment for years, ever since learning that husband-and-wife team Kyle and Katina Connaughton were to launch their first-ever restaurant in their native California. This has been the most talked-about foodie opening in the USA.

Kyle is one of those rare chefs whose dishes make waves. He spent five years in the UK, at Heston Blumenthal's three-Michelin-starred The Fat Duck in Berkshire, with the eccentric job title of 'head chef of research and development at The Fat Duck Experimental Kitchen'. The restaurant made its name with creations such as *Alice in Wonderland*-inspired mock-turtle soup and the multisensory Sound of the Sea.

Prior to the Fat Duck, Kyle worked with chef Michel Bras in Japan for three years. "When I learnt Michel was opening

in Hokkaido, I wrote to him," Kyle says. "I'd been studying the language and learning Japanese cooking for five years, so it was a dream come true to go and work there." For a time, he was in charge of Bras's famous, astoundingly pretty dish, gargouillou, which always reflects the local terroir at that time of year, and used to lead the morning foraging hunt for its ingredients, including fiddlehead fern shoots and tara no me (similar to wild angelica shoots). Katina spent her time in Hokkaido learning about Japanese gardening, and when the couple moved to England, she worked as a culinary gardener and chef for a private estate near Henley-on-Thames.

SingleThread is the culmination of the Connaughtons' wealth of experience, borne of their love of Japanese aesthetics and British inventiveness, but rooted in the American ideal of living off the land. The name comes from the idea of a single thread of hospitality. It starts at Katina's small farm beside the Russian River, with its higgledy-piggledy Japanese vegetables such as kintoki ninjin (Kyoto red carrots) and kamo nasu (round aubergine), old nectarine trees, beehives and clucking chickens. It continues with one of three 11-course tasting menus at the restaurant, with Kyle using homegrown ingredients such as garlic and peaches, then finishes with the gift of a copy of your menu, seeds and a floral posy. And if you can't bear to leave, there are five bedrooms above the restaurant decorated in soft grey tones and designed by AvroKO, the firm behind The Temple House Bar and Lounge in Chengdu, and New York's 1 Hotel

Above from left: a salad at SHED; Adam Mariani, co-owner of Scribe Winery; fresh pickings at Healdsburg Farmers' Market; The Nectary



inhabitants, and values of self-sufficiency and mutual support thrive

Central Park. Sunlight streams through the large windows and, with their rugs and modern art, the rooms feel more like artists' loft spaces than hotel digs. Big, chunky beds are covered with soft cushions, there are flower-filled Iga vases and bathrooms with hi-tech Japanese loos.

The restaurant's menu will alter subtly every five days to capture the changing seasonal ingredients. Forget the minimalist-looking yet complex French-American dishes of the once game-changing French Laundry, such as oysters and pearls (creamy tapioca, oysters and sturgeon caviar quenelles). Instead, here are beautiful, natural-looking plates of food that taste of the moment: chunks of charred jade-green serpentine cucumber in May seasoned with freshly grated wasabi vinaigrette and dotted with caviar; or in early summer, the fluffiest strawberry and shiso yogurt with crisp slivers of pale pink frozen verjus meringue and strawberries. It might look simple, but don't be fooled. Every dish has been carefully developed to give intense pleasure to the eater, including the wild salmon, which is smoked over flowering cherry wood and served with Japanese seasonings of shio koji, ginger and myoga. His food is a blend of classical Japanese kaiseki, up-to-the-minute modern techniques and simple Californian cooking.

Standing in the restaurant, I look at Kyle. Tall, shaven-headed and with heavily tattooed arms, he has a quiet humour and measured manner that often takes people by surprise. "It's been a slow process. Initially we searched

in Napa, but nothing felt right," he says softly. I catch his excitement as he explains more. The entire experience—from the sound-proofed kitchens to the ultimate in-room cup of tea—has been carefully thought through. Each bedroom has one of the first Teforia infusers, which recognises your chosen tea with a radio frequency identification chip and heats water to the right temperature for a spot-on brew. In the dining room, every aspect of the meal is designed to give sensory pleasure, from the silky Kihachi Kobo lacquerware to the range of specially forged Bloodroot Blades steak knives, with handles made from different local wood.

Who else would have thought of creating the US's smallest winery: a 476-gallon fermentation tank, tucked behind glass in a corner of their restaurant? It will host a different Sonoma winemaker every year. Each one will be challenged to create a chef's wine to enhance Kyle's food. Normally, it's the other way round.

Stepping away from SingleThread and exploring Sonoma's restaurants, shops and wineries, I realise there is an idea that connects them all: a desire for proprietors to share with customers the life they themselves are trying to live.

"This town is a special place where farmers and artisans can come, produce and connect with a community that appreciates incredible quality and care," explains Katina, as we meet in downtown Healdsburg for some peach melba pie and buffalo-milk vanilla ice cream at Noble Folk Ice Cream and Pie Bar (www.thenoblefolk.com). "Beyond dynamic →



Sonoma's restaurants, shops and wineries are linked by a desire for proprietors to share with customers the life they themselves are trying to live

winemaking, we also have farmers specialising in top-notch produce, with grains, heritage-breed chickens, Mangalitsa pigs and dairies producing milk and butter with real passion.”

Across the street, the palm trees in the square sway in the breeze and a small group of elderly hippies, grey hair down to their shoulders, stand quietly beside the road holding ‘Ban the drones’ placards. Hip and hippyish go hand-in-hand here. Noble Folk is typical. Kickstarter-funded, it’s run by Osvaldo Jimenez and Christian Sullberg, whose Scandi-Japanese influenced dishes use locally grown grain and fruit in blueberry, plum and thyme pie, and black sesame-coconut ice cream. “The queues have got so bad, we have to limit everyone to three tastings,” says Christian.

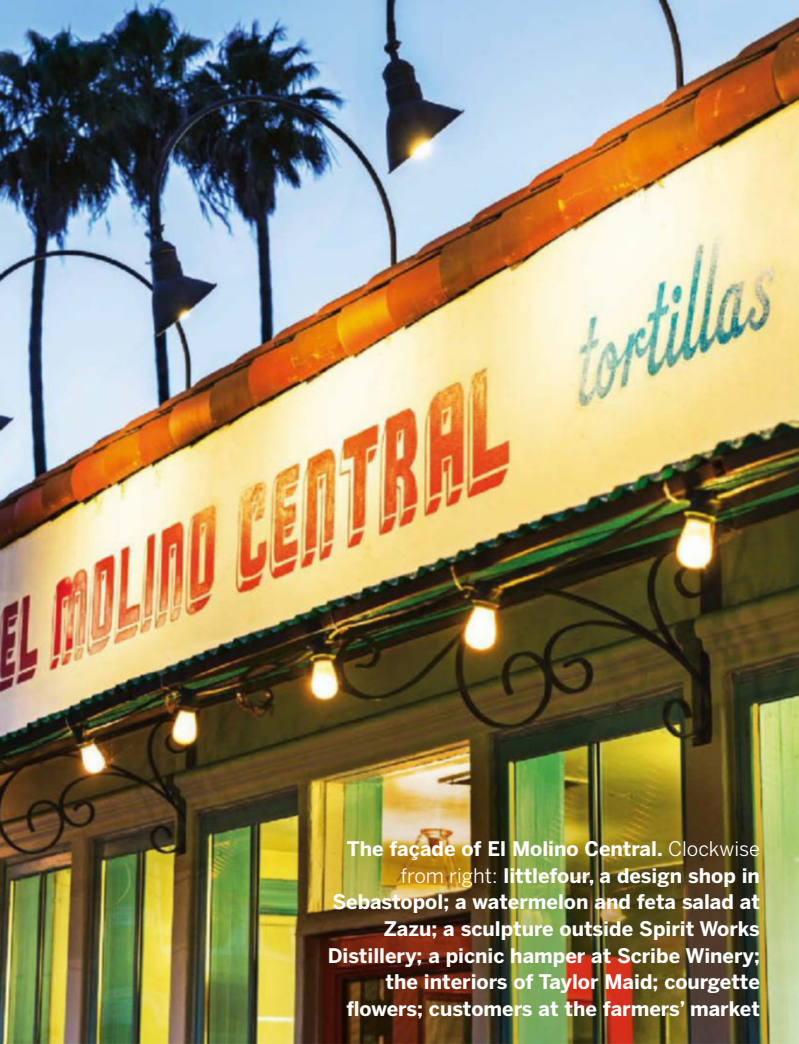
Outside, the tree-lined sidewalks are bustling with well-heeled San Franciscans who have made Healdsburg their weekend treat. They’re carrying armfuls of cottage flowers and bags stuffed with mulberries and tomatoes from the farmers’ market on North Street. Others slip into the minimalist-chic **Flying Goat Coffee** (www.flyinggoatcoffee.com) for a morning shot before strolling over to the town’s galleries. “Annie Leibovitz and her family are opening a gallery and performance-art centre here next year,” says Katina. “They’re restoring the rusty old Healdsburg Machine Co on Healdsburg Avenue.”

Above from left: a vintage truck in Healdsburg; bacon popcorn at Zazu Kitchen + Farm; a barista at Taylor Maid Farms

We stop at the award-winning **SHED** in Healdsburg (www.healdsburgshed.com), owned by farmers Doug Lipton and Cindy Daniel. SHED was designed around an ideal: it is a restaurant, market and community space where mothers coo at babies over buttery kouign-amann Breton pastries while shoppers buy honey, leafy beets and Japanese donabe pots. The open-plan kitchen is in the centre of the ground floor, where chefs cook behind great bowls of sweet rocket and oregano flowers. The arrival of culinary director Perry Hoffman from Napa’s Etoile at Domain Chandon has the café tipped for a Michelin star—he won his first one when he was just 25 years old. SHED is already a brunch favourite with every chef in the district; the kombucha is an excellent pick-me-up. But casual diners prefer to come for long, laid-back dinners with oysters and sparkling Roederer Estate Brut NV.

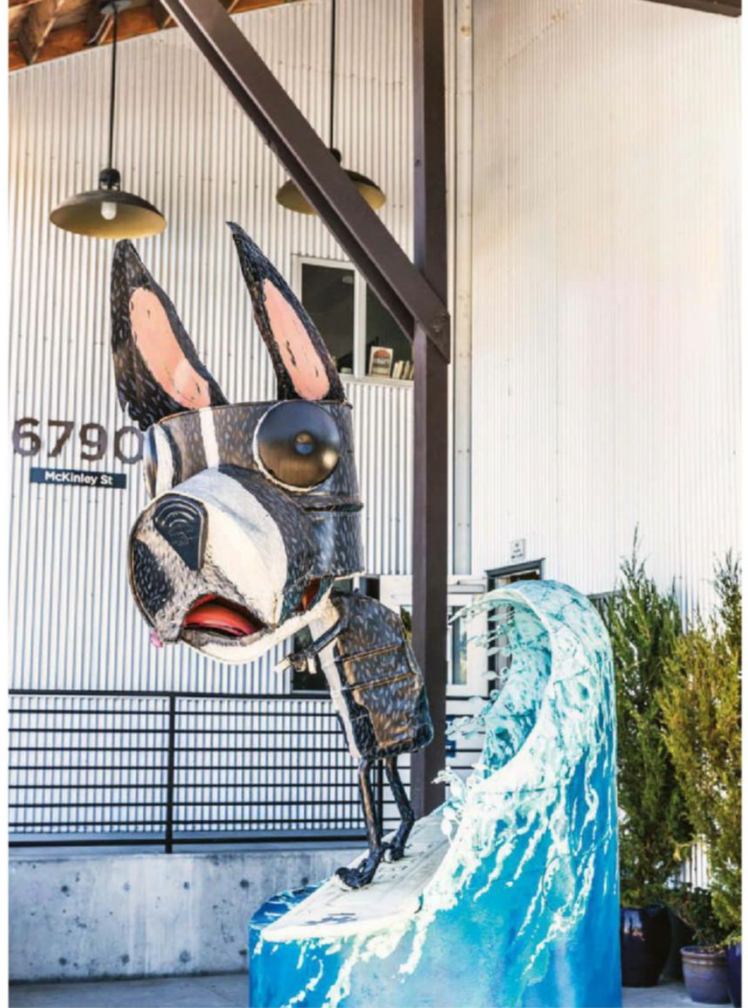
With so many superb wineries in the region, the only way to get around responsibly is to hire a driver. My chauffeur-driven car purrs along winding roads to reach the vineyards of **Scribe Winery** (www.scribewinery.com) on Sonoma’s outskirts, owned by brothers Andrew and Adam Mariani. It’s set on a lush green hillside, and you could easily spend an afternoon lounging under the trees as your host selects wine for you to taste. A soft Bay breeze blows in, and Lady and Califi, a lovable beagle and docile Rhodesian ridgeback, loll at my feet. →





The façade of El Molino Central. Clockwise from right: littlefour, a design shop in Sebastopol; a watermelon and feta salad at Zazu; a sculpture outside Spirit Works Distillery; a picnic hamper at Scribe Winery; the interiors of Taylor Maid; courgette flowers; customers at the farmers' market







I'm handed glasses of fresh non-oaked Chardonnays and delicate, lemony Rieslings while nibbling the creamiest buffalo-milk mozzarella.

Just a 15-minutes drive from Scribe is **El Molino Central** (www.elmolinocentral.com), the sweetest white-and-blue-painted Mexican joint adored by everyone from college students gossiping over crab tostadas to local politicians digging into beer-battered fish tacos. Everything is done by hand, whether it's grinding the corn for tortillas or whizzing up scrumptious strawberries for the lemonade.

Each winery in Sonoma has its own distinctive character. In 2001 when Akiko and Ken Freeman first moved into an old winery in the misty Green Valley near Sebastopol, about 30 minutes' drive from Healdsburg, they had no wine-making experience. "Most of us are small growers, so we support each other if anyone is having a problem," Akiko says. "Some of the Freeman Winery vineyards are on the Sonoma Coast, 1,000ft above sea level. It's always windy and the vines yield teeny-tiny grapes, but they have a good aroma and nice texture."

Their wines are made by traditional methods and both their Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs are gorgeous. Her barrel selection, Akiko's Cuvee Pinot Noir from 2013, is a wine that should be drunk without food so you can really relish its rich flavour. She leads me into a tasting space in their wine cave, all oak casks and cool earth. We talk as much about life as about Pinot Noir vine clones. The ones from the Calera vineyards, I learn, give a wine structure, while those from Swan add a spicy note.

Later, my driver, Buzz Darcy whisks me into Sebastopol, past orchards, and tells me how the town was once a centre for canning Gravenstein apples. We are heading for the **Zazu Kitchen + Farm** in the Barlow (www.zazukitchen.com). This once-derelict apple cannery has been alchemised into an exciting mishmash of restaurants, wine-tasting rooms and art galleries. Zazu's chef owners Duskie Estes and John Stewart are, to put it mildly, fanatical about pigs. Everything they serve is produced locally from John's salumi to bacon caramel popcorn. It's a funky, industrial restaurant whose atmosphere and owners make you want to party.

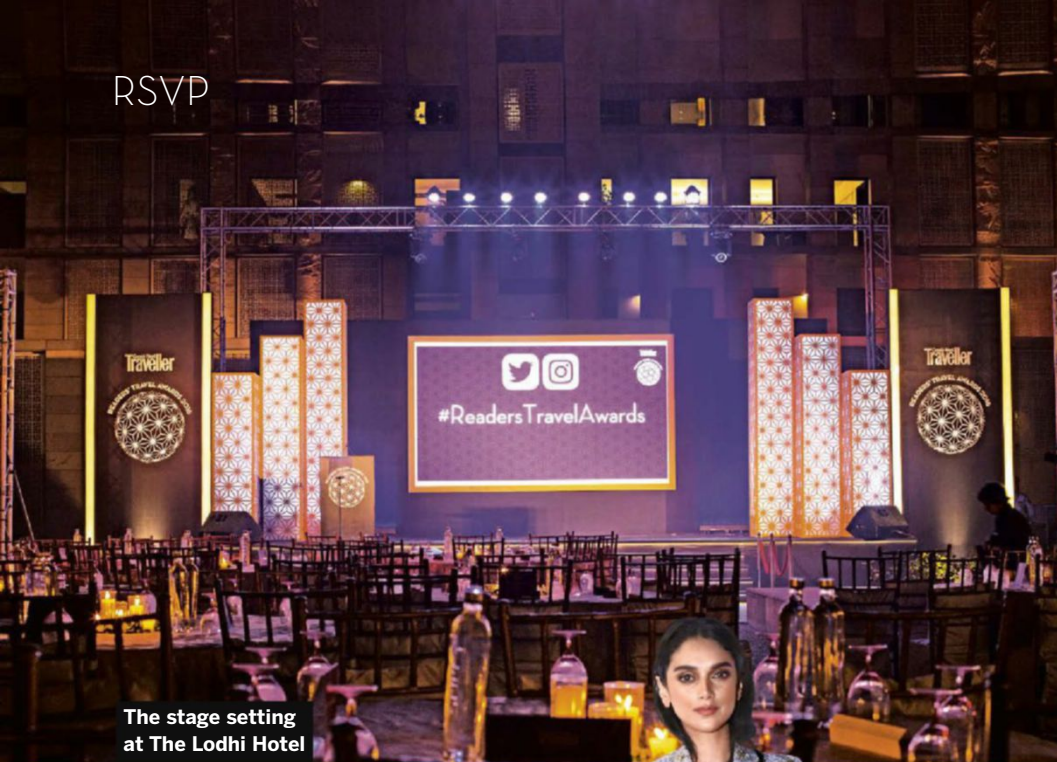
Having worked my way around the fragrant **Taylor Maid Farms** coffee shop (www.taylormaidfarms.com), the oh-so-Californian hippy-dippy juice bar **The Nectary** (www.thenectary.net) and the equally intriguing **Spirit Works Distillery** (www.spiritworksdistillery.com), which makes its own base spirit to give the gin an almost sweet, whisky flavour, I find myself wondering whether I should move. Sonoma captures the energy and sense of can-do that I so love about the US—the people here are sharing in the American dream and it makes me want to join them. 📍

GETTING THERE Fly direct to San Francisco from New Delhi with Air India (www.airindia.com). Healdsburg is about an hour's drive from there. Indian passport-holders can apply for a visa online (www.ustraveldocs.com), 6–8 weeks prior to travel. Visas cost US\$160 or ₹11,000.

Clockwise from top left: **serving spoons on a tray at SingleThread; at the farmers' market; pies and espresso at Noble Folk Ice Cream and Pie Bar; homeware at SHED; flowers for sale; Karen Taylor, the owner of El Molino Central outside the restaurant**



RSVP



The stage setting at The Lodhi Hotel



The lawn at the hotel lit up for the event



Conde Nast's Alex Kuruvilla and Chief Guest Vinod Zutshi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

Actor Aditi Rao Hydari, the host for the event



The best in the travel industry, as voted for by you, were honoured on a gorgeous winter evening at The Lodhi Hotel, New Delhi, hosted by the charming Aditi Rao Hydari. Vinod Zutshi, Honourable Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, was the Chief Guest for the event, which was sponsored by Kama Ayurveda, along with pouring partners William Grant and Grover Zampa and lifestyle partner NDTV Good Times. Here's a look at travel's big night. [T](#)



AKTC's Ratish Nanda



Etihad Airways's Neerja Bhatia



IndiGo's Aditya Ghosh



Marriott's Neeraj Govil



The Lodhi Hotel's Vikramaditya Singh



The Lalit's Keshav Suri



CNT's Sunaina Talwar Khiani and MakeMyTrip's Deep Kalra



HE Sir Dominic Asquith, British High Commissioner to India



Le Passage to India's Arjun Sharma



The Park's Priya Paul and Kama Ayurveda's Vivek Sahni

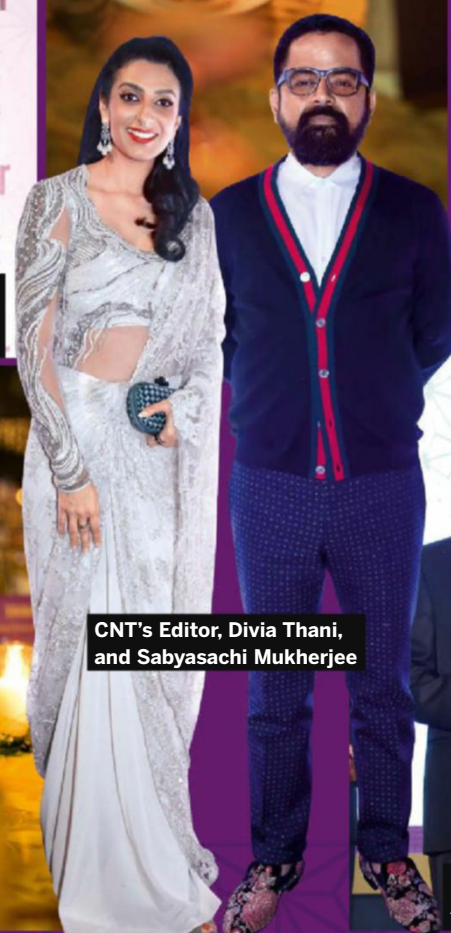


HE Chitrangene Wagiswara, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India

The table setting



Paralympic gold medallist Devendra Jhajharia



CNT's Editor, Divia Thani, and Sabyasachi Mukherjee



Marriott's Rajeev Menon and Cox & Kings's Karan Anand



The Leela's Rajiv Kaul



Vistara's Phee Teik Yeoh



Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism



Farooq Ahmad Shah of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir



PHOTOGRAPHS: ANKIT VISHNOI, GULSHAN SACHDEVA



Neemrana Hotels's Aman Nath



Counselage's Suhel Seth



Condé Nast's Arjun Mehra and Taj's Rajshree Bakshi



**The Lodhi's
Saurabh Khurana**



**Thomas Cook's
Abraham Alapatt**



ITC's B Hariharan



**Pullman and Novotel's
Tristan Beau de Lomenie
and Alaa Afifi**



**IHHR Hospitality's
Aashica Khanna
and Ashok Khanna**



**Airbnb's
Amanpreet Bajaj**



**Hyatt's
Heddo Siebs**



**A&K's Vikram
Madhok**



**The Park's
Ruchika Mehta**



**TrawellTag's
Dev Karvat**



**The gift bags from
Kama Ayurveda**



**Forest Essentials's
Samrath Bedi and
Karishma Manga Bedi**



**HVS's Achin Khanna
and Manav Thadani**



TripAdvisor's Nikhil Ganju



**William Dalrymple, Nandita
Chandra and Pranav Chandra**



**IndiGo's Ankit
Ratra, Nitin Arora
and Sanjay Kumar**



**Kama Ayurveda's Shrishti Chaudhary and Antara
Kundu, Peepul's Akriti Mishra, Angela Sharma,
Priyanka Dass and Kama's Deepak Kumar**



IHG's Vijai Singh



BMW's Varun Pachisia



The Leela's Rashmi Vashisht



The Khyber's Vinit Chhabra



Safilo's Rolf Blaser and Anupama Blaser



Novotel's Rohan Sable and S Jayakrishnan



SUJÁN Hospitality's Jaisal Singh



ITC's Bindu Panicker



Starwood's Anuraag Bhatnagar



Swarovski's Vivek Ramabhadran and AD's Deepa Bhatia with Neha Ramabhadran



Taj's Rakhee Lalvani



Marriott's Khushnooma Kapadia and Vogue's Dilshad Arora



Gujarat Tourism's Soman Pathy



Switzerland Tourism's Ritu Sharma



Swatch Group's Bheeni Kapur, CNT's Priya Singh with Swatch's PH Narayanan and Megha Kaushik



Indiva Marketing's Beate HK Mauder-Kakkar



Hyatt's Pratiti Rajpal, Aseem Kapoor, Sunishchal Parasnish, Somnath Dey, Shobhit Sawhney, Meena Rewari and Arpana Pradhan

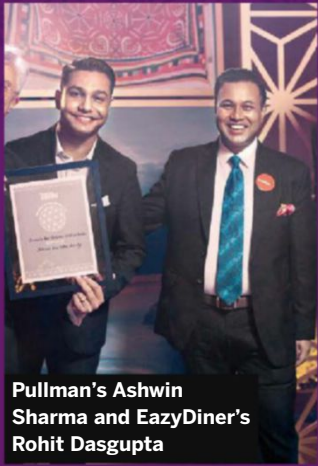


Atmantan Wellness Resort's Athena Roxanne



IHHR's Mahesh Natarajan

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANKIT VISHNOI, GULSHAN SACHDEVA



Pullman's Ashwin Sharma and EazyDiner's Rohit Dasgupta



Starwood's Arjun Verma



The Oberoi's David Mathews



ITC's JP Singh



Kunal Bhagat and William Grant's Elena Petrov



The Trident's Sidharth Grover



Delhi Tourism's Sudhir Sobti



Taj's Taljinder Singh



Conde Nast's Oona Dhabhar and DLF's Dinaz Madhukar



Vacheron Constantin's Rishab Suresh and Apeksha Jain



Airbnb's Simran Kodesia and Mona Gandhi with CNT's Aditi Chaudhuri



Experiential Journeys's Amit Kalsi



RARE's Sowmya Vijaymohan and Diksha Varma



Cruise Professionals's Anima and Nishith Saxena



Rajasthan Tourism's Dr Pratibha Singh



Udai Kothi's Bhuwaneshwari Kumari



Delhi Tourism's BL Agrawala



Soul Media's Anuradha Kapoor



The Preferred Group's Seema Roy and Gaurav Sindhwani



FCML's Abhinav Khandelwal



Rakesh Sood



Ankush Nijhawan



**Starwood's
Sanjay Sharma**



**The Oberoi's
Mallika Dasgupta**



**Thailand Tourism's Isra
Stapanaseth and Pinki Arora**



**Jammu & Kashmir
Tourism's Pamela
Tickoo**



**The Oberoi's
Rachit Mathur**



**Sartha Global's
Vidheesh Tyagi**



**PR Pundit's
Archana Jain**



**Indiva Marketing's
Rooparna Coomar**



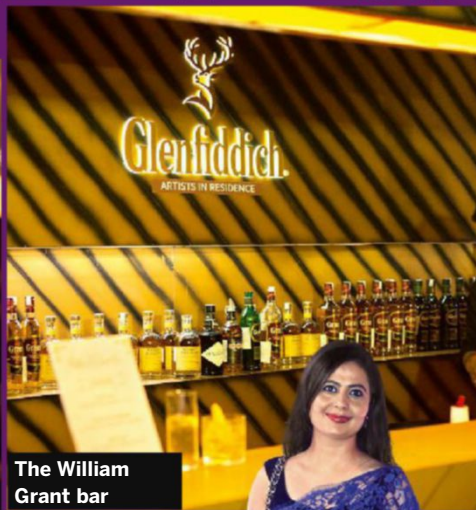
**ITC's Zubin
Songadwala**



**IHG's Karuna
Amarnath**



CNTO's Tian Xin



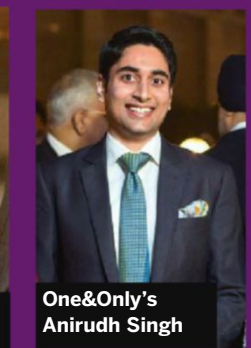
**The William
Grant bar**



**MGM's Rishi
Kapoor**



**Starwood's Akanksha
Maheshwari**



**One&Only's
Anirudh Singh**



**GVK's Ram
Manekar**



**The Leela's Michel
Koopman and Nidhi Verma**



**The Oberoi's
Silki Sehgal**



**Sartha Global's
Sheema Vohra and
Sunil Puri**



**Orange Tourism Solutions's
Murtaza Tunda and Shanti
Maurice's Namrata Rynjah**



NDTV's Smita Chakrabarti



Marriott's Balan Paravantavida



The Lalit's Swati Jain, Rajeev Kumar, Gaurav Mishra and Rohit Sharma



Pugdundee Safaris' Karan Negi and Kanushree Matanhelia



Valsala Vijayan, Resident Commissioner, Goa Sadan, New Delhi



Safilo's Prashant Datta and Swatch's Neha Chadda-Datta



Preferred Hotel Group's Arpit Pant



Vistara's Rashmi Soni



Twohmp Communications's Sandeep Srivastava



Welgrow Travels's Radhika Khanijo



Think Strawberries's Shikha Mishra



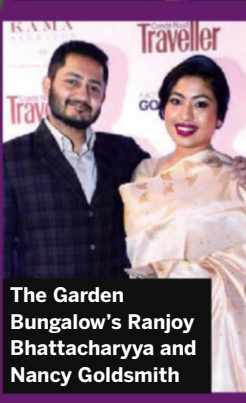
ITC Wills's Karan Kumar



Marriott's Rubani Marwah Singh and Noelle Rocque Daniel



Pullman's Urvashi Malik



The Garden Bungalow's Ranjoy Bhattacharyya and Nancy Goldsmith



MakeMyTrip's Juhi Dua and Ankita Sharma



Airbnb's Shivang Sethia



The Grover Zampa bar



The CNT team with Aditi Rao Hydari



Shangri-La's Alok Chakravarty, Anjori Kumar and Parmeet Singh Nayar



TIRUN's Midhat Hussain



The presentation area at The Korner House

RSVP

TIME TO CELEBRATE

In December, Asian Paints and AD invited some of Mumbai's most celebrated architects and designers for an evening of art and architecture. For AD, it was to celebrate the success of the Art Issue, while for Asian Paints, it was the launch of their new Wall Art collection. Guests were treated to cocktails and canapes at The Korner House.



Sejal Shah, Tejal Thakur



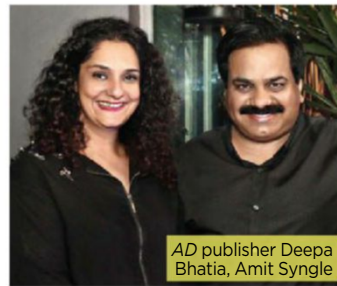
Kanhai Gandhi, Vijay Prakash K



Vishpala Hundekari, Namrata Asudani



Jaideep Kanse



AD publisher Deepa Bhatia, Amit Syngle



AD editor Greg Foster, Abha Narain Lambah



Darshini Shah

Aparna Dhareshwar



Shefali Balwani and Robert Verrijt



Vicky Ratnani, Greg Foster



Ankur Khosla, Rubel Dhuna

Tejal Mathur



Guillaume Dastros, Amandine Schira



Anushka Contractor, Jannat Vasi



Kayzad Shroff



Ankit Puri, Shyam Swamy, Nadeem Karbhari, Kunal Advharyu



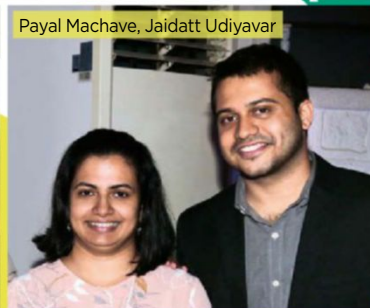
Keshav Muruges, Mangesh Lungare



Nikhil Sharma



Rohina Anand Khira



Payal Machave, Jaidatt Udiyavar



Nitin Barcha



Rakesh Jeswani

AD
ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



Ratul Sood, Indrani Dasgupta, Vijendra Bhardwaj & AD Singh



Anuj & Deepika Agarwal



Mehek & Anshul Chauhan



Harsh Chamria



Varun Thapar



Neha & Siddhant Arya with Samrat Dutta



The Ermenegildo Zegna display



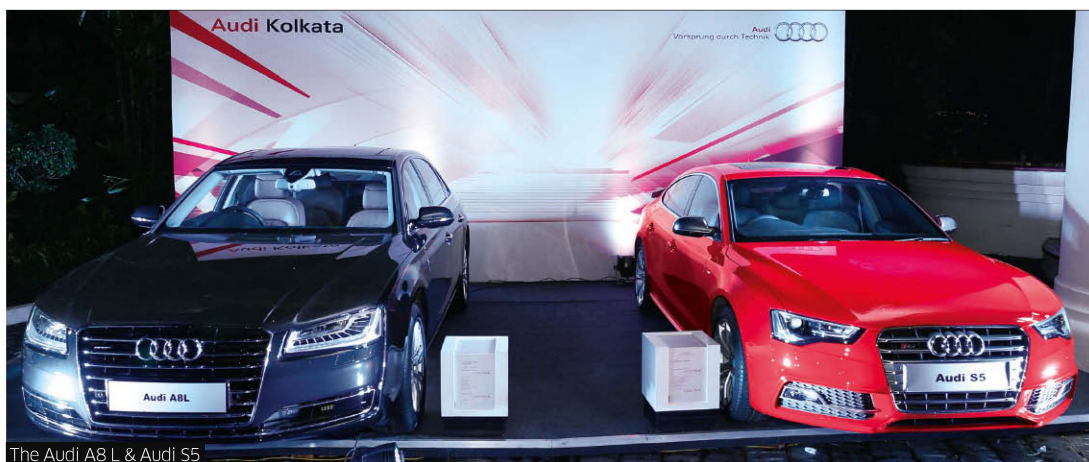
The Gentlemen's Club – an editorial initiative to bring together India's finest gentlemen who share a common passion – was hosted at The Chambers, Taj Bengal on the 7th of September with partners Ermenegildo Zegna, Audi, Kérastase and PS Group. The evening saw some of the city's most discerning gather for a session of engaging discussions over drinks and a gourmet meal.



Peter Thewlis, Dushyant Thakkar & Surabhi Negi



Almona Bhatia & Sanjeev Mehra



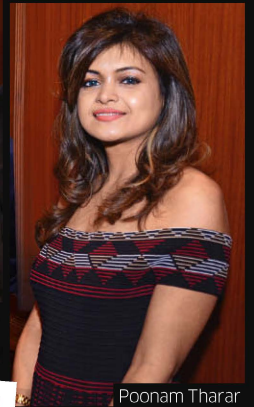
The Audi A8 L & Audi S5



Saharsh & Devangi Parekh with Anahita & Rahul Kayan



Govind Atwal & Kshitij Saxena



Poonam Tharar



Hariom Sood & Rituparna Sengupta
Sangeeta & Raj Kejriwal



Seema Bahety



The Chivas Regal 18 Year Old



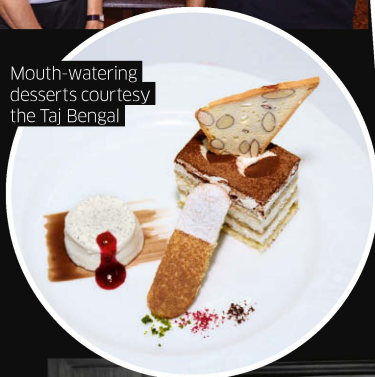
Manish Poddar



Meghna Mehrotra



Mouth-watering
desserts courtesy
the Taj Bengal



Shreya Pandey & Prakash Agarwal



Punam & Gaurav Dugar with Prashant & Payal Chopra



Gaurav Bajaj & Praveen Agarwal



Gaurav Malhotra



Sidharth Pansari



The newly launched Kérastase Densité Homme collection



PHOTOGRAPH: JING LEE/STOCKSY



WHERE ARE YOU?

This landscape is located in one of the world's most populous countries. Considered an economic superpower, the country is also called a 'tiger'. A few hours' drive from the skyscraper-dotted financial capital, this is the largest topography of its kind in the country, and is home to a number of fishing villages and birds. The area is popular with tourists, because it offers a glimpse into the life of the rural farming and fishing communities. Where are you? **SAMIRA SOOD**

Email your answers to whereareyou@condenast.in and you could win a two-night stay at a Trident hotel in Agra, Jaipur or Kochi. See overleaf for details—and look out for the answer in our next issue, out in April.

CONTEST



A Deluxe Garden View Room at the Trident, Agra.
Right: the façade and lawn of the Trident, Jaipur




WIN A TWO-NIGHT STAY AT A TRIDENT HOTEL IN AGRA, KOCHI OR JAIPUR

Mughal heritage in Agra, Rajput grandeur in Jaipur or the serene waters of Kochi—regardless of which city you choose, what won't change is the superb experience you'll have thanks to Trident Hotels.

The red sandstone, landscaped gardens and gushing fountains of the Trident, Agra transport you instantly to medieval times, when the city was ruled by Mughals. A four-hour drive from here, Jaipur has its own stunning reminders of history, and the Trident property here is an ideal spot from which to take it all in. Each room features a jharokha from which you can see the gardens or Mansagar Lake, with the Aravali range in the distance. And in Kerala, the palm

tree-dotted Trident, Cochin is located on Willingdon Island, just a short car or ferry ride from the famed Chinese fishing nets of Fort Kochi and the Jewish Synagogue in Mattancherry.

You could experience a stay in any one of these properties! Just rush in your entry with the correct answer to this issue's **Where Are You?** competition before **1 March 2017**. The prize includes a two-night stay for a couple in a Deluxe Garden View Room, with complimentary breakfast, Internet and access to the Trident Kids' Club and entertainment activities. The offer is valid until 30 June 2017, subject to availability.

For information on prize details, email sidharth.grover@tridenthotels.com. 



WINNER: DEC-JAN 2016-17

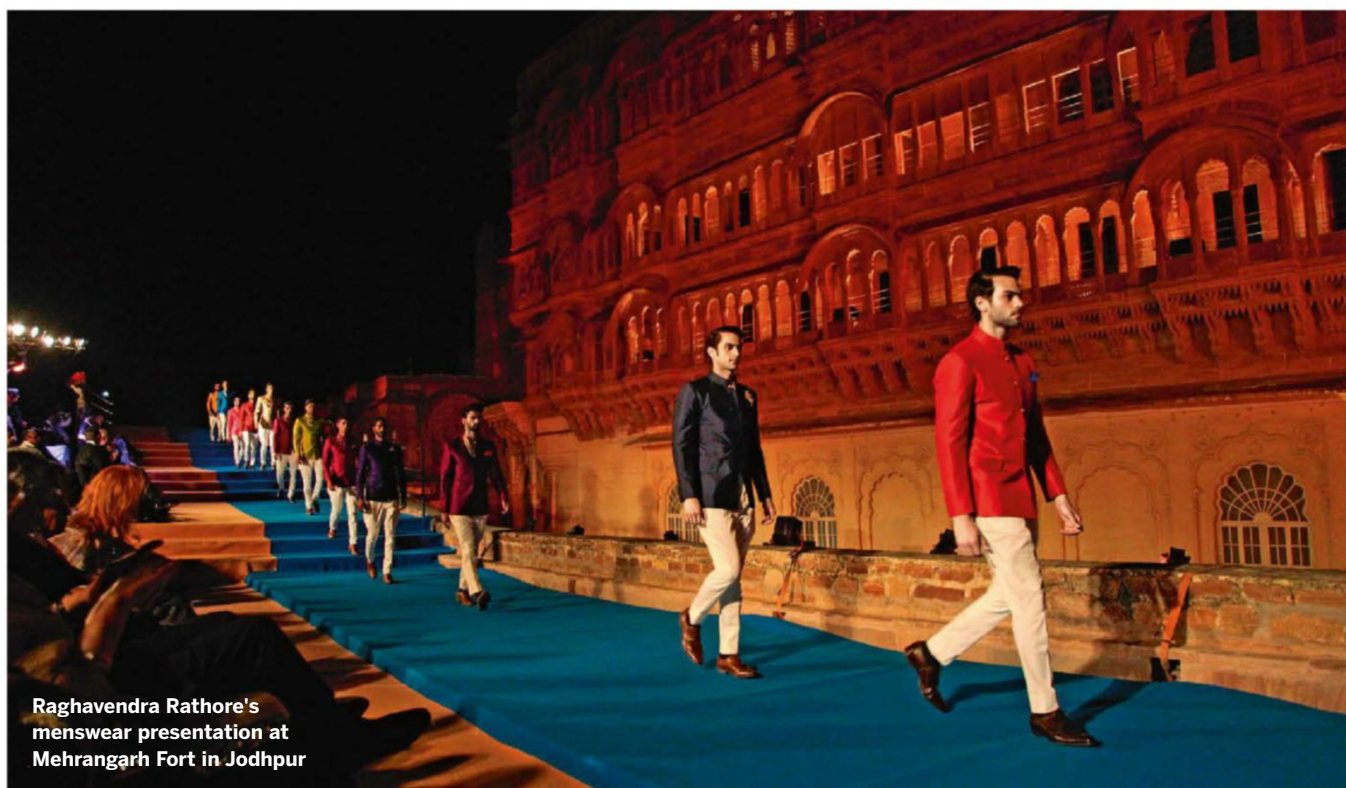
The winner of the Dec-Jan issue's Where Are You? competition is **Rina Panda**, who correctly identified the above picture as that of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi. She wins a four-night stay for two at the Grand Dragon Ladakh.

COMPETITION RULES

1. Entries for *Condé Nast Traveller's* Where Are You? competition can be sent on a postcard, by email or online (all stating the entrant's full name, address and telephone number) and must correctly identify the place described according to the instructions given.
2. Entries by post should be sent to: **Where Are You? competition, Condé Nast Traveller, 3rd Floor, Dubash House, 15 JN Heredia Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400001.**
3. Email entries should be sent to whereareyou@condenast.in; entries can also be made online at www.cntraveller.in.
4. Winners will be judged at the discretion of *Condé Nast Traveller*. The decision of the judges will be final and binding. No correspondence will be entertained. Only one correct answer will be registered per entrant per issue.
5. Each entry must arrive no later than the first day of the second month on that issue's cover. The last day of receiving entries is **1 March 2017**. Winners will be intimated by post or over the telephone wherever possible.
6. The entries must be in English and complete in all respects. Incomplete entries will not be considered for a prize.
7. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd is not responsible for late, lost or damaged mail or email. Illegible or mechanically-produced entries are not eligible. Entries by text message are not eligible.
8. Prizes will not be transferred or exchanged for cash or any other item. No refunds or credits for changes or cancellations are allowed. All other expenses and costs, which are not specified as being included in the prize, are the sole responsibility of the winner.
9. All prizes must be redeemed prior to the expiry date.
10. Taxes if any on the prize are the sole responsibility of the winner.
11. The Where Are You? competition is open to readers of *Condé Nast Traveller* who are 18 or older on the date of entry and are ordinarily residents of India.
12. Employees of Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd, participating promotional agencies, contributors to *Condé Nast Traveller*, and the families of any of those above are not eligible to contest.
13. All entries to the Where Are You? competition become the sole property of *Condé Nast Traveller* and will neither be acknowledged nor returned.
14. Entries become the property of Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd and may be used for such purpose and in such media as the company deems fit, without requiring the participant's prior permission.
15. Acceptance of the prize constitutes consent for the use of the winner's name and likeness and those of his/her travelling companion for editorial, advertising and publicity purposes.
16. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd will not be liable for any loss, damage or expense incurred by a prizewinner or by his/her travelling companion (for example, costs of repatriation) as a consequence of any party participating in providing the prize becoming insolvent or entering into liquidation or bankruptcy.
17. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd reserves the right to amend any or all of the terms of this contest, or the prizes on offer, at any time without prior notice. All disputes will be subject to the jurisdiction of Mumbai courts only.
18. Contestants, by entering the competition, agree to be bound by the above rules, terms and conditions. Please indicate if you do not want to be added to our mailing list, which is sometimes made available to carefully screened companies.

Condé Nast Traveller DIRECTORY

The prices and availability of products and services by the following brands were checked at the time of going to press, but we cannot guarantee that the prices will not change or that specific items will be in stock when the magazine is published.



Raghavendra Rathore's menswear presentation at Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur

FASHION

A Anita Dongre: Mumbai 022 6741 1504, New Delhi 011 4103 5862
C Chanel: New Delhi 011 4111 6840
Corneliani: New Delhi 011 4604 0711
D Diesel: Mumbai 022 2661 8282
E Ermenegildo Zegna: New Delhi 011 4686 9999, Mumbai 022 4347 1261
F Fendi: New Delhi 011 4604 0777
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FASHION NIGHTS



Farhan Akhtar walks the ramp for Rajesh Pratap Singh



Shantanu Mehra, Sushant Singh Rajput & Nikhil Mehra



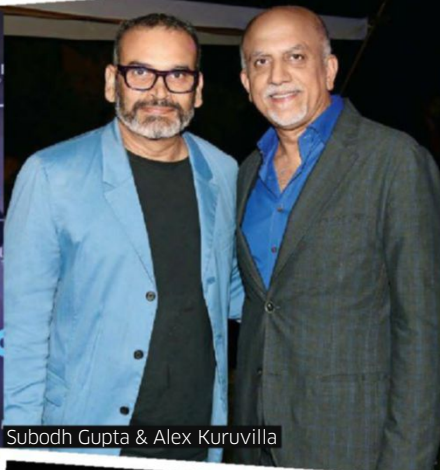
Showstopper Anil Kapoor for Kunal Rawal



Anushka Sharma



Yami Gautam



Subodh Gupta & Alex Kuruvilla



Fatima Sana Shaikh, Aamir Khan & Sanya Malhotra



Van Heusen's showstopper Kunal Kapoor



Hrithik Roshan & Che Kurrien



Rohit Bal

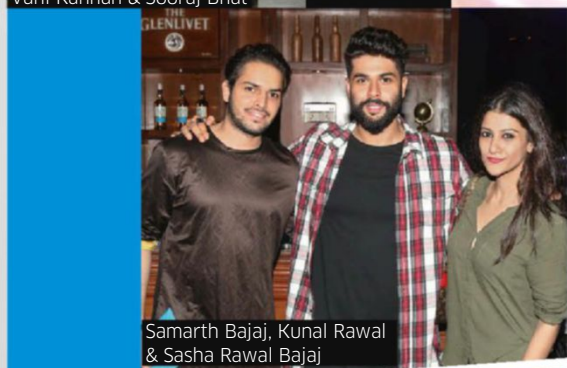


Vani Kannan & Sooraj Bhat

Rahul Khanna & Rohit Gandhi



The Van Heusen Display



Samarth Bajaj, Kunal Rawal & Sasha Rawal Bajaj

Welcome to the front row seats of the second Van Heusen + GQ Fashion Nights, held on December 3 and 4, 2016 at Taj Land's End, Mumbai. It's where designers Shantanu & Nikhil, Abhishek Paatni & Sahil Aneja, Rohit Gandhi & Rahul Khanna, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Kunal Rawal and Rohit Bal showcased their masterpieces and Van Heusen unveiled their collections: Savile Row and Fashion Formals. While showstoppers like Sushant Singh Rajput, Farhan Akhtar, Vikrant Massey, Prateik, Kunal Kapoor and Anil Kapoor looked sharp on the runway, the red carpet was graced by the likes of Anushka Sharma, Aamir Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Yami Gautam, Harshvardhan Kapoor, Mira Rajput, Fatima Sana Shaikh and many others. Setting new benchmarks in the world of men's fashion, this event will long be remembered.



Mira Rajput

Van Heusen's showstopper Vikrant Massey



Rajesh Pratap Singh



Ayan Mukerji

Bibhu Mohapatra & Ashiesh Shah



Sahil Aneja & Abhishek Paatni



Harshvardhan Kapoor

Shawn Marion



Prateik walks the ramp for Sahil Aneja

Mandira Bedi



Sulakshna Pathak

ON THE RUNWAY

Gaurav Chaudhary for Rohit Gandhi & Rahul Khanna

Acquin Pais for Abhishek Paatni

Vivek Dhiman for Kunal Rawal

Namit Khanna for Savile Row by Van Heusen

Mitar Filipovic for Rohit Bal

By Rajesh Pratap Singh

Rouhallah Gazi for Fashion Formals by Van Heusen

Sahil Shroff for Shantanu & Nikhil

Saud Khan for Sahil Aneja

MINI Clubman

Bikram Saluja

Bharat Kapoor & Mohit Hemdev

Make-up by Sonic Sarwate of M.A.C Cosmetics

Oona Dhabar with Akash & Priyanka Sheth and Jai Makhijani

Akshay Oberoi

Preeti Govindarajan, Ahmed Sheraf Nazir & Anshuman Bhaskar

Theron Carmine DeSouza, Shivangi Lodayekar & Vijendra Bhardwaj

Gaurav Bhatia

AD Singh & Anisha Dixit

The Panerai Display

Gaurav Gupta & Isha Ahluwalia

Saket Dhankar

Kanishtha Dhankar





Madhu Sapre & Manasi Scott



Adah Sharma



Sooraj Pancholi



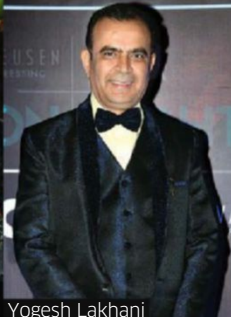
The Fratelli Wines Bar



Robin Singh



Sheetal Mallar & Chhaya Momaya



Yogesh Lakhani



Tisca Chopra



Ritu Shivpuri & Nisha Jamwal



Vikas Bahl



Abhishek Haryson



Saloni & Rohit Suri with Almona Bhatia & Arjun Mehra



Ujjwala Raut



Bandita Patnaik & Rajveer Kaur



Karan Singh Grover



Aparna Bahl



Manan Gandhi



Arpita Mehta



The Bombay Perfumery display



Suhel Seth



Kriti Kharbanda

IN ASSOCIATION WITH





Our pick of the most stylish finds and travel-related news

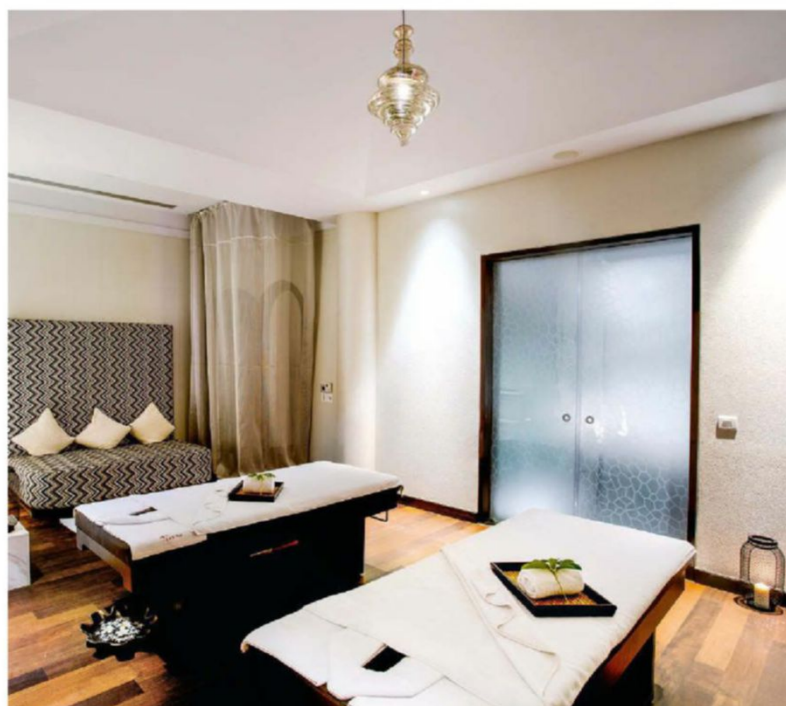
↑ DELIGHT AND DISCOVER

Watch Olive Ridley turtles hatch on a quiet beach, or take in the state's many architectural marvels. Visit a bustling port city, or go on a spiritual quest that allows you to take in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain wonders, Odisha is a destination that has it all, and the best part is that is a year-round destination. Konark's Sun Temple, surfing on untouched shores, and communing with nature in the Eastern Ghats are just three of the many options that travellers have when it comes to exploring the state. www.odishatourism.gov.in

➔ MESSAGE MANTRAS

Once you're all partied out, make sure to visit the Spa by Clarins at the W Goa. Its eight treatment rooms are spread over 14,000 sq ft and includes rooms for both single and couples therapies. After a night spent dancing by the poolside, you can detoxify with a CLARINS Touch massage to knead out those pain points, or take a dip in the indoor vitality pool. End with a visit to Fuel Bar for healthy food and, even cocktails! Its Goa, go ahead and order that second cocktail, knowing that it's made with fresh ingredients and meant to be light on the stomach.

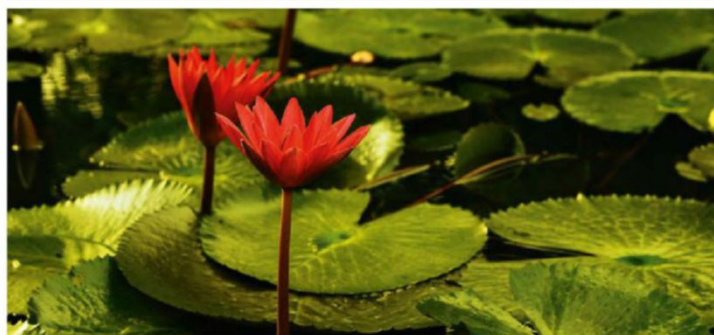
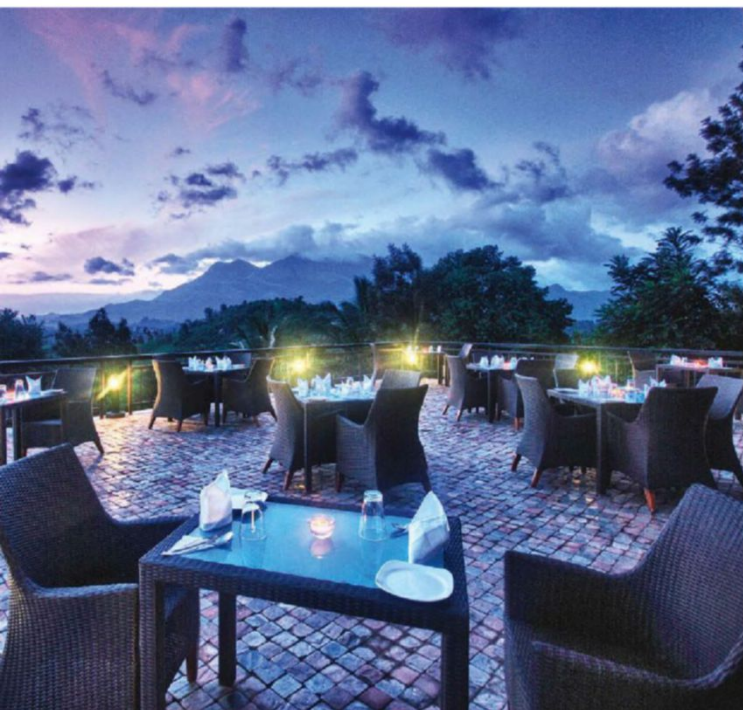
www.w-goa.com



↓ PLANTATION VIBES

The Windflower Resort and Vythiri is set in a coffee and tea estate among the hills of Wayanad. This boutique property has only 38 rooms and villas but doesn't compromise on modern comforts. For those looking to get away from the city, villas come with a private Jacuzzi. There's also an infinity pool and spa on the property grounds. Use your time to explore jungle trails, go trekking, or just catch up with a book and a beverage - given the surroundings, who would blame you.

www.thewindflower.com/vythiri



↑ TRANQUIL CELEBRATIONS

Experience Holi at The Garden Bungalow, located in Tagore's Shantiniketan, where the festival of colour is celebrated with gusto by students from the neighbouring school as well as those that have come from far and wide to experience the festival in the tranquil surroundings. Once you've had your fill, explore the sprawling property, or return to your well-appointed room, where the antique furnishings and old-world charm transport you to another era. www.thegardenbungalow.com



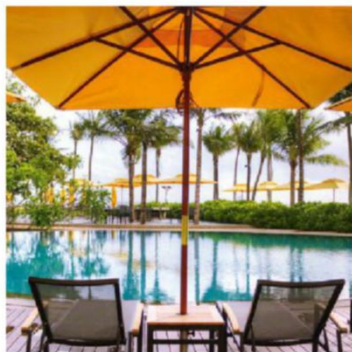
→ SERENE SANCTUARY

Before heading out to one Gurugram's brewpubs, or just to pamper yourself after a long day, make an appointment at the Amida Salon in the Leela Ambiance Gurugram Hotel and Spa. The trained team uses a range of quality products to take care of your lifestyle needs - manicures, pedicures, skin care, hair styling and more. Men and women alike will be rejuvenated by the calming space.

www.theleela.com



ON
THE
GO



← SRI LANKAN SOJOURN

This luxury hotel features 139 rooms and suites, each of which have private balconies that look out onto the ocean. One of the Heritance's five properties in Sri Lanka, the property is well connected to Colombo and features two restaurants - Bluetan and B-Burns, as well as See Lounge, where you can kick back with a cocktail after working on your tan. If you still need more options, walk over to the Banyan, across the street for some wine and tapas.

www.heritancehotels.com/negombo



↑ COVETED CREDITS

The Yes First Exclusive Credit Card offers a range of rewards to those that sign up, from membership to Taj's InnerCircle Epicure program to Priority Pass access at the airport. The card features reward points that never expire in addition to exclusive memberships, a dedicated concierge and other lifestyle benefits. You can look forward to annual benefits of over Rs 1,00,000 when you spend over Rs 1,00,000 per month. www.yesbank.in



↑ SERENITY BECKONS

If the name doesn't have you hooked, there's the fact that this resort has only 10 villas, each of which offers direct access to pristine sandy beaches. The jewel in the property's crown is the Owner's Signature Villa, which can host four people and has a private deck and infinity pool. In the master bedroom, you'll find LED TV's and other creature comforts, but with a setting so secluded, you'll want to spend your entire time outdoors, soaking in the sun and sand.

www.jaresortshotels.com

→ TROPICAL LUXURY

The luxury pool villas at the Hilton Seychelles Northholme Resort and Spa offer more than just privacy. First, there's the infinity pool, then there's the tranquility. Each villa is set on stilts, so that you are elevated above the pristine blue waters, you'll still find modern luxuries in the rooms. Surrounded by the tropical forests of Mahé Island, you can choose to go for a dip or sunbathe on the wooden deck.

www.hilton.com



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THE VIEW FROM HERE

Shakti Himalaya's latest venture, The River House, is located in the high-altitude region of Ladakh, and by the Indus River as it descends from the Karakoram and Himalayan mountains. Soldier-turned-farmer Tsering Dorje, his wife and children live on one floor of the house, which he built 26 years ago, but on another floor are fabulously comfortable rooms with handsome beds and billowy duvets, and astonishing bathrooms (given the general level of plumbing in these parts). And that is the clever formula of Shakti, the company whose strategy is to choose some of India's most unyielding locations and partner with locals to establish wondrous little family properties. As a team, they convert a wing or add a floor to the house, creating an extraordinary place for visitors to stay, making it cosy but connected. The River House is a whitewashed converted home with rooms in muted jade and mauve, furniture in natural wood, and grey and beige wool throws to keep out the mountain chill. Best of all, the wraparound terraces look out towards the peak of Gulab Kangri and the Stakna Monastery. Feasts are served on the terrace, under a shady apple tree in the orchard or around the elaborate wood-burning stove. And the food is superb, with dishes like spinach soup, fenugreek chicken or spicy curries to fill you up after a day spent trekking or rafting on the roaring Zaskar River. For something more contemplative, there are dawn prayers at the nearby Thiksey Monastery, where they summon the faithful on trumpets and conch shells. The monk blowing the trumpet can also visit The River House to discuss the Buddhist path to enlightenment in his cut-glass English accent. **MINTY CLINCH**

CONTACT www.shaktihimalaya.com; from **₹3,39,000 per person for a six-night package available from May to September**



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of

Jodha Bai

Jodha Bai's style elicited a blend of
two different regalities-an inherited Rajput poise and the acquired Mughal assertion

BIRDHICHAND GHANSHYAMDAS
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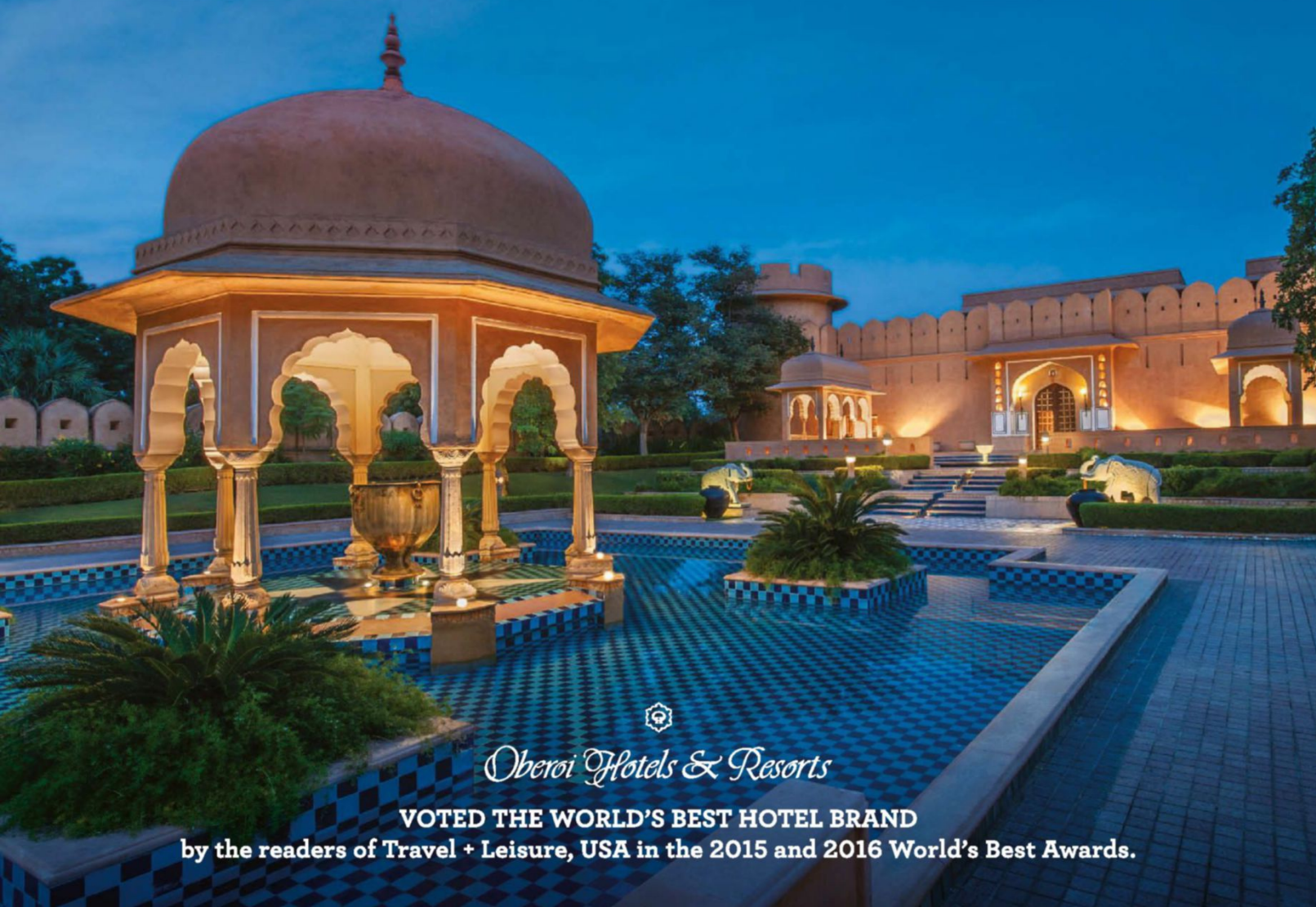
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Rajasthan is my favourite country in India.

I have lost count of the number of reasons and times I've visited over the years: I've been for destination weddings and fashion shoots, for polo matches and business conferences, for literary festivals and dinner parties, for tiger and leopard safaris, for heritage hotel visits, for weekends of jewellery shopping and ghee-dripping food, and for that particular brand of Rajasthani romance, all full moons and lake views with undertones of eternal, regal love. I never tire of it.


What particularly fascinates me about Rajasthan is how it manages to retain its distinct identity and soul while evolving quickly to keep pace with the times.

There's always so much to do and see, regardless of whether your tastes lean towards historical forts or local crafts or adventure sports or bars with views.

The state's thriving travel and hospitality industry is largely responsible for the constant buzz: gone are the days when owners of palace hotels or havelis had a foreigners-only policy; today, they're all delightedly welcoming Indian travellers. This means they are working harder to ensure that their properties are well-maintained (unlike many Europeans, we don't find dilapidated interiors and leaky faucets charming), that their food is authentic and tasty and their service is top-notch. But hospitality pros are smart enough to think beyond their hotels, too, and participate in making Rajasthan a year-round destination for young, cool, global travellers. Which is why the state is now home to some of the most exciting festivals and events anywhere in the country, bringing in everyone from Sufi enthusiasts to photography buffs. The settings are always old, beautiful and majestic, the proceedings always polished and hip.

Locals have realised that their history is their treasure, their wealth, their greatest asset, so they make an effort to conserve, restore and sustain all that is old. (The rest of our country could learn from that.) The history in Rajasthan is living and breathing; it's not locked away in ticketed museums or private chambers; it permeates the state with pride, character and atmosphere. It's what makes Rajasthan so unique, unlike anywhere else in the world.

To my mind, nobody embodies this particularity more so than HH Maharaja Gaj Singh II of Jodhpur, aka Baapji. His exquisite ancestral abode is run as a fine hotel; he's been a pioneer in putting Rajasthan on the global map, spearheading festivals, tournaments, committees—and he's great fun, a quality that cannot be overstated. Baapji is Rajasthan: traditional when it comes to custom, modern when it comes to his outlook, and global in his appeal.

I dearly hope you enjoy our guide to Rajasthan, which includes insider secrets from Baapji as well as dozens of our favourite locals. 

Divia Thani

Divia Thani Editor

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Seen here, Sheesh Mahal overlooking Lake Pichola.



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For a view of the Chambal River from the luxury of a royal stay, visit the Bhainsrorgarh Fort



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FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Our pick of the best festivals in Rajasthan to make a trip for

JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL

In its 10th year now, Jaipur Literature Festival has seen some of the best authors descend on the Pink City for a festival that bills itself as the biggest of its kind in the world. This year saw a line up of names like Alan Hollinghurst who wrote the Man Booker Prize-winning *The Line of Beauty*, *The New Yorker* contributor and music writer Alex Ross and writer Vikram Chandra, in addition to a range of speakers that seems to grow every year. Hosted at the charming Diggi Palace, this festival manages to be both fun and cerebral. (www.jaipurliteraturefestival.org; to be announced)

NAGAU FAIR

The Nagaur Fair sees traders from all over Rajasthan come together with over 70,000 types of livestock—from camels and cows to horses and bullocks. The desert becomes a riot of colour with temporary settlements and colourfully dressed animals being traded by men in elaborate turbans and long, twirled moustaches. On the sidelines of the fair, buy some dried chillies, spices and handicraft. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in; 1–4 February 2017)

WORLD SACRED SPIRIT FESTIVAL

Held in two heritage buildings—Ahichatragarh Fort and Mehrangarh Fort, this festival returns to Nagaur and Jodhpur in 2017, featuring local musicians and international artists alike. Sting is the international patron. Performances especially for children, accompanying dances



and more ensure that this gathering is not just for those who listen to devotional music. (www.worldsacredspiritfestival.org; 13–19 February 2017)

JAIPUR PHOTO FESTIVAL

In its second year, this outdoor festival will feature a range of exhibits all over the Pink City. Co-curated by Federica Chiocchetti, you can expect an array of site-specific works that take into account the city's varied architecture and heritage. (www.jaipurphoto.in; 24 February–5 March 2017)

GANGAUR FESTIVAL

This traditional celebration of Goddess Parvati is held all over the state every year but

the procession at Jaipur's stunning City Palace is a must-see. Before that, women fast for 18 days, as Rajasthan comes alive with festivities, fairs and dance performances. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in; 13–31 March 2017)

AJMER URS

Held to commemorate the death anniversary of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti, during the festivities, the city of Ajmer sees devotees come to pay respects to the saint. Held during the first six days of the seventh month of the Islamic calendar, Urs is a time when the fragrance from the ittar and fresh flowers that are offered at the dargah, fills the air. (29 March–6 April 2017)

JODHPUR RIFF

Held in the stunning Mehrangarh Fort, Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF) is, like the Jaipur Literature Festival, celebrating its 10th year in 2017. With HH Maharaja Gaj Singh of Marwar-Jodhpur as chief patron, the festival brings the best of folk music and art to the historic setting of the fort, for a series of concerts that take you back to the glory days of musicians playing for the royal courts. Venues range from the grass lawns to sandstone courtyards, and the overall effect is magical. (www.jodhpurriff.org; 5–9 October 2017)

PUSHKAR CAMEL FAIR

The fair runs during the Hindu month of Kartik, during the five days leading up to the full moon. The annual affair features camel traders, live music, adventure sports and more. In recent years, the government has taken an active interest in promoting the enterprise, so infrastructure has improved, which is important when you're on the edge of the Thar Desert. (www.pushkarmela.org; 8–14 November 2017)

MAGNETIC FIELDS

For three days in December, Alsisar Mahal comes alive as indie music lovers descend on the heritage property to dance along to DJ sets and performances in the ancient dungeons and massive courtyards. Rataat and Daisuke Tanabe are some of the international names that have performed in the past, while Prateek Kuhad, Nucleya and more have flown the flag for India. (www.magneticfields.in; dates to be announced)



PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

The audience at the Jaipur Literature Festival Opposite page: A harpist plays during RIFF

SUJÁN RAJMAHAL PALACE

Make this gorgeously appointed palace your home as you explore Jaipur's historic palaces and forts.



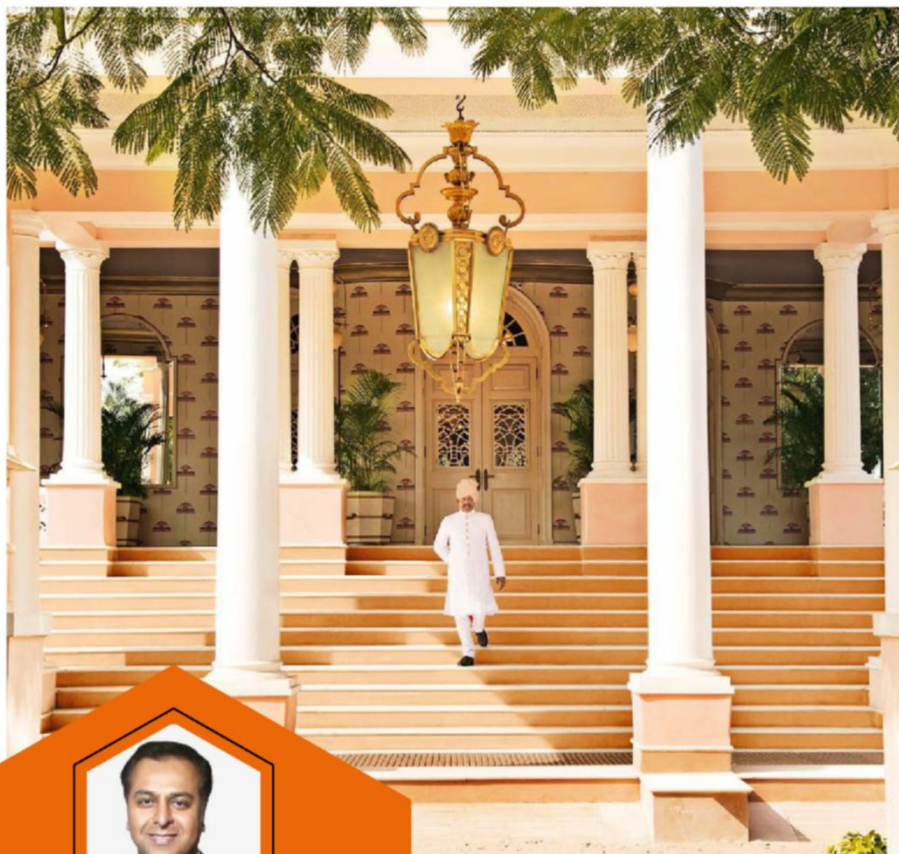
If you're looking for royal precedent, HH The Maharaja of Jaipur still lives in this pastel fever dream - a luxury property in the heart of the Pink City. SUJÁN Rajmahal Palace sits on the arterial Sardar Patel Marg, and is close to the city sights - like the Hawa Mahal, Jantar Mantar and City Palace. But if you've chosen to splurge and stay at the palace, built in 1729, chances are - you want to soak in its charm, whether that is the chance to explore the property's sumptuous interiors, walk through its well-manicured gardens, or tune off from the world at the hotel spa.

With only 13 rooms on the premises, divided into suites and apartments - you're assured of an intimate experience at this Relais and Chateaux member property.



Each suite is named after a famous guest the palace has hosted - and so you have the option to stay at the Mountbatten, Queen Elizabeth or Kennedy suites among others, each of which are uniquely done up and range from 960 to 1530 sq ft. If you're looking to splurge though, the Maharaja's Apartment - which is spread over 3126 sq ft - and featured two bedrooms in addition to a private balcony, dining area, and a private butler for the duration of the stay. The Maharani's Apartment comes with an indoor heated plunge pool, private dining room and private butler. For those opting for the rooms - they include a bedroom, dressing room and en suite bathroom at the minimum.

With four dining options on the property



ASHISH KUMAR RAI
VICE PRESIDENT
SUJÁN LUXURY HOTELS

◆ **SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE** ◆

An exclusive visit to the City Palace and sections of this royal residence, which are not otherwise accessible to the public.



- you'll have plenty of options to choose from. 51 Shades of Pink, which features interiors that wouldn't be out of place in a Wes Anderson movie, is where you can get breakfast or lunch. For a sit down meal, Orient Occident with a menu fit for a king, is where you should stop by. The Colonnade is the hotel's all-day dining restaurant while the Polo Bar is where you should retire after a long day to grab and drink. If the weather is pleasant and you're hankering for a meal outdoors, ask the hotel to set up dinner on the upper lawns.

Before setting off for the City Palace, remember to request access to parts of the museum that are usually out of bounds for

visitors. Once there, marvel at the intricate carvings, try to guess the myriad influences and soak in the royal atmosphere. When you're looking to relax, the Rajmahal Palace has a spa and swimming pool on the premises.

Once you uncovered the properties visual delights, and possibly - run into the royal family - make the most of Rajasthan by visiting the hotel group's other properties. SUJÁN Jawai is a luxury tented forest camp around where you can go leopard spotting, Sher Bagh on the border of Ranthambore National Park offers you the chance to catch a glimpse of the mighty tigers without giving up any creature comforts, and The Serai in Jaisalmer is your gateway to the Thar - each is a getaway that's fit for a king. Don't believe us? Just ask the Maharaja when you spot him at the palace.

For more information email on
reservations@sujanluxury.com



SUJÁN
RAJMAHAL PALACE
JAIPUR

JAIPUR

THE PINK CITY

SEE & DO ♦ EAT & DRINK ♦ SHOP ♦ STAY ♦ GET AWAY

PLUS INSIDER SECRETS

PRINCESS DIYA KUMARI ♦ TARANG ARORA
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THE PINK CITY

Anyone who's ever gazed upon a beautiful sunset from Nahargarh Fort in Jaipur will have experienced that eureka moment. Watching the sun bathe the city in shades of rose, its fortified walls and minarets blushing deep sandstone hues and exuding romance, there's no mistaking it — Jaipur rightfully stakes its claim to the colour pink.

The third corner of India's 'Golden Triangle' — about 270km south west of Delhi and 240km west of Agra — Jaipur lies on a dry lakebed in an arid landscape, surrounded by fortress-peaked hills. The city's allure lies in its vivid colours. Even its rose petal welcome seems more vibrant somehow, and the rani pink of the Rajput turban, brighter. But that's not the only reason why it is joyously celebrated as the Pink City. Rajputs associate the colour with hospitality and the city was daubed pink by Maharaja Man Singh II in preparation for a visit by the Prince of Wales in 1876. The tradition continues today, as does the city's warm welcome to its regular stream of visitors.

The Pink City was founded in 1726 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of the Kachwaha clan of Rajputs, with the help of his architect Vidyadhar Bhattacharya. When the increasing population and an acute shortage of water made the former capital of Amer (about 11km from Jaipur) uninhabitable, the ruler was compelled to select Jaipur as the new one. The capital continues its long association with royalty — Jaipur's most famous royal was the feisty Maharani Gayatri Devi — and the City Palace remains the residence of the royal descendants (currently, the family of Maharaja Sawai Bhawani Singh). A cluster of buildings, including the famous Hawa Mahal, surround the palace complex, their architecture a fine blend of Rajasthani, Mughal and European styles. In contrast with their intricate carvings and the ornate palace gates or *pol*s are the stark, geometric lines of their futuristic (for that time, no doubt) neighbour, the Jantar Mantar — the largest of five observatories built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in 1734 (the others are found in Delhi, Varanasi and Ujjain, while the one in Mathura no longer exists).

Enduring sights and experiences in the city include roadside 'tapris' selling hot chai and a sinfully rich breakfast of *doodh-jalebi*. Men and women in colourful traditional attire along streets buzzing with

activity. Beautiful frescoes, on city walls old and new, juxtaposed with scenes of modern life. With its fairy tale palaces and crenellated fort walls, its myriad festivals, fairs, and quaint bazaars, it is easy to resort to *exotica* while describing the city. Local residents, however, are likely to list old favourites alongside the new. If Johari Bazaar within the walled city remains the go-to place for its tie-dyed saris and silver, then designer stores such as Hot Pink housed inside Narain Niwas Palace are no less significant today. And while traditional fare like the famous *kachoris*, *ghewar* and *jalebis* of Jaipur are best had at places like Laxmi Mishthan Bhandar, CM Karodia Namkeen and Gopi Kwaliti Sweets at Raja Park, Jaipur also has its many hip cafés, bars and fine dining options like Anokhi Café, Polo Bar at the Rambagh Palace hotel and Chaandi at the Hilton Jaipur. Festivals too have their contemporary counterparts; the Jaipur Literature Festival, the largest free literary gathering in the world today, has placed the city firmly on the global cultural map alongside its many colourful traditional festivals like Makar Sankranti.

If there ever was a city devoted to art and aesthetics, it is Jaipur. From block printed textiles and blue pottery to finely-crafted jewellery, miniature paintings and paper art, the place is a treasure trove for art lovers. And with its fine combination of royalty, art and architectural heritage, it is hardly surprising that Jaipur should boast the finest accommodation ranging from palace hotels and havelis to tasteful boutique stays.

Come winter — October until March is the best time to be in Rajasthan — and the city is bedecked for its many festivals and events (including destination weddings); the celebration of Diwali and Holi, particularly, are likely to be unforgettable. For those who wish to soak in the local culture, a walk in Jaipur's central park is as essential to understanding the city's nuances as attending a polo match or the vintage car rally held here annually. But then, there's plenty of time for that. Because a first visit to Jaipur is rarely the last.

JANHAVI ACHAREKAR

Opposite page: **royal welcome at the City Palace**

Previous page: **the pink walls of a home in Jaipur**



WHAT TO SEE & DO: JAIPUR

Explore Jantar Mantar

An astrological marvel, the Jantar Mantar in Jaipur can tell time, track the passage of the zodiac and so much more, when it comes to following celestial bodies. Its sharp angles are in contrast to the domes and arches that typify the architecture of the city and you'd do well to spend some time exploring the complex. (www.jantarantar.org)

Get a vintage black-and-white portrait of yourself

Frame your memories with Jaipur nostalgia in the Old City. Street photographer **Tikam Chand**, located near Hawa Mahal, takes old-fashioned black-and-white portraits with his 1880 Carl Zeiss wooden box camera. (098280 72800)

Go on a heritage walk

Unless you immerse yourself in its rich and colourful history, Jaipur remains a destination undiscovered. A city meant for walking, its heritage is brought alive by guided tours on foot from **Virasat Experiences**. Their themed walks are also categorised by interest—gastronomy, photography, birdwatching—and take visitors beyond the usual tourist trail. The group also organises cycling tours for those who wish to explore the city and beyond. (www.virasatexperiences.com)

Go on a hot-air balloon tour

Those who take their views seriously, go a notch higher with the **SkyWaltz** hot-air balloon safari. This hour

long ride provides breathtaking views of city palaces and forts, surrounding villages and landscape. The balloon tour gives a spectacular aerial view of Amer Fort as well as the Hawa Mahal at sunrise. (www.skywaltz.com)

Handprint your own shirt

The Anokhi Museum of Handprinting (www.anokhi.com/museum) near Amer Fort and **Studio Bagru** (099297 10239), a concept store, are where you can observe the block printing process and participate in it by printing your own garment. At Studio Bagru, a team of young designers conducts



INSIDER Timmie Kumar

MANAGING TRUSTEE, HELP IN SUFFERING



"Visit the **Amer Fort** early in the morning to see elephants being bathed. And the view of Amer Fort from **Kesar Kyari Garden** after sunset is equally spectacular. Lastly, a winter evening in the artistically done-up **The Farm**, drinking wine in the company of Ritu and Surya, the owners, is pretty special."

tours in Bagru and Sanganer—regions near Jaipur that are known for their distinct block-printing style—where you can learn the art of printing and dyeing, and also design your own shirt.

Hawa Mahal Perhaps the most famous of Jaipur's architectural wonders, the Hawa Mahal was built to allow the women of the royal household to witness the street festivities without being seen. The pastry pink building can now be toured by all, family pedigree no bar. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Moti Dungri Fort

This fort, built to look like a Scottish castle, is probably better known for the fact that it also houses the Birla Temple, to which devotees throng from all across the country. This is a fort worth visiting. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Nahargarh Fort

The name translates to 'abode of tigers,' and the fort is one of three that was built to protect the city from ancient attacks. Built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, the fort today makes a great look-

out point from which to survey the Pink City. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Participate in the polo season

Jaipur's polo season arrives in January and brings with it seasoned polo players and enthusiasts from around the world. The Bhawani Singh Cup and Vodafone Sirmur Cup, held on the Rambagh Polo Ground, are elegant and much-awaited events. Matches are followed by all-night soirées at Naila Bagh Palace or at Narain Niwas Palace, and are attended by royalty and the who's who of the sport. (www.rajasthanpoloclub.co.in)

Try Paramotoring

Thrill seekers can now combine sightseeing with adventure in Jaipur's vicinity. Powered Paramotoring was recently introduced in Kalwar on the outskirts of Jaipur, by **Wingmasters Co**. The aero-sport allows for an aerial joyride above attractions such as the Mundota Fort, on the outskirts of the city. (099502 59444)

Visit City Palace As the seat of the Maharaja of Jaipur, City Palace is home to the Chandra Mahal, Mubarak Mahal and other buildings. Walk around the palace, which was built in 1729, before going on to visit the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum. (www.msmsmuseum.com)

Opposite page: **Amer Fort** offers breathtaking views of the city. Left: **SkyWaltz** hot-air balloon with Amer Fort's ramparts in the background



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK: JAIPUR

Anokhi Café This (almost entirely) organic café makes for a great pit stop while shopping at the famous Anokhi textile store next door. Their salads, sandwiches, juices and baked treats are made from seasonal produce, grown locally at their farm, of which the carrot cake is a speciality. (0141 400 7245)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Bar Palladio This swish spot, inspired by Caffé Florian and Harry's Bar, both in Venice, blends Italian cuisine and style with Mughal sensibility. Located in the magnificent Narain Niwas Palace, its sophisticated interiors are complemented by a lovely outdoor space that pitches tented canopies amid mango trees and peacocks. Let the royal blue walls transport you. (0141 256 5556)

Café Palladio Launched with much fanfare in September 2016, this bright, airy Mediterranean café—the latest offering from Bar Palladio—whips up a variety of Italian, Lebanese and Turkish fare. Its cheerful ambience and stark murals make it a great place for coffee and baklava or a romantic dinner outdoors. (0141 256 3533)

Chaandi This award-winning fine dining restaurant at Hilton Jaipur is where you can enjoy a contemporary interpretation of traditional fare, with an ambience to match. Guests have a choice between three four-course set meals and an a la carte menu with desserts such as spinach halwa and blueberry phirni. Dining is al fresco, in lovely poolside cabanas. (0141 417 0000)



INSIDER Fiona Caulfield

FOUNDER, LOVE TRAVEL GUIDES

"I love early mornings at the **Phool Mandi** (Janta Market), the fragrant wholesale flower market in the Old City, located just inside the Chandi ki Taksal gate. On Saturdays the splendid **Hatwara flea market** pops up adjacent to the open sacks of roses and marigolds. The flea market is a true local market, and it is rare to see any tourists here. If you are lucky you will find treasures at bargain prices. Be rewarded with an ornately carved wooden candlestick, strings of colourful beads, tin toys and even vintage tin advertising signs and framed pictures of deities. All of these are tucked away amongst the flotsam and jetsam of the Pink City. If you miss the market, head to **Mosaic's Guesthouse** in Amer, to shop from **Herve's Flea Boutique** and whilst there enjoy excellent coffee and the best citron tart in India."

Chokhi Dhani A Jaipur landmark, Chokhi Dhani brings you the complete Rajasthani experience. A village fair more than a restaurant, guests are regaled by Rajasthani folk singers and dancers, bangle-makers and potters. Food is the best of traditional, local fare. (096672 22203)

Cinnamon This fine dining restaurant at Jai Mahal Palace adds a modern twist to cuisine from the four princely states—Rajputana, Awadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir. The erstwhile dining room of the prime minister of Jaipur Kingdom, its Rajput interior and adjoining lawn set the stage for a princely meal that takes you on a culinary journey. (0141 660 1069)

Dzurt A gourmet patisserie by the Cordon Bleu trained Tejasvi Chandela, Dzurt is known for its delectable sweet confections. The cheerful café serves lemon cake, fruit tarts, berry mousse and delicious ice cream desserts in various flavours. Our favourites are the red velvet and mud cake. (088004 98884)

Laxmi Mishthan Bhandar Shortened to LMB, this popular eatery is surrounded by the buzz of the lively Johari Bazaar. It is famous for its kachoris, chaat, samosas and sweets like ghevar and rasmalai. (0141 256 5844)

Lounge 18 This hot weekend nightspot at the Jaipur Marriott is known for its drinks. Popular music can be heard, while you nibble on delicious bar snacks. The lounge opens out onto the pool area for those seeking some fresh air. An interesting finger food menu complements the cocktails and other drinks. (0141 456 7777)



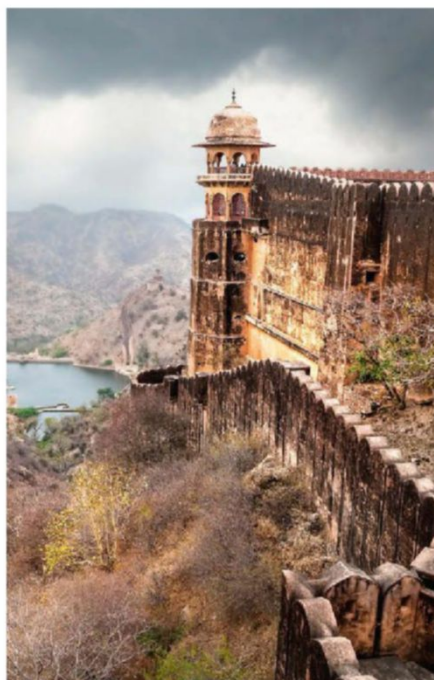
Villas with private plunge pools are reminiscent of beach vacations, but given Jaipur's sweltering summers, we're surprised no one's thought of them sooner. Of the JW Marriott Jaipur's 199 rooms, 42 of them come with inviting blue pools to spend the day in. There's more though to this newly built property that will be opening soon, than

just the pools. Rooms are divided amongst two blocks - and feature the usual five star amenities, including JW Marriott's signature range. With natural light streaming in from the outside, these spacious rooms are a haven for those seeking serenity, especially after exploring the chaotic streets of Jaipur's many bazaars.

You will check in at a reception that features white fretwork mirrors, glass chandeliers and black marble inlay, which you get to after walking past one of the many water bodies that are scattered the grounds of the hotel. Once you've settled in wander around and visit the spa or the one of the many restaurants that dot the property. Jaipur Bistro is the all-day dining restaurant, while Amber Grill is one of the two speciality eateries. The second, is a rooftop restaurant that offers stunning views and open air dining for those that want to take in the city from a higher perch. Tipplers can make their way to the lobby bar for a nightcap, or if you are looking to unwind during the day, there's always the pool bar to cool down at.

For children, there's a dedicated play area, while fitness centre, spa and swimming pool are the options that city-dwellers have to de-stress and indulge in. The hotel's lawns and banqueting facilities are some of the largest in the city, allowing you to plan for an intimate gathering or a massive celebration - like a wedding, conference or party.

For more information visit
www.marriott.com.



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

INSIDER Tarang Arora CEO AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR, AMRAPALI JEWELS



"A must-visit for a first-time traveller is **Rambagh Palace**, for continental food head to **Rajput Room**. Another eatery to consider is **The Spice Court** which serves delicious mouth-watering North Indian food. I personally relish the non-veg—**lal maas**

and **kheema bati** are my favourites and should definitely be called for. To spend a relaxing Sunday evening we take our son out swimming to **Alsisar Haveli**. **Bar Palladio**, is one of the best cafés in town with superb interiors by Dutch designer Marie-Anne Oudejans offering refreshing evening drinks in a soothing atmosphere. Opposite it is **Café Palladio**, the perfect place for healthy lunch and rejuvenating iced-teas.

Those looking to take something home should visit **Andraab** (0141 257 0110), which has good Kashmiri shawls and scarves for gifting purposes or even to treat yourself with one of a kind pashminas."

The interiors of
Bar Palladio

SAMODE PALACE

This heritage palace hotel near Jaipur is a beacon of exclusivity and quiet luxury.



YADAVENDRA SINGH PARTNER

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

A walking palace tour will acquaint you with the history and beauty of the property. A wedding here is incomplete with a mandap in the courtyard and a royal banquet at the Darbar hall.



Discreetly tucked amidst the Aravali hills of Jaipur, Samode Palace ushers you into a world that effortlessly balances modern luxury with traditional grandeur. The heritage palace hotel doesn't merely attempt to recreate the past. Instead, its walls ring with tales of eras gone by. The palace's history dates back 475 years to the illustrious rule of Prithviraj Singhji of Amber (Jaipur), the 17th prince of the Kacchawaha Rajputs. A true blend of Rajput and Mughal styles of architecture, its stately corridors, frescoed walls, and ethereal audience halls seamlessly fuse style, functionality and luxury.

The palace promises guests an authentic slice of the royal life. The 42 rooms and suites boast traditional Rajasthani décor and design elements, but are also equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Each elegantly and opulently furnished room has a distinct flavour, ensuring that no two rooms are alike. Though regal elements like richly carved furniture, four-poster beds, glossy marble and an overall attitude of opulence remain. The two restaurants offer a unique dining experience of royal Rajasthan and international cuisine, alongside a fine selection of wines. Spend your days here swimming in the clear marble and mosaic swimming pool, lounging by the rooftop



infinity pool, or rejuvenating at the spa. A romantic candle-lit dinner on the terrace garden is the perfect note to end your day on. It's safe to say that you will be immersed in an experience with an abundance of magical hospitality and rare courtesy.

For more information, log on to
www.samode.com, call +91 141 263 2370
or email reservations@samode.com.



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Baradari This chic restaurant inside the City Palace serves excellent Rajasthani and international dishes, but often with a twist—kachoris stuffed with Brie and naans filled with bacon, served with cucumber wasabi raita. The rocket pesto pasta and pearl barley risotto are highly recommended. (099825 01429)

Niros An old Jaipur favourite, Niros was the first to introduce the city to Chinese cuisine and it remains on the must-do list of visitors old and new. It also offers tandoori and continental fare, served amid murals by artist Satish Gujral. The restaurant has hosted the likes of MF Husain, Rajiv Gandhi, and Maharani Gayatri Devi. (0141 237 4493)

Pandit Kulfi The authority on kulfi in Jaipur, Pandit Kulfi has a mind-boggling range of flavours from their famous kesar pista badam kulfi to paan, chocolate, sugar-free and other variants of this Indian frozen dessert. (094140 71922)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Polo Bar This iconic Jaipur hang-out symbolises what the city once stood for—royalty and a lingering sense of nostalgia. The bar is an ode to the equestrian sport and decorated with memorabilia. In addition to the finest selection



INSIDER

Mita Kapur

CEO, SIYAH

"Breakfast on the nihari and khomeeri roti at **Kallu Miya** (096804 21302), in Ramganj Bazaar. For a mean galouti kebab you have **House on Fire** (0141 331 9407). Their boti is a tender, melts-in-the-mouth dish. And **Sharma Dhaba** (097848 59000) in Vishwakarma Industrial Area has the best vegetarian meal in town—their parathas are a visit to heaven."

of single malts, wines, liqueurs, and Cuban cigars, it is known for its signature vodka and melon liqueur cocktail—the Polo Polotini. (0141 221 1919)

Rajput Room The all-day dining restaurant on the grounds of Rambagh Palace, the Rajput Room is where you can dine informally in a splendid setting or get your caffeine fix with a view of the lush lawns outside. For more traditional fare in an opulent ambience, hop across to Suvarna Mahal—the former palace ballroom embellished with gilded mirrors and crystal chandeliers—that's open for lunch. (0141 221 1919)

Rawat Mishthan Bhandar Visitors and locals alike queue up to pay obeisance to the legendary kachoris (the pyaaz and mawa variants are favourites) at Rawat Mishthan Bhandar—a famous local eatery.



Try their snacks like mirchi badas, samosas and chaat, or their sweets while exploring the Old City. (0141 236 1535)

Samode Haveli This beautiful historical royal retreat offers traditional and international fare amid the hand-painted murals and crystal chandeliers of its elegant restaurant, a former royal dining hall. There's a verandah lounge for tea-time snacks while cocktails may be enjoyed on day beds by the pool. The raan-e-samode—marinated leg of lamb—is a house speciality. (0141 263 2407)

Sharma Dhaba & Garden This eatery serves authentic dhaba-style spicy vegetarian cuisine. Famous for its naans and parathas, particularly the mawa ones, the restaurant is an old Jaipur favourite, and a must-visit. (097848 59000)

Sheesh Mahal This modern-day Hall of Mirrors at the ITC Rajputana is inspired by the glasswork featured in Rajput architecture. Try their excellent cocktails or take your pick from the extensive malt menu for a classy night out. (0141 405 1713)

Signature Head to this chic rooftop lounge at Hilton Jaipur for sundowners. The bar offers a wide selection of Indian and Mediterranean

snacks, impressive cocktails and beverages, all coupled with a spectacular city view from its location on the 10th floor. (0141 417 0000)

Steam A concept lounge bar at Rambagh Palace, Steam evokes the nostalgia of a luxurious train journey. Park yourself at this recreated Victorian station and gaze at its restored steam engine as you snack on Mediterranean cuisine and sip on the finest selection of liquor. (0141 221 1919)

Ta Blu This rooftop bar at the Clarks Amer is a Jaipur classic. Live gigs, great cocktails and one of the best views of the Pink City make it a favourite with locals, tourists and the jet set. (0141 255 0616)

The Spice Court This multi-cuisine restaurant with courtyard dining is known for its North Indian fare, especially local non-vegetarian delicacies like lal maas, keema baati, jungle maas and safed maas with missi roti. (0141 222 0202)

Verandah Café The al fresco restaurant at Rambagh Palace is a place for unhurried conversations over Champagne. Its setting includes a view of the manicured palace gardens and the Moti Dungri Fort in the distance. (0141 221 1919)

1135 AD For the ultimate heritage dining experience, head to this romantic restaurant located atop Amer Fort. As you savour their 10-dish Rajasthani thali or other delicacies, remember that recipes have passed down generations before they arrived on your plate. The restaurant has various levels and its jharokhas offer the most spectacular fort views. (0141 253 0148)

From left: **the thali at Polo Bar; interiors of Rajput Room, at the Rambagh Palace**

JAIPUR MARRIOTT HOTEL

A modern oasis in a traditional city.

Home to the Jaipur Literature Festival and a gateway to Rajasthan, Jaipur is a must visit, for its historic havelis, gorgeous palaces and for those visiting on work, as a burgeoning business destination.

While there, why not stay at the hotel which has the most number of rooms in the state, and that manages to be a change from the traditional architecture that dominates the old city. Here, in this modern building, each of the 342 rooms are done up with tasteful wood panelled flooring, marble bathrooms, features inviting beds and offers high speed internet. The 15 suites feature an additional living room, a second bathroom and complimentary afternoon tea, in addition to the breakfast that is on offer.

The massive hotel, with its large number of rooms as well as meeting spaces is ideal for big events, whether office conferences, weddings or more. There is also a spa and fitness centre for those looking to keep up with their fitness regime while travelling. The spa, with nine treatment rooms, offers everything from couples massages to facials, manicures and pedicures to body scrubs. An outdoor pool, separate children's pool and sauna are also options for those that want to cool off in the water, after a day in Jaipur's unforgiving sun.

Finally, there are the hotel's four eateries - each of which are distinctive and serves up an array of dining (and drinking) options to hungry travellers, thirsty tipplers and on-the-go business people alike. Okra serves up a range of cuisines and is open all day, while those looking for tea and pastry can stop by at Jaipur Baking Company. One of the city's most popular lounge bars is Lounge 18, while those looking for traditional Indian food should make a beeline for Saffron.



ROHIT DAR
GENERAL MANAGER

◆ **SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE** ◆

A specially set-up romantic, candle lit dinner at the poolside.

The hotel, which has played host to speakers visiting the city for the literature fest, and numerous other contingents that visit the city, has something for everyone and every type of traveller.

For more information visit
www.jaipurmarriott.com. To make
a reservation, email mhrs.jaimc.reservations@marriotthotels.com
or call 0141 456 7777



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

INSIDERS Ritu & Ruchi Jain

CO-FOUNDERS OF KALEE

"Apart from the regular historical and cultural sights there are a few experiences which are a must-do when in Jaipur. Watch a polo match at the **Rajasthan Polo Club** (www.rajasthanpoloclub.co.in). Aside from horses and adrenaline you will experience the mix of traditional and modern Jaipur, men with moustaches, women in chiffon saris, Champagne, fascinators and after-parties. Polo season in Jaipur is mainly in September and January but a few matches happen throughout the year, at the Polo Club.

Rajasthan is a state of the royals, and for this reason the **vintage car rally** held in Jaipur is spectacular. From a 1964 Ford Mustang, and 1950 Jaguar XK 120 to a 1934 Rolls Royce, 1937 Mercedes 170 V, these classic beauties really take you back in time. This annual event is held in January and is free for those who wish to witness the grandeur of automotive technology of the vintage era."



BARADARI

AT THE CITY PALACE, JAIPUR

Award-winning design and a historic setting come together at this new addition to the City Palace.

Still the residence of the royal family of Jaipur, the City Palace holds many surprises, Baradari is one of them. Designed by Studio Lotus, the eatery sits within the historic palace complex and seamlessly blends modern and traditional, indoor and outdoor, and food that straddles Rajasthani fare and international favourites.

The walls of the restaurant's courtyard have been stripped to their original stone masonry in the city's trademark hue of pink. There's also a stunning pillared brass and marble pavilion housing an island bar, and for those that want to celebrate an occasion - a private dining room where service is top notch, and makes you feel like a maharaja. The various dining areas, which are artfully divided between indoors and outdoors allows you to take advantage of Jaipur's cool evenings and retreat during the city's hot days.

Tipplers can look forward to grabbing a drink at the spectacular fluted marble bar, and while the expansive space is modern, it still pays homage to the handicrafts for which Rajasthan is known - from delicate thikri mirror work, to painstaking stone inlay and other skills like weaving, metal casting and more.

Guests may wish to club their meal with an evening visit to the City Palace's "Museum at Night," when there are fewer tourists, the galleries are open, the palace is beautifully lit and there's a unique sculpture lumiere light and sound show about the history of Jaipur. Following that, stop by for dinner and drinks at



**H.H. MAHARAJA SAWAI
PADMANABH SINGH OF JAIPUR**

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

A must try dish is the royal lal maas, which is accompanied with bajre ki khichdi and Rajasthani chard, baati and scalloped potatoes. To end your meal, sample the apple jalebi with rose petal ice cream, which is a personal favourite.



Baradari, where the royal lal maas is a favourite, as is the signature desserts platter which includes apple jalebi with rose petal ice cream.

The pavilion, which gives the restaurant its name, is made of brass, marble and mirrors



and guests sitting in the courtyard can look forward to the calming sound of a cascading water feature, which drowns out ambient noises, creating a tranquil atmosphere in which to enjoy a lazy coffee, or an authentic feast.

The chef uses local produce, and is keen to showcase the variety of cooking styles that state is known for. Baradari - at the City Palace Jaipur offers food in a setting that manages to combine old world charm, with 21st century flourishes.

**For more information visit
www.royaljaipur.com.**

**To make a reservation
email info@baradarijaipur.com
or call 0141 408 8836 or 98297 87550.
Entry from within the Museum
or directly to the restaurant from
Jaleb Chowk**



WHERE TO SHOP: JAIPUR

BAZAARS

Johari Bazaar If you're looking for textiles, particularly traditional tie and dye fabrics and gota saris, visit Johari Bazaar. Stop at **Rana's** (0141 256 5975) and **Indian Gota Works** (0141 257 6612) for saris and **Ikramuddin Mohammed Sabir Neelgar** (093145 07666), in Mehro ki Nadi near Hawa Mahal—he belongs to one of the oldest families practising the traditional leheriya dyeing techniques. Gopalji ka Rasta and Haldiyan ka Rasta—have numerous jewellery houses including **Shanu Ram Jewellers** (0141 257 6109).

Bapu Bazaar The main market in Jaipur, this is where you can buy traditional camel skin jutis, trinkets, attar and churan. For jutis, there's **Tourist Shoes Store** (099282 07032).

Chameliwala Bazaar Known for its silversmiths, this is the market for traditional and contemporary silver jewellery. Antique tribal pieces are available at **Maneeka** (0141 235 7913) while precious and semi-precious stones may be bought at **HK Gems** (090019 49605).

Tripolia Bazaar This is the place for Jaipur's colourful lacquer bangles, metalcraft and vintage finds. Pick your shiniest bangles and other bling at Maniharon ka Rasta or your retro memorabilia like antique trunks at the 200-year-old **Rajasthan Trunk Co.** (0141 260 6446).

STORES

Aashka This lifestyle store—curated by Princess Bhargavi



Printing blocks at Soma

Kumari Mewar—sports an equestrian theme. Expect to find exquisite handicrafts, furniture and home accessories as well as the signature menswear brand **Polofactory**. (0141 256 3448)

Amrapali A leading Jaipur jewellery brand patronised by Indian and international celebrities, Amrapali offers a wide range of designs and collections. It has a **line exclusively designed by Manish Arora** while the premier lounge in their flagship store exhibits a dazzling array of uncut diamonds and gems. (www.amrapalijewels.com)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Anantaya A team of designers led by creative director Ayush Kasliwal collaborates with traditional artisans to create edgy, contemporary home décor. Unusual jewellery boxes, brass items, kitchenware, dhurries, bags, t-shirts and other items inspired by Jaipur's art and culture—think jaali coasters and

'spire' or dome-shaped jars—make this store worth visiting. (www.anantayadecor.com)

Anokhi Synonymous with Jaipur-style hand-printed or block-printed Indian and Western wear around India, Anokhi is known for its role in the conservation and revival of traditional textile crafts. (www.anokhi.com)

Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas Jewellers One of a number of jewellers with a flagship store on MI Road, you will find kundan and minakari works at Birdhichand. A favourite of locals and tourists alike, the two-floor emporium has more than enough to dazzle you. (www.bgjewellers.in)

Brigitte Singh A French designer known for her blend of traditional block prints with Western design, seen in her signature flowing dresses and tunics, kaftans, jackets and nightwear. Her studio is housed

in a haveli which one can visit by appointment to watch the artisans at work and buy her designs. Alternatively, **Tijori**, the gift store at The Oberoi Rajvilas, also stocks her designs. (094140 52639)

CMYK Bookstore With three outlets in Jaipur, you're never far away from notebooks and other stationery that take their inspiration from ancient Indian artworks and painting styles. The Jodha Bai collection, inspired by the city of Jaipur is a great gift or keepsake to remember your travels. (www.cmykbookstore.com)

East West Designers When clients include the royal families of Jaipur, you know you can rely on the designers and tailors of East West for a well-cut traditional suit. Get your bandhgallas, sherwanis or classic Jodhpur breeches stitched here. (0141 403 6999)

Gem Palace Established in 1852, Gem Palace is the oldest jewellery house in Jaipur and remains housed in its original haveli on MI Road. A hot favourite with its foreign clientele, collections feature traditional and antique jewellery alongside classic European as well as contemporary designs. (www.gempalacejaipur.com)

Hot Pink This designer concept store at Narain Niwas Palace was the first to showcase the collective works of some of the finest designers in the country. This is where you can buy creations by **Manish Arora, Rahul Khanna, Rohit Gandhi, Rajesh Pratap Singh** and **Namrata Joshipura** among others. It has a lively children's section too. (www.hotpinkindia.com)



JAIPUR PINK BY SUNITA BURAD

This designer souvenir store pays an ode to the city's vibrant culture and rich history with a versatile selection of products.

Jaipur is a city steeped in heritage, culture, and vibrancy. Flamboyant and stately, it holds its own as the capital of the state that has become synonymous with royalty. And the designer souvenir store of Jaipur Pink by Sunita Burad aims to reflect the soul of the city with its collections. Inspired by the city's most iconic monument Hawa Mahal, and the colour that defines Jaipur, the store captures the essence of the land with their elegant, ethnic and innovative designs.

Fashion designer Sunita Burad conceptualised Jaipur Pink in 2007 and launched the store in June 2012, nestled amidst the hustle and bustle of Bapu Bazaar. Ever since, Burad has strived to curate handcrafted and handmade collections that focus on natural fabrics, and evoke memories of the city long after the shopper has left the store. From hand-blocked Mughal print cushions, quilts, throws, bedcovers, and cotton bags to clothing and signature hand embroidered silk potlis, there is a lot to choose from. Their renowned clothing line of tunics, dresses, kaftans, and jackets in chanderi and silk, featuring



thread embroidery and gota patti, marries timelessness with a bohemian mood. Jaipur Pink's range of men's shirts, kurtas, jackets in cottons and silks is tailor-made for the man with a global outlook.

For more information, log on to www.jaipurpinkstore.com, call +91 94149 84777 or email jaipurpink@gmail.com.

TOP PICK

Their ready-to-wear pieces in exquisitely handcrafted Mughal and ajrakh prints in soft cottons are must-buys. Don't miss their soft mulmul Mughal printed throws and quilts as well as the vibrant handcrafted silk cushions with peacock motifs either.



jaipur pink
by Sunita Burad

artifacts • fashion • home

WHERE TO SHOP

INSIDER Swati Ubroi FASHION DESIGNER



"JD & Company (0141 330 2055) in Johari Bazaar for churan and supari, is a very Jaipur-specific shopping activity. Try the delicious rabdi at **Mahavir Rabdi Bandar** (097990 36942) and kanji wada and tikki chhole at **Jai Shree Ram Chat Bhandar** (094146 05668) on Haldiyan ka Rasta in Bapu Baazar."



Johari Bazaar is a shopping haven

RANIWALA JEWELLERS

An elegant new brand that has a selection of jadau jewellery that is fit for a royal.

A spanking new store in Jaipur's Civil Lines takes inspiration from the rich architectural tradition of the state. Customers walk into a shopping experience that seamlessly brings together the hallmarks of Rajasthani architecture - think mehrabs, ancient wooden elements and more. A contemporary twist is added with the use of light pastel colours for a bold fusion of elements and eras that perfectly compliments the jewellery on display.

Raniwala Jewellers specialises in jadau jewellery, and each of the jewels on display is made by hand. The artisans that are working behind the scenes have learned about the craft from their fathers and grandfathers before them - and so the skill is hereditary with each generation building on the intricate craftsmanship of the one that came before it. As a result, the designs are driven by the skills of these artisans, with the degree of intricacy that can be achieved only by their practised hands.

Unsurprisingly then, the heirlooms are popular for bridal and other occasions, when one wants to nod to India's rich artisanal heritage. Jadau is a jewellery style traditionally associated with brides, so this comes as no surprise. With a repertoire of items that includes nakhs, earrings, bangles and necklaces - a woman can find an array of designs that sparkle and delight, for her big day.

MUST BUY

Meenakari and polki patla jodi bangles showcase the intricate work that the brand is known for.



The brand isn't resting on its laurels, though, and has, over the last four consecutive years, won four Indian Jewellery Design Awards including its most recent one for the Best Colour Stone Jewellery. With designs that marry local gemstone expertise with traditional motifs, every bride is sure to find something to suit their taste.

For more information

Call 0141 403 1655, or 91662 26655

1, Geejgarh House, Next to Hotel Hilton, Hawa Sadak.



WHERE TO SHOP

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Idli French designer Thierry Journo's hip lifestyle store at Narain Niwas Palace has traditional tie and dye, gemcraft and other techniques that are used to create contemporary and edgy products in home décor, apparel and jewellery. (www.idlidesign.com)

Jaipur Blue Pottery Art Centre

The name is self-explanatory—this is where you will find Jaipur's famous blue ceramic artefacts including plates, jars, vases, mugs, tiles and coasters. These decorative pieces are created from a special mixture that is glazed and low-fired. Miniature paintings and carved marble handicrafts are also available here. (www.bluepottery.net)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Jaipur Modern Traditional Indian craft meets Italian sensibility at this elegant boutique founded by Yash Agarwal and Maximiliano Modesti. Jaipur Modern adapts Rajasthani aesthetics to global designs, showcasing stylish apparel, bags, scarves and home linen. There's an organic all-day café as well, that serves Italian fare. (www.jaipurmodern.com)

Jaipur Pink Using natural fabrics, Jaipur Pink showcases a range of Indian handicrafts. Sunita Burad is the designer behind the store, and she also assists her husband on **Mangalmayee**, a family enterprise that has been customising bridal lehengas for the Jaipur royal family for generations. (www.jaipurpinkstore.com)

KALEE Founded by designer siblings Ritu and Ruchi Jain, Kalee displays their own brands—Indian formal wear from the label **RITUJAIN SINGH**



and colourful, contemporary Western wear from Ruchi's **Crazyheart** line—along with those of other designers. Shop here for handbags, embroidered clutches, trinkets and more. (0141 274 4621)

PM Allah Buksh & Sons This store is run by a fifth generation brass artisans and lamp makers known for their intricate filigree work on metal. A place for exquisite lamps as well as various items of furniture and metalware, they ship around the world. (0141 237 6198)

Rajasthali This state-run emporium is where you can pick up beautiful handicrafts including blue pottery, textiles such as natural-dyed saris and traditional quilts, as well as carpets, papier-mâché, jewellery, furniture and woodcrafted artefacts from around Rajasthan. (0141 510 3329)

RASA A block-print store with a difference, RASA stands out for

its classy contemporary designs on fabrics such as silk and crepe. A little pricey, it promises unique pieces for a formal evening out as well as exquisite cushion covers and bed linen. (www.rasajaipur.com)

Ridhi Sidhi Textiles Spend a leisurely afternoon browsing through its vast variety of block-print fabrics and traditional quilts. Embroidered bedcovers and ethnic clutches, as well as traditional kurtas make it a favourite with both tourists and locals alike. (0141 263 3134)

Sanjhi Paper Art The intricate paper art created with hand-cut stencils of mythological scenes finds its origins in Mathura. Artist Ram Soni continues the tradition with his handiwork using traditional mythology and nature-inspired motifs. (www.sanjhiart.com)

Soma Another pioneering block-print house that's known for its apparel, especially the

men's shirts that are available in an array of traditional prints. Find everything from bags to organic cotton quilts and home linen here. (www.somashop.com)

Sunita Shekhawat Known for her Rajasthan-themed jadau and meenakari works. Her collections derive inspiration from the various elements and colours of her home state, including blue pottery, peacocks and motifs from nature. (www.sunitashekhawat.com)

Teatro Dhora A stylish multi-brand store, it exhibits the in-house lifestyle label Dhora alongside apparel by **Vraj Bhoomi**, beauty products by **Ma Earth Botanicals** as well as an eclectic mix of accessories and home décor items. (www.dhoraindia.in)

Tholia's Kuber This leading jewellery house is the place for delicate handcrafted kundan enamel and jadau work. Their stunning diamond pieces and wide range of gold and silver jewellery are truly unique. They also customise designs. (0141 237 7416)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Trunks Company Jaipur

Founded in 2011 by Paritosh and Priyank Mehta, Trunks Company Jaipur uses local artisans to create bespoke pieces that can be used as suitcases, portable bars, watch cases and more. (www.trunkscompany.com)

91 Degree This contemporary home store founded by Israeli designer Alon Molay is high on the design quotient. Chic lamps, wall décor, handblown glass items and furnishings bring a modern touch to the home. (www.91degree.com)



INSIDERS Jai Sirmathura and Vikramaditya Barkana

CO-FOUNDERS, POLOFACTORY

"Some may know about Jaipur-based workshops of brilliant designers who're working closely with local artisans to create products that blend traditional skills with modern design. One such designer is Nur Kaoukji. The creative director of Kuwait-based lifestyle label **Ecru** (www.ecruonline.com), Nur works out of her office on Bhagwan Das Road, which you can visit. Nur welcomes you to the world of Ecru, showing you different pieces that they design and skillfully hand-make in Jaipur. And to top it all Nur's office serves the best Arabic coffee!

Nestled in the Aravalis, just about 14km from Jaipur, stands the beautiful **Amer Fort**. We highly recommend that you experience the fort a little differently from regular tourists. Trek around and about the surrounding hills and you'll see serene temples, step wells, cenotaphs and witness the best views of the fort and city. Abhimanyu Singh's **Things to do in Jaipur** (www.thingstodoinjaipur.com) plans these treks for us. The treks usually end with an elaborately laid out camp breakfast at a point on a hill with the most breathtaking view of the sun-dripped Amer.

Experience this and you'll know what you've always missed in Jaipur."

WHERE TO STAY: JAIPUR

Alsisar Haveli A nobleman's townhouse restored to its former splendour, Alsisar Haveli is a fine example of traditional Rajput architecture, complete with beautifully decorated walls, sprawling courtyards and gazebos. Built in 1892, its 45 rooms are furnished with antique furniture and are a throwback to Jaipur's glory days. (www.alsisarhaveli.com; doubles from ₹7,500)

Bissau Palace Built in 1919, the ornate Bissau Palace has been recently renovated. Sporting opulent, maximalist interiors, the rooms overlook the nearby Tiger Fort. Also on the premises is a pool and two restaurants. Spend an afternoon marvelling at the wood-panelled library, or see the collection of arms used in combat by the palace's previous inhabitants. (www.bissaupalace.com; doubles from ₹3,000)

Crowne Plaza Jaipur Tonk Road Located near the airport, this business hotel has 218 rooms including 20 suites, as well as flexible meeting spaces and a large ballroom that can accommodate up to 1,200 guests. Visitors can choose between restaurants Sirocco, for contemporary international cuisine, and House of Han for Chinese fare. The bar, Connexions, and spa, Sohum, offer respite after a long day. (www.crowneplaza.com; doubles from ₹4,100)

Diggi Palace The erstwhile garden retreat of Thakur Ram Pratap Singh Diggi whose descendants continue to inhabit a part of the haveli, Diggi Palace is better known as the venue of the grand Jaipur Literature



The exteriors of Fairmont Jaipur

Festival. The annual gathering, held in January every year, has had a stellar line-up of authors and luminaries including Orhan Pamuk, JM Coetzee and Oprah Winfrey. Each of the 70 rooms here is unique in character while the atmospheric multi-cuisine restaurant prides itself on using home-grown organic produce. (0141 237 3091; doubles from ₹6,600)

Fairmont Jaipur Nestled in the Aravali hills, the Fairmont Jaipur resembles a present-day fortress. A luxury hotel that evokes Rajasthani nostalgia, expect to find crystal chandeliers and dark wooden floors here. Business travellers are offered meeting rooms with a view while the grand ballroom makes for a good wedding venue. With fine dining options, including Zoya for regional fare and Zarin for Indo-Persian cuisine, as well as Aza Library Bar, guests are spoiled for choice. (www.fairmont.com; doubles from ₹11,000)

Hilton Jaipur With suites that overlook Nahargarh Fort and rooms that offer beautiful views of the Aravalis, this modern luxury hotel is a great place to base yourself. Dining options include the award-winning restaurants, Chaandi, for contemporary Indian cuisine, and the all-day Aurum, while a rooftop lounge, Signature, and the bar, Krystal, are where one can unwind and relax after a day spent out in the city. (www.hilton.com; doubles from ₹9,000)

ITC Rajputana A luxury hotel that combines business and modernity with tradition, the ITC Rajputana is home to well-appointed suites and rooms.

INSIDER Sunita Shekhawat CEO & DESIGNER, MIDAS SIGNATURE JEWELLERY



"I love shopping at **Ridhi Sidhi Textiles**, which is a beautiful fabric shop, where you get cloth in thaans (in bulk or wholesale). While browsing their dohars (quilts) and loose fabric, don't forget to have a cup of their excellent masala chai.

Another speciality of Jaipur that you shouldn't miss out on is

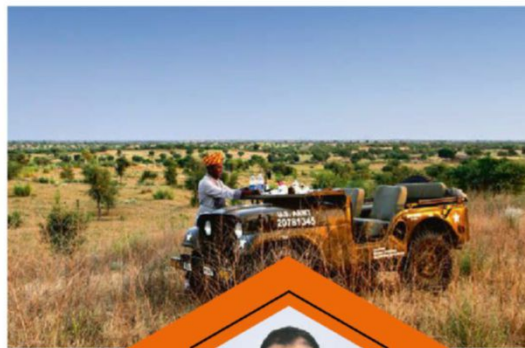
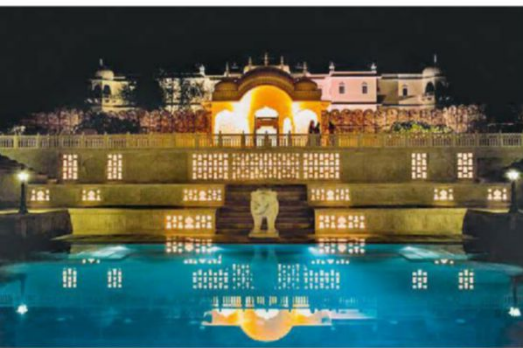
Pandit Kulfi. It's one of the oldest names for kulfi and located in the Old City of Jaipur. It is renowned for its kesar pista badam kulfi, which is the best you can ever have.

On The House (www.onthehousebistro.com) is yet another one of my favourite eating joints in Jaipur. Drop in for breakfast or more. The Italian, continental and Mexican varieties are the best in the town!"



ALSISAR HOTELS

With three properties across Rajasthan, you're assured of a different experience at each one.



**ABHIMANYU ALSISAR
OWNER**

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

At each property, ask for where the hotel can arrange for a special meal. For example, at Nahargarh, the newly constructed Hathi Kund can be the setting for an intimate dinner that is only for you and your significant other.

Alsisar Mahal, home to Magnetic Fields music festival might have music festival cache, but that doesn't mean the hotel group's other properties are lagging behind. 2017 saw Nahargarh, another Alsisar property, play host to Ranthambore festival on the edge of the national park. There's also Jaipur's Alsisar Mahal, which offers old world charm in the heart of the Pink City.

Each of these three hotels was once home to Rajput noblemen, and today, have been converted into plush properties that showcase traditional architecture and hospitality while staying mindful of 21st century needs. So while rooms are well appointed and feature original furnishings, there are concessions to modernity, like free Wi-Fi, if you feel the need to stay connected with the outside world.

Better yet take in the palatial hotels and their surroundings. For example, if you're planning a trip to Ranthambore National Park to go tiger spotting, make Nahargarh your base, and let the hotel plan your safari

into the park. Once back, passed the wooden gates and the high ramparts, you'll be transported to another world, one in which your whims are taken care of.

Similarly, at Alsisar Mahal in Shekhawati, there are frescos to photograph, walks in the

countryside, and horse or camelback safaris to enjoy, after which you can bed down at the luxurious property.

The Pink City needs no introduction, and once you're done touring its palaces, forts and bazaars, you can take a refreshing dip in the swimming pool or enjoy a traditional at the Alsisar Haveli.

Each of the distinctive properties moves away from the formulaic luxury experience, for an intimate holiday that you will savour.

**For more information visit
www.alsisar.com.**

**To make a reservation
email alsisar@alsisar.com
or call 0141 236 8290**



ALSISAR HOTELS

WHERE TO STAY

The Oberoi Rajvillas Getaway of the rich and famous, this stunning hotel includes 54 rooms and 13 luxury tents set amid 32 acres of manicured gardens, its tranquility disturbed only by birdsong and chants from the 18th-century Shiva temple on the property. It has two excellent fine-dining restaurants and the Rajwada Library Bar, as well as a spa housed in a heritage haveli. The spectacular Kohinoor Villa, spread across 11,377sq ft, comes with its own pool, garden and dining pavilion. (www.oberoihotels.com; doubles from ₹42,000)



HOTEL DIGGI PALACE

There's much to explore, at the sprawling home of Jaipur Literature Festival.

Built by Thakur Pratap Singh Diggi in 1860, Hotel Diggi Palace today is made up of 75 rooms each of which has its own story to tell. Don't be surprised if you run into Thakur Ram Pratap Singh Diggi or his wife, Jyotika Kumari Diggi, the owners today-as they also reside in the palatial property while you are taking your morning walk around the expansive gardens.

The hotel has played host to numerous well-known guests from the Dalai Lama to Amitabh Bachchan and Oprah Winfrey. Rooms are spread across three categories - heritage rooms, palace suites and courtyard suites, and each room showcases traditional Rajasthani block-printing and other artisanal skills that the state is well known for. You'll get lost in the 18-acre property as you take in deodis, durbars and havelis that make up the intricately frescoed and brightly painted property.

For dinner, walk over to the Baradari Mahal, which showcases food from the state, for those looking to experience an authentic Rajasthani feast. In the day time, and if you're hankering to take the recipes for some of the dishes sampled home with you, ask the hotel to arrange a cooking workshop, where age-old royal recipes are shared with guests, by the ladies of the royal



**THAKURANI JYOTIKA KUMARI
AND KAUSHIKA KUMARI
OWNERS**

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

Ask the hotel to arrange a trip to the outskirts of the city, where you can see where the property's vegetables are grown and while partaking in a camel safari and more.

family - complete with a demonstration and meal after. The hotel plays host to the Jaipur Literature Festival every January, when celebrated authors from all over the world descend on the city. Lesser known is that it hosts the SAARC Sufi Festival, which consists of three days of music, poetry, literature and art. While culture lovers ensure that they visit



during one of the two festivals, for visitors that want to take in all that the Pink City has to offer, the best time to visit is between October and November, when the weather starts to cool and the city comes alive.

**For more information visit
www.hoteldiggipalace.com.**

**To make a reservation email
reservations@hoteldiggipalace.com
or call 0141 237 3091**



WHERE TO STAY

Book a relaxing massage at the Kaya Kalp spa, visit Jharokha, the poolside lounge and bar, or get a meal at one of the several speciality cuisine restaurants on the property. The hotel also provides daycare/babysitting services to those seeking a quiet twosome or a dip in the pool. (www.itchotels.in; doubles from ₹15,000)

Jai Mahal Palace This 270-year-old, 18-acre Indo-Saracenic palace hotel (and Taj property), has 94 rooms and 6 suites. Each of the suites—named Junior, Crystal, Jaipur, Peacock, Gangaur and Topaz—reflects Rajputana décor and heritage. Its three restaurants—Cinnamon, Marble Arch and Giardino—serve Indian, multi-cuisine and Italian fare respectively. Ask the staff to organise a heritage walk and take you through the history of the former palace. (www.tajhotels.com; doubles from ₹21,000)

Jaipur Marriott Hotel Located near the airport, the Jaipur Marriott is a modern hotel for the business traveller. Well-equipped meeting rooms, conference and event halls make it ideal for large professional gatherings as well as weddings. Restaurants Okra and Saffron specialise in international and local cuisine respectively while Lounge 18, is the bar at which young executives let down their hair. (www.marriott.com; doubles from ₹9,000)

Le Méridien Jaipur Located along the Delhi-Jaipur highway, this 126-room property provides some unlikely visual respite amid its otherwise dull surroundings and is a destination in itself. Its luxurious villas come with a garden, a sunken bathtub-with-a-view, and on-call butler service. The hotel has four restaurants and bars to choose from when it



The drawing room at SUJÁN Rajmahal Palace. Below: Pattered wallpaper at SUJÁN Rajmahal Palace

comes to food and drink options. (www.starwoodhotels.com; doubles from ₹6,200)

Mandawa Haveli Jaipur This elegant heritage property built by Thakur Bhagwat Singh, the 15th ruler of Mandawa, is a tranquil haven amid the hustle and bustle of the city. Its 70 rooms overlook lush lawns with Nahargarh Fort in the distance. An Indian cuisine restaurant and cultural evenings add to the experience. (www.mandawahaveli.com; doubles from ₹9,500)

Naila Bagh Palace The palace home of a former prime minister of Jaipur, Thakur Fateh Singh, Naila Bagh is a heritage property that dates back to 1872. Centrally located near the walled city, it offers a variety of well-decorated suites and rooms together with a pool, billiards room and traditional

cuisine to complete your old-world experience. (www.nailabaghpalace.com; doubles from ₹3,500)

Narain Niwas Palace With Art Deco furniture, Rajasthani motifs and a garden view, this 37-room heritage hotel is a visual treat. The erstwhile getaway of Jaipur nobility hosts folk performances and offers the finest in local cuisine and drink, including forgotten and secret recipes, that draw on Rajasthan's culinary heritage. (www.hotelnarainniwas.com; double from ₹9,000)

Rambagh Palace It's easy to see why this mother of all heritage properties in Jaipur is so highly recommended. The erstwhile palace of the Maharaja of Jaipur is now a beautifully restored Taj hotel fit for, well, a king. The luxurious rooms

and suites were the actual chambers of royalty, including the legendary Maharani Gayatri Devi whose suite—now named the Maharani Suite—was designed exclusively for her by Hammond's of London. The Polo Bar is a popular hangout with both tourists and locals as are its two restaurants, Suvarna Mahal and The Verandah Café. The Rambagh Polo Grounds next door complete the experience. (www.tajhotels.com; doubles from ₹40,000)

Radisson Blu Jaipur Located near the airport, this business hotel allows guests to unwind after work at the rooftop swimming pool or at the bars, West 56 and Colorbar. Within walking distance of the mall, World Trade Park, the hotel is well-equipped for conferences and corporate events. Rooms are modern and spacious while the multi-cuisine restaurant, Market Place, is ideal for quick business lunches. (www.radissonblu.com; doubles from ₹3,800)

SUJÁN Rajmahal Palace The private retreat of Sawai Jai Singh II, this beautiful palace—now a charming 14-room boutique hotel—offers a significant slice of Jaipur's history. Its magnificent rooms, which reflect the colours and design sensibility of Rajasthani palace décor, have hosted the likes of Queen Elizabeth II, Jacqueline Kennedy and the Shah of Iran. Vibrant dining spaces—think magenta and turquoise—together with traditional and European cuisine make for a delightful culinary experience. Its lawns and gardens are perfect for private celebrations. (www.sujanluxury.com; doubles from ₹37,000)

The Farm An art hotel or an 'experimental style space', The Farm stands out for its quirky,

INSIDER

Princess Diya Kumari

BUSINESSWOMAN, PHILANTHROPIST, POLITICIAN

"For jewellery my personal favourites are **Gem Palace** and **Amrapali**, which are both on MI Road, and offer a comfortable and relaxed shopping experience. Both stand by the quality and the impeccable craftsmanship of their pieces. I also always find really nice and fun décor items at **Anantaya** (located at Narain Niwas), which has very contemporary houseware, furniture, and gifts, that are handmade by local craftspeople. **Palace Atelier** (0141 408 8856), our museum shop at City Palace also has many great, unique, and affordable gifts, many based on exclusive designs from the palace and our collections.

The City Palace also has a few new attractions that many people don't know about yet. The new gallery dedicated to painting and photography that only opened last year, has many treasures on display. This collection includes photographs of the women of the zenana, which is something totally unique. Also, not many people know that the City Palace can now be visited at night for a new experience. It includes the Sculpture Lumiere projection, which is not the standard 'sound and light' show. We invited a world-renowned light projection artist named Patrick Rimoux to do it for us, commissioned special music, and have used images from our collections to detail the history of the city.

After the museum visit and the show, visitors can conclude their evening with a lovely dinner in the intimate setting of our **Baradari** (099825 01429), restaurant."



WHERE TO STAY

contemporary design that uses recycled products ranging from plastic bottles and jute bags to discarded car parts. Located on the fringes of the city, its five rooms and two suites have been designed by 18 local artists. The hip hotel grows its own organic produce, has an interactive kitchen and encourages communal dining. (www.thefarmjaipur.com; doubles from ₹11,000)

The Lalit Jaipur Situated right in the centre of an upcoming commercial district, this is where business meets leisure. The hotel's 231 rooms and suites, and 27,000sq ft of space for events, make it popular for conferences and weddings. The spa, Rejuve, offers natural therapies and beauty services while two speciality restaurants and the bar, The Circle, take care of your food and drink needs. (www.thelalit.com; doubles from ₹6,500)

The Royal Heritage Haveli

This beautiful 14-suite and one apartment boutique hotel comes with all the perks of most erstwhile royal residences—vast lawns,

traditional interiors, expansive courtyards and outdoor dining. Built in the 18th century by Maharaja Madho Singh of Jaipur, it continues to be run by royalty. (www.royalheritagehaveli.com; doubles from ₹12,300)

Tree of Life This serene getaway is within easy distance of Jaipur and yet a world away from it. Its 13 luxury villas come with private gardens and rest on seven acres of land amid the Aravali hills. The green resort is committed to sustainable practices; earnings contribute towards conservation projects. Set up interactions with villagers and participate in farming or teaching activities. A memorable experience to consider is 'dinner with elephants', which sees you feed the elephants before eating a traditional dinner yourself. (www.treeofliferesorts.com; doubles from ₹12,300)

Trident Jaipur En route to the Amer Fort and opposite Jal Mahal, sits the Trident Jaipur. 132 well-appointed rooms and suites with jharokhas and balconies offer sweeping views of the Man Sagar Lake and Aravali hills while



INSIDER Thakurani Jyotika Kumari of Diggi

OWNER & DIRECTOR, HOTEL DIGGI PALACE

"If you are visiting Jaipur and you haven't visited the walled city, you haven't really visited the city then! It is a magical place where anything and everything can be found with a little patience and know-how. Add a cycle rickshaw ride for a memorable experience. It is home to many hidden gems, like the **Maniharon ka raasta**, which is an entire lane dedicated to a community that specialises in the making of lac bangles. Also visit **Thateron ka raasta** and **Panigharon ka mohalla** to see (and buy) silver and gold foil made out of 100 percent silver and gold. The gold filigree mosque here is a must-see as well. For those that want to go attar shopping, visit **Devi Singh Sughandi Bhandar** (Tripolia Bazaar), while **Awaz Mohammed Banglewala** is the shop to stop at for glass and lacquer bangles."

INSIDER Priyank Mehta

PARTNER, TRUNKS COMPANY JAIPUR



"One of the few things that you cannot miss is the homemade Ginger Ale at **Steam in Rambagh Palace**. Another favourite is **Padao** (0141 514 8044) restaurant, which is on the top at Nahargarh Fort and provides a 360° complete scenic view of Jaipur. Also nearby is an amazing sound and light show where the

narrator talks about the history of Jaipur so beautifully you can literally re-live those old times when kings and queens used to rule. Lastly, I would recommend **Kishan Lal Govind Narain Agarwal Lassiwalla** (0141 237 8692) at MI Road for the excellent lassis."

its lakefront terrace is a great place to relax outdoors. Visit Jal Mahal for Rajasthani fine dining. The Verandah is where you can dine al fresco and the bar, Mansagar, is where you can end the day with a nightcap. (www.tridenthotels.com; doubles from ₹8,500)

28 Kothi This boutique guest house, by the Gem Palace's Siddharth Kasliwal and Abhishek Honawar, marries contemporary design with a Rajasthani sensibility. The result is a fine combination of hand-painted murals, reading nooks and sun-soaked outdoor areas. The theme is gemstones, with each

of the five rooms reflecting a different stone in colour and design. (www.28kothi.com; doubles from ₹9,000)

47 Jobner Bagh This cosy, family-run guest house is located in the private gardens of the Maharaja of Jobner. Designed by an Italian architect, its 11 rooms are minimal and yet traditional, while the terrace offers views of the Nahargarh Fort and the Ganesh Temple on the Aravali hills. This boutique space also has a spa, a small antique shop and a restaurant that serves simple, home-style Rajasthani fare. (www.jobnerbagh.com; doubles from ₹8,300)



★EDITOR'S PICK★

Samode Haveli One of Jaipur's most beautiful royal retreats, Samode Haveli was founded 175 years ago. A stellar example of traditional Rajasthani artistry, the 39-room hotel is made up of charming gardens, pools, chowks and courtyards. Located deep inside the Old City, this is heritage living at its finest. (www.samode.com; doubles from ₹15,800)

GET AWAY FROM: JAIPUR

Ajmer Throngs of devotees, both Muslim and Hindu, visit this nondescript town 180km from Jaipur, to pray at the tomb of the famous Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti who died here in 1236. The dargah is one of the most important Sufi shrines, the entry to which is through its bazaar and imposing gates. While Ajmer is also home to other monuments such as Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra, Akbar's Palace and Museum, and the Taragarh Fort, the town is centred on this major pilgrimage spot. Urs, the death anniversary of the saint, is when Ajmer is at its festive best. When you're ready to rest for the evening, make your way to **Badnor House** (www.badnorhouse.com; doubles from ₹2,700), which is a royal retreat in the heart of the town.

Bharatpur-Keoladeo National Park Around 184km from Jaipur and 26km from Fatehpur Sikri, Bharatpur is famous for its bird sanctuary—the Keoladeo National Park. This top ornithological destination plays host to over 380 species of indigenous birds and other migratory species. A day trip from Bharatpur, the beautiful 18th century Deeg Palace, 32km from the park—summer retreat of the Jat kings—is a sprawling complex of palaces, pavilions and gardens. **The Bagh** (www.thebagh.com; doubles from ₹8,000), a hotel set in 12 acres features 23 rooms and a restaurant that serves traditional vegetarian cuisine.

Dera Amer An elephant camp located in a private forest in the foothills of the Aravalis, **Dera Amer** (www.deraamer.com; doubles from ₹25,000) is where visitors can live with the



elephants. The camp organises elephant treks through the forest and surrounding villages, and gives guests the opportunity to bathe and feed the pachyderms. Located only half an hour from Jaipur, the camp also provides jeep safaris to the Amer Fort, Nahargarh National Park and surrounding areas. For those looking for more local wildlife, explore the region on camel back, or go birding and keep your eyes peeled for dusky eagle owls and laughing doves, among other species.

Dundlod Fort If a historic getaway is what you're looking for, make your way to Dundlod Fort (www.dundlod.com; doubles from ₹4,800), which is approximately 150km from Jaipur. The fort is now a heritage

hotel and you can soak in the Rajputana lifestyle in the heart of Rajasthan's Shekhawati region. Guests share the fort with the royal owners, and thus feel like you are engaging in a royal lifestyle as well. Horseback safaris can be arranged for those who want to get out and explore the surrounding country side.

Mandawa Located in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, known for its stunning havelis, Mandawa lies 168 km from Jaipur. Typical of the region, this small town located on the Old Silk Route, is known for the detailed artistry, decorative murals and frescoes of its historical Murmuria Haveli, Gulab Rai Wadia Haveli, Jhunjunhwa Haveli and Goenka Double Haveli, among others.

However, its grand fortress, now a luxurious heritage hotel—**Hotel Mandawa Castle** (www.castlemandawa.com; doubles from ₹9,000)—with 85 rooms and two restaurants is an ideal property in which to immerse yourself in the grandeur of this opulent region.

Neemrana Located on the Delhi-Jaipur highway, and equidistant from both cities, the historical town of Neemrana is synonymous with its 15th century fort—one of Rajasthan's first palace hotels. **Neemrana Fort** (www.fort-palace.neemranahotels.com; doubles from ₹7,000) is a destination unto itself, the massive heritage property lies perched atop a hill and spreads over multiple levels to give a stunning view of the town and surrounding landscape. It lies within easy distance of Sariska Tiger Sanctuary, Bharatpur-Keoladeo National Park, Jaisamand Lake and other destinations. If you want to just spend time on the property—there are two pools, gardens and more, all spread over 14 tiers of the hill.

Pushkar Studded with over 400 temples, 52 ghats and a serene lake, this jewel of a destination is best known for its vibrant camel fair. 144km from Jaipur, Pushkar is a place for mystics and seekers. Devotees throng the lakes and the Brahma temple to conduct rituals during the full moon period in the Hindu month of Kartik. The camel fair, held around the same time, turns the town into the venue for a colourful carnival. Amble along the ghats to watch priests and pilgrims scatter rose petals in worship at the lake, or sip on a 'special' lassi at one of its

INSIDER Aavriti R Jain

DESIGNER & FOUNDER, DHORA AND TEATRO DHORA

"You must kick start your day with a hot cup of tea in the midst of the walled city, absorb the hustle and soak some sun at **Sahu Chaiwala** (Shop no 365, Chaura Rasta). It's a small stall, which has been run by the same family for the past 40 years. Their secret is the slow boiling of milk on a coal stove, which gives the chai its unique flavour.

Take a fragrant stroll into the flower market on Hawa Mahal Road, and finally, one experience, which you should not miss, would be to rise above the frantic maelstrom and look down on the city from a high place of calm—**Surya Temple at Galta** (Surya Mandir, Galta Ji, Jaipur). The journey to reach it is as exhilarating as the reward. You drive through the woodland to reach the entrance of the ashram. The white shrine cuts into the ridge of the hills overlooking Jaipur. You can see the entire city spread out between the encircling hills, its main roads running straight as an arrow from below your feet to the distant horizon."



INSIDER Shilpa Sharma

FOUNDER, JAYPORE



"The Stitching Project (www.the-stitching-project.com) a social enterprise near **Pushkar**, works with local women to produce quality hand worked homeware, garments, quilts and craft supplies and special orders for private customers. Call **Fiona Wright** (099820 32755) for appointments. And if I had to pick an unmissable

experience it would be a stay at **Mahansar Fort Homestay** (0159 526 4761), in **Jhunjhunu**. You can enjoy authentic Rajasthani food with desi liqueurs (arak being the most potent of the lot) that the resident prince Bhagwati Singh distils from mint, aniseed, ginger, fennel, and cardamom to name a few. Watch the sun set below the acacia trees as you savour the brew of the season."

hip cafés. Alternatively, check out the greenhouses at **The Green House Resort** (www.thegreenhouseressort.com; doubles from ₹6,000), which you should check into. With LCD TVs and suites that have private patios, this eco-friendly resort is a great retreat. **The Westin Pushkar Resort and Spa** (www.starwood.com; doubles from ₹7,800) is another option, it's the one hundredth brand property worldwide and features 100 rooms set amidst Frangipani trees. **Sewara's Pushkar Resorts** (www.sewara.com; doubles from ₹11,475) is spread amidst 15 acres and features 40 cottages. The property can arrange qawwali nights and more for those that are interested.

Ramathra Fort The Ramathra Fort is now a heritage hotel, but was given as a fiefdom by the Maharaja of Karauli to his son Thakur Bhoj Pal in 1645. Named after Lord Ram, who, legend says, stopped here on his way to Lanka, the hilltop fort has an enviable view of surrounding farmlands, forests and the Kalisil Lake. While tiger sightings are

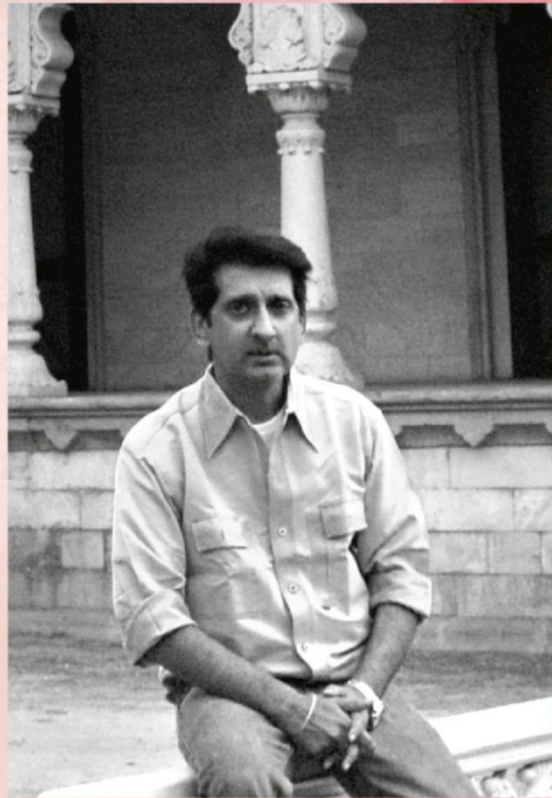
rare, you might just spot deer, wolves and jackals on your jeep safari. For those looking to spend an afternoon, take a trip on the lake, and maybe you might spot a crocodile on the banks. Within the fort, lies multiple shrines—like the Ganesh Mandir and Shiva Mandir, while the interior of the fort is a fine example of latticework and traditional artistry. (www.ramathrafort.com; doubles from ₹18,000)

Samode Palace Only 42 km from Jaipur and on the outskirts of Shekhawati, **Samode** (www.samode.com; doubles from ₹25,000) is known for its 475-year-old palace that is now a heritage hotel. Its intricate carvings, frescoed corridors, stunning glasswork of the Sheesh Mahal or Hall of Mirrors, and Mughal gardens nearby ensure that you have enough to do. Ask the hotel to organise a horse or camel safari of the surrounding regions or walk through the village and shop for handicrafts from the colourful stores.

Sariska The Sariska Tiger Reserve and National Park lies at a distance of 107km

from Jaipur and while its tiger population has been dwindling in recent times, it is a serene place lacking the usual crowds. Home to the leopard, golden jackal, four-horned antelope, Indian eagle-owl and other wildlife, the national park is also dotted with temples and atmospheric ruins such as the Kankwari Fort and Hanuman Temple. The 40 suites and pavilions of the **Amanbagh** (www.aman.com; doubles from ₹73,206) are another option when it comes to choosing a

base to explore Sariska. Those who aren't inclined for the early morning safari can start the day with yoga, and your room includes the creature comforts you'd expect. **The Sariska Palace** (www.thesariskapalace.in; doubles from ₹9,000), a heritage hotel that was once a royal hunting lodge, is located on the park periphery. The property features a tennis court, the Cat's Whiskers Bar and sprawling lawns to enjoy after time in the forest spotting tigers.



INSIDER Sanjay Singh Badnor

PHOTOGRAPHER AND HOTELIER, BADNOR HOUSE

"Established in 1895, **Bhikkilal Chottaylal Agrawal** (www.bhikkilals.com) is synonymous with Ajmer. Located at Madar Gate, Bhikkilal's 50 different sherbets are the coolest way to beat the heat. An equal number of pickles, preserves and more, have been handed down over five generations. The trademark Rose Sherbet is made from hand-plucked Pushkar pink roses and is a must after an exhaustive shopping spree."

THE WESTIN PUSHKAR RESORT AND SPA

A sprawling, intimate property from which to explore Rajasthan's rustic city



When exploring the ancient city of Pushkar, make the Westin Pushkar Resort and Spa your retreat to come back to. With the surrounding Aravalli hills and an array of temples to explore, Pushkar has more than the annual camel fair to see.

Similarly, this newly built five-star property, with 98 guest rooms has a lot to keep guests comfortable - like high speed internet access and flat screen televisions, to more 21st century concerns, like the Westin's signature Heavenly® Bed and their healthy SuperFoodsRX™ offerings.

The hotel, like all Westin properties, takes wellness seriously, and as a result, the fitness studio and spa are state of the art. For a nominal fee, Westin offers New Balance® clothing and shoes for guests to use during their stay so they can pack light and stay fit. If the dust of the city, and walking around has taken its toll on you, book a treatment at the spa - where the best local and international treatments are sure to help you de-stress.

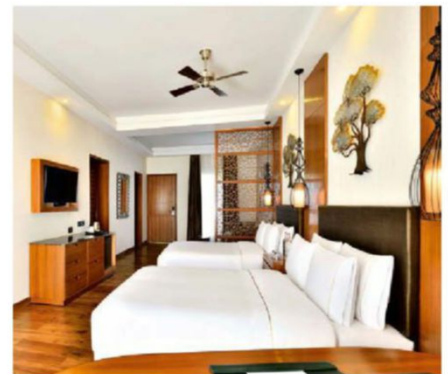
For those looking to relax and enjoy all that the hotel (and your room) has to offer, book one of the 24 luxury villas or 20 Royal villas. While each of the former has its own indoor plunge pool, each of the latter is spread over 105 sq mts and has a private



outdoor pool to cool off in.

After splashing about in the water, make your way to Seasonal Tastes, for all-day dining or visit Panorama, where you can take in the distant Aravalli range from the roof while enjoying some sumptuous grills. End the day with a drink at Mix, the bar - where well-crafted signature cocktails rub shoulders with beers and spirits.

Ideal for events and retreats, the hotel has over 1,800 sq mts of conference and



meeting space, so your next company get-together or family holiday can combine the best of Indian hospitality and luxury with a city that has attracted travellers for its traditional way of life.

For more information visit
www.westinpushkar.com.

To make a reservation
email westin.pushkar@westin.com
or call 0145 277 4400

THE WESTIN
PUSHKAR
RESORT & SPA

GET AWAY

Ranthambore

A temple, a fort and a tiger are what you need to complete that classic Rajasthan trip and Ranthambore promises all three. Situated 162km from Jaipur, the national park—one of the largest in North India—was once the hunting ground of the Maharaja of Jaipur. Besides its increasing tiger population, the park is also home to leopards, jackals, sloth bears, nilgai and a wealth of other wildlife and birdlife. The 10th century Ranthambore Fort, which encloses a group of Hindu and Jain temples, rises above the forest on a rock, made all the more romantic in this setting. Safaris start early, and it's best to let your hotel organise them. Stay at **Nahargarh** (www.nahargarh.com; doubles from

₹15,000), a fortress with 100 rooms and a step well inspired pool—for when you want to relax after a day in the jungle. Another option is **SUJÁN's Sher Bagh** (www.sujanluxury.com; doubles from ₹40,000) a luxury camp that transports you to the days when royalty went hunting with a retinue in tow. Bespoke dining, a pool and more await you at this oasis on the fringes of Ranthambore. Aman, the international luxury resort chain also offers tented luxury at Aman-i-Khas (www.aman.com; doubles from ₹1,05,055), with ten fully kitted rooms under canvas that feature modern amenities. A spa, pool and the opportunity to eat dinner in the forest are some of the experiences on offer.

A tiger on the prowl in Ranthambore

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JODHPUR

THE BLUE CITY

SEE & DO ♦ EAT & DRINK ♦ SHOP ♦ STAY ♦ GET AWAY

PLUS INSIDER SECRETS

HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA GAJ SINGH II OF MARWAR-JODHPUR ♦
CHIRAG NAINANI ♦ RAGHAVENDRA RATHORE



THE BLUE CITY

A first trip to Jodhpur is a bit like a visit to the Taj Mahal. Most visitors have been armchair travellers before and it is with trepidation that they approach the city, wondering if it will meet their expectations. Like the Taj Mahal, the Blue City does not disappoint; it is love at first sight.

Jodhpur rises like an indigo-dyed mirage from the ochre countryside and surrounding desertscape. At its crest, the majestic Mehrangarh Fort stands sentinel over the old gates and clock tower. The walled city and its busy by-lanes are lined with old houses and havelis that keep a deferential eye on the Umaid Bhawan Palace nearby. Hidden stepwells and old bazaars add to its medieval charm; to travel to Jodhpur is to journey back in time.

The Rathore clan that once reigned over Marwar, has a long and tumultuous history of victory and defeat. In 1459, Rao Jodha moved the capital from Mandore to Jodhpur, which he named after himself. Jodhpur grew wealthy from trade—even the Mughals coveted it—but the impregnable fort was impossible to conquer. Eventually, they forged an alliance with the Rathores when Akbar married Udai Singh's sister. The last Maharaja before Independence was Umaid Singh, after whom the palace is named. When the royal Privy Purse was abolished in 1971, his descendant Maharaja Gaj Singh paved the way for heritage tourism by opening up his ancestral fort and palace to tourists. Given the wealth of heritage properties in this state marked by feudal kingdoms, he set a precedent, thereby giving a boost to tourism in Rajasthan. The family continues to occupy a part of this beautiful palace known for its memorabilia and several acres of gardens that house a museum, library and zoo. Tread softly, for this is also one of the world's grandest luxury hotels today, and a destination in itself.

Mehrangarh Fort is sprawled atop a hillock. Within the fort complex lie the finest examples of Rajput design and architecture. It is encircled by the Old City whose narrow, crooked lanes lead you through rows of houses bathed in blue, deeper than the cerulean sky above, and in contrast with the heaps of scarlet chillies left to dry in their courtyards. The colour blue was once the mark of distinction of the city's Shaivite Brahmins, but has since been adopted by others, including a local mosque. Close to the fort complex lies the serene, white Jaswant Thada, a cluster of marble cenotaphs commemorating Maharaja Jaswant Singh II, and the

Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park. The latter is an oasis in the arid countryside, with beautiful walking trails that showcase the flora of the region.

The city bazaars and gates like Jalori Gate and Sojati Gate are alive with the buzz of daily life. True to Rajasthani tradition, shops sell everything from antiques, camel bone and leather items, to hand block-printed textiles, bright leheriya and bandhani fabrics, and, of course, the well-known jodhpurs—the classic breeches that derive their name from the city. The famous Sadar Bazaar is teeming with local temptations like silver jewellery, lacquerware, puppets and carpets. One can even buy excellent spices like the pungent, bright red Mathania chillies that lend their flavour to the local cuisine.

Jodhpur has made significant contributions to India's culinary landscape, especially in terms of snacks and savouries. Specialities like makhaniya lassi, mawa kachori, pyaaz ki kachori and mirchi vada, have their origins here. The city also has a sweet tooth, with a weakness for mawa sweets and doodh phirni, which, according to tradition, are to be had before a meal. Among the many experiences that the city has to offer, the combination of its culinary delights with the view from its rooftop restaurants and bars, is one of the finest.

The Blue City is a sensorial extravaganza, with its colours, smells, sounds and tastes. Festivals like Jodhpur Rajasthan International Folk Festival or RIFF (of which Mick Jagger is an international patron), Marwar Festival, Nagaur Fair and Desert Kite Festival, enhance the experience, but with its vibrant culture and the hospitality of its cheerful, brightly attired residents, Jodhpur exudes a festive feel all year round.

The city's central location—it is flanked by Jaipur and Jaisalmer—means it's a blend of both eastern and western Rajasthan. At a short distance are attractions like Sardar Samand Lake, Rohetgarh and the beautiful temples of Osian, ideal for a getaway. In the surrounding villages, you can observe the daily life of the nature-worshipping Bishnoi tribe and watch potters and weavers at work. Jodhpur lies on the fringe of the Thar Desert, allowing for camel safaris, desert camps and luxury stays in sandstone forts. And yet, for those who wish to experience the city fully, it may be enough to wander aimlessly through its maze of gullies, soaking in the sights and sounds under a vast sky so blue that it seems to reflect the hues of the city below.

JANHAVI ACHAREKAR



WHAT TO SEE & DO: JODHPUR

Visit Mehrangarh Fort Rising 410ft above the city like something out of a fairy tale, **Mehrangarh Fort**—the majority of which was built in the 17th century by Maharaja Jaswant Singh—is at once colossal and delicate, imposing and organic. This is a monument whose dominance of the skyline feels well-earned. There's an excellent audio-guide to **Mehrangarh Museum**, which houses one of the best-kept collections of regal paraphernalia in the land (the palanquins are a particular highlight). While you're there make it a point to see the **Sheesh Mahal**, **Phool Mahal** and **Moti Mahal**—each is

distinct and breathtaking. (www.mehrangarh.org)

Go zip lining Mehrangarh Fort offers the opportunity for adventure seekers to try their hand at six different zip lines of varying lengths (the longest is 300m). **Flying Fox's** lines allow you to glide over gardens and battlements, giving you a unique vantage point from which to see the city. (www.flyingfox.asia)

Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park

This unique park was created to restore the ecosystem next to Mehrangarh Fort. Opened in 2006, the park has over 80 species of plants that can grow

in the rocky terrain here. The flourishing greenery offers a great opportunity to learn about succulents (plants that store water in their tissue) and other plants. (www.raojodhapark.com)

Take a tour of Umaid Bhawan Palace Museum

Touching down in Jodhpur affords a bird's-eye view of **Umaid Bhawan Palace**, the Beaux-Arts marvel constructed by Maharaja Umaid Singh in the 1930s and '40s, when the royal family finally decamped from Mehrangarh to live here. Now partly a hotel and partly a museum, it's a palace so surreally futuristic and so massive, you get the impression

that it could probably be seen from space.

Explore the area around the stepwell Toorji ka Jhalra

the stepwell on the edge of Mehrangarh, has been restored, and the water cleaned to revitalise the area. Now, cafés, shops and more are being set up around the ancient structure, giving tourists a chance to spend the day exploring this historic part of town. Its not all development, though: local daredevils continue to dive into the water, putting on a show for anyone who's watching, just as they've been doing for generations. (*Makrana Mohalla*)

Manganiyars perform in front of the Mehrangarh Fort





WHERE TO EAT & DRINK: JODHPUR

Baradari This partly al-fresco restaurant at RAAS Jodhpur, serving up a range of cuisines including Thai, Mediterranean and regional fare, sits in the shadow of the towering Mehrangarh Fort. But foodies heading here know the hero's not the view but what's on the plate, which is prepared using organic produce from the chef's own kitchen garden. (www.raasjodhpur.com)

Chokelao Mahal What's better than a meal served with a view of Mehrangarh Fort? Eating a meal sitting at Mehrangarh Fort with a bird's-eye view of the city to boot! This restaurant is situated within the fort's walls and is accessed by a special jeep that ferries you from the gate. And when in a precinct so royal, why not eat like a maharaja? Order the Silver Thali meal that comes in, well, as the name suggests, silverware. (0291 254 8790)

Nai Sarak In a city steeped in history, where so little has changed over time, Nai Sarak or New Street, transports you to the Jodhpur of yore. Shops like **Shri Arora Namkeen and Sweets** (098290 27042) and **Pokar Sweets** (098290 22200) are local landmarks where visitors and residents alike stop for their fill of piping hot samosas, pyaaz ki kachoris, saffron jalebis, kalakand, rabdi, and gulab jamun. Similarly, hole-in-the-wall establishments like **Surya Namkeen** (098296 30121), **Choudhary Namkeen** (094149 12798), **Chaturbhuj Rameshchandra** (094141 31765) and **Mohanji Mithaiwala** (093147 10760) are all on the city's A-list when it comes to

INSIDER Rahul Soni

WRITER/EDITOR/TRANSLATOR

"For me, as for perhaps most of its denizens, the best things about Jodhpur are the fort and the food—especially the mithai and the namkeen which are—and I do not make this claim lightly—possibly the best in the country.

First the namkeen. **Surya Namkeen** at Jalori Gate is most famous for its shahi samosa, which is quite superb, but its pyaaz ki kachori is the real star. For mirchi vadas, **Choudhary Namkeen** is quite rightly 'world famous in Jodhpur' and cartons of the stuff, I'm told, are regularly spirited away to foreign lands by Jodhpuris who can't live without it.

When it comes to sweets, **Chaturbhuj Rameshchandra** (Pungal Pada Road, Sarafa Bazar), is the place to go for its special gulab jamuns and kitti ki chakki, while **Mohanji Mithaiwala** at Ada Bazaar makes the best laddoos of all kinds, but especially its signature kind made with boondi, which is the stuff of legend.

For a while, there used to be lamp-lit, unplugged performances by Langa and Manganiyar folk musicians at the Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park on full moon nights, in the shadow of the fort and surrounded by nature. I'm told there are plans to revive these 'Chandni Concerts'. Until then, though, an **early morning tour of the Desert Rock Park** will have to suffice."

snacking on the go. Some, like Pokar, will even seal and pack goodies so you can carry what you love back home with you.

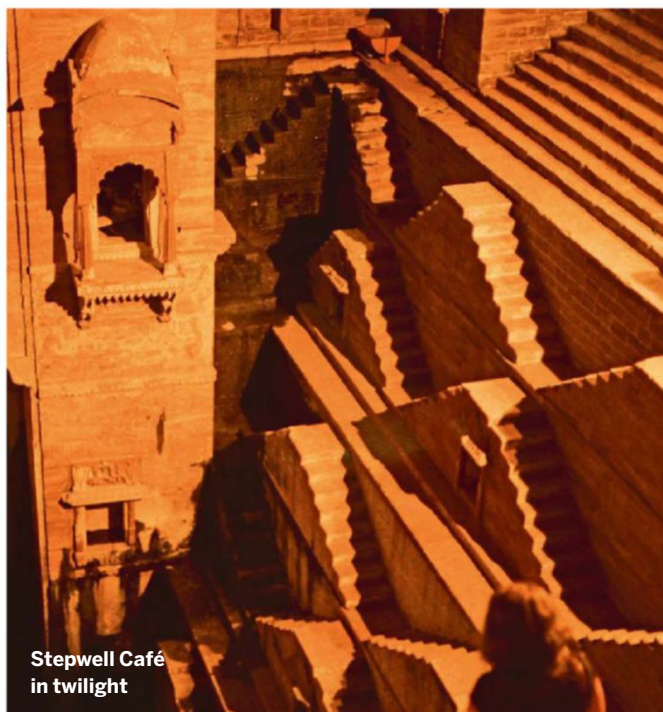
On The Rocks Near Ajit Bhawan, On The Rocks serves Indian fare. But the main reason to visit is the cosy bar, which has a decent wine list and good cocktails. The whisky sour comes specially recommended. (www.facebook.com/pages/On-The-Rocks-Jodhpur)

Risala Enjoy recipes that are handed down from royal bawarchis in a palace that still houses the descendants of Jodhpur's former rulers. From the Umaid Bhawan Palace, look out on to the fair lawns, or Mehrangarh in the distance, as turbaned durbans address you as 'hukum' and serve you decadent continental and Indian fare. (www.tajhotels.com)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Stepwell Café Part of the JDH Project which aims to restore the old, walled city of Jodhpur, the new Stepwell Café is the perfect place from which you can contemplate the city's beauty and history while sipping on a cappuccino. The walls are covered with old photographs of Rajasthan's royalty, and the Indo-European menu features comfort food. A happy combination of old and new, this is exactly the kind of spot Jodhpur has been lacking. (www.raasjodhpur.com)

Tashli A local favourite, Tashli serves excellent Rajasthani food. The laal maas, predictably, is one of the most ordered dishes. (www.karnihotels.com)





INSIDER

HH Maharaja Gaj Singh II of Marwar-Jodhpur

CHAIRMAN, MARUDHAR HOTELS

"As twilight descends on the historic Mehrangarh Fort, the rugged impregnable walls and the delicate palaces come alive with a **walk with the museum curator**. Let him take you on a tour of the collection and share his expertise and insights. Listen to the tales of sacrifice, of extraordinary events of adventure. Indulge in the easy joy of discussing a painting or discussing the incredible architecture. You won't regret the experience."

WHERE TO SHOP: JODHPUR

BAZAARS

Mochi Bazaar Called Mochi or shoemaker's bazaar, we can almost guarantee that you will leave here with not just footwear, but a whole new wardrobe. Start with the colourful, bejewelled mojris that are essential to any Rajasthani outfit. For every day use, choose the less-ornamented, simpler kind. Don't forget to stop for traditional lacquer bangles. For men, there are traditional Rajasthani achkans, sherwanis and other garments, so you are sure to find something here that catches your eye. Remember, don't be afraid of colour. (Korna House Road, Bhistiyon ka Bas)

Sadar Bazaar In the shadow of the clock tower, shop for local handicrafts that range from leheriyas to juttis and all kinds of spices. Haggling with the vendors is expected; consider it part of the experience. (Clock Tower Road)

SHOPS

★EDITOR'S PICK★
Anandaram Bhojaria Industries The dhurries (rugs) and wooden furniture here are the stuff of legends. Don't miss the intricately embroidered tents, either. (099289 81105)

Bibaji Churi Wale Abdul Sattar's family has been selling glass bangles for more than 100 years now. Don't be fooled by his humble-looking store; he has been decorating the wrists of generations of Rajasthani royalty. He stocks everything from decorative, wedding bangles to minimalist lacquer ones for daily wear. (098282 92232)

INSIDER
LIFESTYLE DESIGNER



Raghavendra Rathore

"**Sadar Bazaar** near the Clock Tower gives immense shopping pleasure to locals as well as visitors. The colourful but hectic bazaar consists of many narrow lanes lined with tiny shops. Look for tie-and-dye textiles, embroidered leather shoes, lacquerware, antiques, carpets and puppets. Gastronomic delights are aplenty—for the rustic traveller who understands and cherishes a spicy mix of food. **On The Rocks** is a good start. Surprisingly though, the food is light on the tummy. As you walk back to the new city, you cannot miss **Nai Sarak**. The small strip has myriad food stalls selling an incredible variety of fast food."

Gem and Jewel Palace A local institution, Gem and Jewel Palace is popular with local families looking for traditional Rajasthani jewellery, especially bridal wear. That doesn't preclude you from stepping in and seeing its other offerings, ranging from statement necklaces to delicate earrings and more. (0291 251 6666)

Jodhpur Jutti Samir, the owner of the store, stocks everything from simple to blinged-out numbers, this is your one-stop shop for classic Rajasthani footwear. (077929 12050)

Lalji Handicrafts Interested in some quality, traditional Rajasthani furniture and artifacts? Look no further. A lot of the interesting items on display here are of reclaimed vintage stock and you will want to buy everything in the store. If, somehow, you manage to resist the urge to shop, you'll still be in for an interesting afternoon of exploring. (0291 251 0887)

★EDITOR'S PICK★
Maharani Textiles and Handicrafts While this store has some smoother-than-silk stoles and feather-light pashminas, part of the reason people keep coming here is to be entertained by owner Mukesh Jain. His stories about Hollywood celebrity customers are as colourful as his brocade cushions. (093514 97944)

★EDITOR'S PICK★
Malani Impex Babulalji is the biggest exporter of handicrafts and fabrics in Jodhpur. Make a stop here for everything from scarves to rugs and everything in between—you'll find something for everyone. (088548 11111)

★EDITOR'S PICK★
Mohammed Tayeb Khan If you are in the market for beautiful, colourful Rajasthani fabric or saris, chances are you have already heard this name—several times. Tayeb, and his father Hassan before him, have popularised the leheriya

fabric. This is a result of a particular dyeing technique that results in characteristic wave-like patterns. The family has made a name for itself, making colourful turbans for Rajasthans' royals. (098295 48786)

Pukhraj Durry Udhog This weaver's co-operative is synonymous with colourful, brightly patterned dhurries. The village is located 20km outside Jodhpur, where residents use materials such as cotton, silk, goat and camel hair, jute and wool to weave these gorgeous dhurries on a loom. See how beautiful dhurries are made and experience rural Rajasthan first-hand. (094147 20724)

★EDITOR'S PICK★
The Step Well Square All-new stores from our favourite Made in India brands are popping up quickly in this restored area of the old city, including **Via Jodhpur, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Forest Essentials, PortsideCafé, Play Clan**, and more. **Nicobar**, the hip lifestyle brand will be joining the gang, as will other indie stores, in this recently restored part of town. (www.raasjodhpur.com)

VJ Home If you'd like to decorate your home with some of the beautifully understated furniture you have been admiring at your hotel, you must stop by this place. Chances are the exquisite wardrobe in your hotel room or that stone lampshade in the lobby wherever you are staying came from here. Using wood, iron and stone, the material palette reflects the earthy surroundings. (0291 272 1789)



PHOTOGRAPHY, ALAMY

Sadar Bazaar in
the shadow of the
clock tower

WHERE TO STAY: JODHPUR

Ajit Bhawan Bringing together verdant greenery, earthy tones and a royal history, Ajit Bhawan is a casual, fun retreat. Built in 1927, the hotel, which is about 4km away from Mehrangarh Fort, belongs to the family of well-known designer Raghavendra Rathore, and features both tents and rooms. With each room done up differently, they combine the hotel's heritage with modern comforts. Get dinner at one of the three restaurants or get a drink at J Bar before walking through the gardens to bed down for the night. Days are best spent lounging by its buzzing poolside. (www.ajitbhawan.com; doubles from ₹12,000)

Devi Bhawan In the 80-year-old residence of Thakur Ratan Singh and his family (who still live on the property), the rooms are set around a courtyard garden. Let the sun filter in through the trees as you get your morning coffee by the lotus-filled fountain before stepping out—either into the city for some sightseeing or to visit the nearby villages. The old-world charm of this heritage property is sure to transport you to the days when it was first built. (www.devibhawan.com; doubles from ₹2,500)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

RAAS Jodhpur Located right in the heart of the Old City, with amazing views of Mehrangarh Fort, RAAS Jodhpur is made up of four original buildings as well as three contemporary structures. Red, angular and breathtaking, the thoughtfully designed hotel features modern amenities while staying true to the city's colour and material palette. RAAS takes the best of India's heritage and fuses it with cutting-edge design and technology. A range of dining options and an Ila spa round out the offerings. (www.raasjodhpur.com; doubles from ₹17,500)

Ranbanka Palace Built for royalty, today, the hotel works with neighbouring villages to provide jobs and allow visitors to engage with local culture through nightly performances. The pool, spa and sauna make for great retreats after a day spent outdoors—or simply retire to one of the 90 rooms on the property. All combine old-world charm with modern amenities like wi-fi. Book one of the Jodhana Suites to be pampered like royalty. (www.ranbankahotels.com; doubles from ₹5,800)

INSIDER Chirag Nainani

FASHION DESIGNER



"My love for Rajasthan comes from desserts and food. In Jodhpur, **Arora ke samosa** (0291 262 1476), **Pungal Pada ke gulab jamun** (0291 262 7212) and gulab jamun ki sabzi and haldi ki sabzi from **Pokar Sweets** (098290 22200) are my three picks when it comes to street food."

INSIDER Mala Tandan

DIRECTOR, GREAVES TRAVEL



"The **Ahhichtragarh Fort** at Nagaur comes alive during the **Sufi Festival** (www.worldsacredspiritfestival.org), with its sultry music, whirling dervishes and candlelit forecourts. Book early and stay at the sumptuous Ranvas Nagaur. At Mehrangarh Fort, meet astro-palmist **SL Sharma** (094141 30200) who is available for consultations daily. Don't forget to visit **Bibaji Bangles** (0291 261 2504), which has the best glass bangles in Rajasthan. It is available in a tiny, congested shop close to the clock tower."

Fairfield by Marriott Jodhpur Hotel

In the heart of the city (across from the offices of the state High Court), this 136-key property is good spot for a business trip. With seven meeting rooms, about 7,000sq ft of event space and free wi-fi in all public areas, here's a good option for your next team-building or brainstorming session. (www.marriott.com; doubles from ₹6,500)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace One of the most luxurious estates in the country (and currently the sixth-largest private residence in the world), it's hard to beat Umaid Bhawan Palace when it comes to history and opulence. HH Maharaja Gaj Singh II still resides in part of this ancestral home; the rest comprises 42 suites and 22 rooms available for guests. All are spectacularly designed in an Art Deco style. But spend your afternoons drinking tea overlooking the landscaped gardens and enjoying the dance of peacocks. There's also a Jiva spa, marble

squash courts and billiards and pool tables. (www.tajhotels.com; doubles from ₹42,500)

WelcomHotel Jodhpur

An oasis of green and brown, the WelcomHotel Jodhpur sits on the edges of the Thar Desert. The 98 rooms (that include two independent villas), reflect modern sensibilities. Large lawns make the property ideal for working getaways or celebrations. For those looking to take a break, book a spa visit or sit down for a meal at one of the hotel's three restaurants. (www.itchotels.in; doubles from ₹8,500)

Vivanta by Taj - Hari Mahal

Ask the hotel to arrange a dinner amid the sand dunes, or take the opportunity to head into the countryside and interact with the locals. With this hotel as your base, you can easily explore the city and surrounding desert before returning to this six-acre retreat, which features a pool, three restaurants and a bar. (www.vivanta.tajhotels.com; doubles from ₹14,000)



PHOTOGRAPH: JONAS UNGER

Diva Dhawan at
RAAS Jodhpur

GET AWAY FROM: JODHPUR

Bal Samand Lake Palace and Garden Retreat

Just 5km outside the main city, this 17th-century palace has long been a favourite spot with Jodhpur's royal family. And it's really not hard to see why. Sprawled across 60 acres, **Bal Samand Lake Palace and Garden Retreat** (www.balsamandlakepalace.jodhanaheritage.com; doubles from ₹9,000) is a gorgeous red sandstone structure that sits pretty above the pristine lake with which it shares its name, and pomegranate orchards and gardens make up the rest of the private estate. The rooms feature bright, colourful interiors in the warm tones that Rajasthan is known for, but with facilities like a nine-hole mini golf course, horse carriage rides and trips to sand dunes on offer, you won't spend too much time indoors.

Chhatra Sagar Built on a dam by Thakur Chhatra Singh of Nimaj in the late 19th century, this a tented camp, that was set up by the Thakur's grandchildren. Over the years, the dam has transformed the area, with animals and birds drinking from the reservoir. To keep permanent construction to a minimum, the camp, which is 120km from Jodhpur, is made of hand-stitched tents that are supported by wooden frames. With 11 tents on the dam itself and two on the hill, there are uninterrupted views to look forward to. A seasonal property, **Chhatra Sagar** (www.chhatrasagar.com; doubles from ₹35,000) is open from October to March.

Ghanerao Castle Still used as a residence by the family that owns the castle, the property



INSIDERS Thakur Sidharth Singh and Thakurani Rashmi Singh

OWNERS, THE HOUSE OF ROHET

"Our village of Rohet is famous for its legendary kachoris and mirchi vadas sold by **Prahlad Kachoriwala** (Prahlad Chand Mangilal, National Highway 65). On any given day, you can see a traffic jam in front of his shop as people stop to enjoy these treats. Also worth sampling is **Gulab Ji's** (0291 32 264 550) decadent Gulab Halwa in the town of Pali. The city of Jodhpur is known for many things, especially the mawa ki kachori from **Janta Sweets** (0291 263 6666), the legendary rabri ka laddoo from **Jodhpur Sweets** (098282 43452) and the most delicious doodh ka pedas sold in the Old City at **Misri Laal's** (096809 21111). The **Shikaar Dinner at Mihir Garh** is reminiscent of a bygone era: you are taken out into the desert by camel cart and served a mouthwatering barbecue meal by firelight while dancers and musicians entertain you. You then head back, lying in camel carts, looking up at a glittering canopy of stars."

boasts 15 rooms spread across three different categories. No two rooms are alike, and each has a private verandah.

Ghanerao Castle (www.ghanerao.com; doubles from ₹3,200), which is about three hours from Jodhpur, includes a swimming pool and a restaurant, but chances are you'll want to step out and explore the region around the ancient structure as well. Ask to go crocodile-spotting in the nearby lake, or visit the Kumbhalgarh Fort, which is approximately 50km away. Picnics in the surrounding grasslands can also be organised, as can a visit to a camel-breeding farm, or a horseback safari for the adventurously inclined.

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Lakshman Sagar This resort, by the Sewara group, located 130km outside Jodhpur, is based on the principle of slow living—the hotel's 12 rooms takes inspiration from the region around it, and each has its own plunge pool. There's also a swimming pool, hewn out of a single rock, but you'll probably spend more time gazing out at the wildlife that come to Lakshman Sagar, the lake around which the property is built. Campfire dinners are made using local produce, that allows you to experience this area's traditions. **Lakshman Sagar** (www.sewara.com; doubles from ₹14,000) is happy to organise nature trails, romantic meals and more for guests.

Mihirgarh Owner Thakur Sidharth Rohet and his wife Thakurani Rashmi had a dream. They wanted to create a sand castle that paid tribute to its heritage and location, while



View from a tent
at Chhatra Sagar

GET AWAY

not compromising on comfort. The result—**Mihir Garh** (www.mihirgarh.com, doubles from ₹35,236), about 60km from Jodhpur, which houses nine suites, 1,700sq ft each, with plunge pools and fireplaces. Its interiors blend the royal with the rustic to delightful effect, such as luxurious bathtubs surrounded by mud walls and a beautiful pool that overlooks the rugged landscape. Go horseback-riding or birdwatching, explore the nearby village and attend in-house culinary workshops, lakeside picnics and bonfire-side barbecues, which recreate some of the magic of bygone hunts.

Osian Sand Dunes Resort and Camp

This 15-tent property lies within fortress-like brick walls. Once inside the ramparts, though, the camp opens up and features a restaurant and comfortable accommodation. Ask the property to set up a cultural evening in the rolling sands nearby, or take a jeep safari to look at the animals and birds that call the area around **Osian Sand Dunes Resort and Camp** (www.osianresortcamps.com; doubles from ₹6,000) home. The nearby village of Osian, that gives the area its name, is also worth visiting and exploring.

Ranvas Nagaur An 18th-century fort that's been converted into a hotel, **Ranvas Nagaur** (www.ranvasnagaur.com; doubles from ₹22,000) is housed in the palace that used to be home to Maharaja Bakhi Singh's many queens. With a pool and two restaurants for guests, you can choose to dine on Indian food or international favourites. A spa, hammam and library are in the works, while gardens and water features await, as you explore the palace. The 33 spacious rooms, though, ensure that you

INSIDER Nikhilendra Singh MANAGING DIRECTOR, RAAS JODHPUR



"I love **zip lining at Mehrangarh Fort**. It offers a jaw-dropping, breath-taking view of the walled city and the Rao Jodha Desert Park at impossible angles and high speed. Another favourite is slipping through the secret passage from RAAS and diving into the cool waters of the freshly rejuvenated 1740s **Toorji Ka**

Jhalra Stepwell on a hot summer's day.

Step Well Café is a new favourite of mine. It offers rarest of rare views, eclectic furniture from Indian furniture brand, Krea, wonderful music, and an exciting mix of old and contemporary Jodhpur imagery and ambience. My best new shopping experience is in **Stepwell Square**, a red sand-stone's throw from RAAS. It's the best of India with a distinct Jodhpur twist—from Hot Pink to Royal Blue, from Rajesh Pratap Singh, CMYK and PortsideCafe to Play Clan and Forest Essentials and Good Earth and Nicobar to RaSA and Andraab. I recommend buying a bespoke pair of jodhpurs and a pre-tied safa (turban) of many hues at Royal Blue."

will want to spend most of your time living as the ranis once did. Each room has its own living room and private courtyard amidst the maze-like fort.

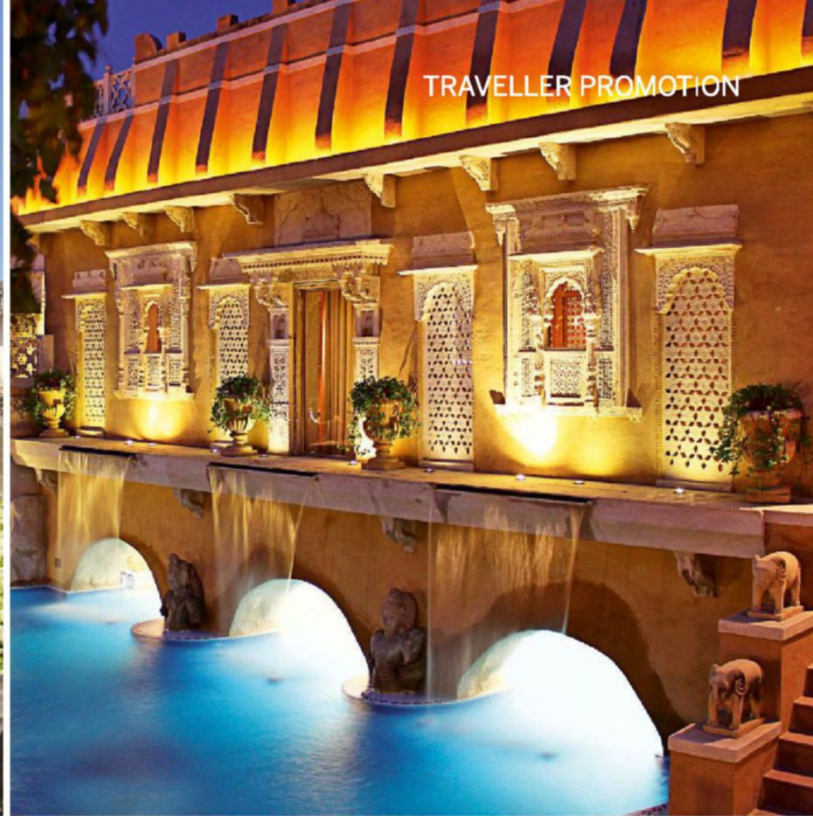
Rohet Garh In 1622, this stunning house was given to Thakur Dalpat Singh I as a reward for his courage in battle. The younger generations of the family, who still own it, have painstakingly restored it to make **Rohet Garh** (www.rohetgarh.com; doubles from ₹12,000) a luxury retreat without forsaking its heritage appeal. The 30 rooms including six suites, feature frescoes and bay windows, and peacocks dance on the property's manicured gardens. Guests can relish dinners by the pool while watching stunning performances by folk musicians, and can take part in workshops to master traditional local cuisine. A highlight is the equestrian programme, which allows guests to ride Marwari horses into the wilderness, for a chance to sight the area's famous blackbucks.

Sardar Samand Lake Palace

A former hunting lodge of the royal family and built by Maharaja Umaid Singh, this Art Deco building is a visual treat. **Sardar Samand Lake Palace** (www.sardarsamand.jodhanaheritage.com; doubles from ₹7,500) consists of 18 sprawling rooms and two restaurants, but chances are you'll want to spend more time outdoors. On the property, there are tennis and squash courts and a swimming pool, while those looking to explore the countryside can take the hotel up on its offer to organise a village safari, bird watching excursion or a day on the lake. Keep an eye out for the chinkaras and blackbucks that roam the region.



The traditional architecture of Mihir Garh



AJIT BHAWAN AND RAWLA NARLAI

Two intimate properties that allow you to experience the quiet luxury that Rajasthan is known for.

Both Ajit Bhawan and Rawla Narlai offer an immersive Rajasthani experience. While Ajit Bhawan is in Jodhpur, making it an ideal hotel from which to explore the old city, and its bazaars, architecture and history, Rawla Narlai offers an insight into rural Rajasthani life, albeit one that you can enjoy from a luxurious perch.

So in Narlai, there's the chance to go visit the village of Narlai and interact with the locals, which will give you a glimpse of the agriculture and cattle farming that sustains the local economy. Once you're back, take a horse ride through the rugged countryside, or get some rest to prepare you for a morning spent spotting leopards in the wild. Alternatively, visit the spa, to take care of your aches and pains, or just spend time in the hotel, which features stained glass, hand block prints and classical furnishing in each of the 32 rooms.

Over at Ajit Bhawan, you can choose to bed down in tents, rooms or types of Suites. Whichever room you choose, the hotels inviting pool - for when the scorching sun gets too much - and relaxing spa are a great way to spend the afternoon, or even an entire day. The hotel also features Ajit suites for those that want to experience life as the royals once lived it. When it comes to special experiences ask the hotel to set up a desert safari on camelback or jeep, which concludes with



AJAY UPADHYAY
GENERAL MANAGER,
AJIT GROUP OF HOTELS



GAREEMA GAUTAM
GENERAL MANAGER RAWLA NARLAI

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

Ajit Bhawan - The Ajit Suite experience includes cocktails in the Maharaja's private heritage room, which is still in use by the royal family. Following that, enjoy a rustic Rajasthani meal at Dhani, where local flavours delight the palate.

Rawla Narlai - Ask the hotel to set up a magical dinner at the village step well, or take tea by the lake - complete with a butler to accompany you and serve the refreshments.



dinner in the dunes at Osian, or then to truly feel like a royal, why not catch a polo match, before retiring to Jodhpur Café for a meal or J Bar a evening tippie.

Recreating all the understated luxury of a bygone era, both hotels live up to their aristocratic pedigree.

For more information on both hotels, visit www.ajitbhawan.com.

To make a reservation email reservations@ajitbhawan.com or call 0291 251 3333.



GET AWAY

SUJÁN's JAWAI

Nine tents make up the luxury campsite for **SUJÁN's JAWAI** (www.sujanluxury.com; doubles from ₹59,000), a seasonal camp, about three hours from Jodhpur, that is open from September to April. With a Wellness-under-Canvas tent, a dining tent and more, this isn't any ordinary campsite. Ask the property to arrange a drive through the rugged region for the chance to spot leopards, or make your way to the temples that are carved into the surrounding hillsides. As with all SUJÁN properties, the Royal Tented Suite comes with its own butler, vehicle and several other surprises, including a private heated swimming pool.



FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT JODHPUR

The newest entrant to Jodhpur's hotel scene has something for everyone.



**LOVESH SHARMA
HOTEL MANAGER**

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

Enjoy a sumptuous meal offering local delicacies and gastronomic delights at modern and contemporary Kava restaurant where you can savour a selection of handpicked wines and spirits.

For travellers visiting Jodhpur, either on work or for play, a comfortable hotel in which to unwind after a long day is a necessity. Fairfield by Marriott Jodhpur, which will be opening shortly, is the newest lodging in the city. Conveniently located close to the historic city centre, and directly opposite the new high court, Fairfield by Marriott Jodhpur is a cosy retreat.

The 136 well-appointed rooms are spread across three categories, including eight Junior Suites and one Fairfield Suite (which features a living room with dining area, in addition to a separate bedroom). Each hotel room is tastefully done-up and features a television, mini-fridge and of course Internet access (for those who need to catch up on work).

The hotel also features dining and drinking options in the form of Kava Grill and Lounge and Kava Bar. With live kitchens, a range of cuisines, both indoor and alfresco seating and two private dining rooms, Kava is where you can watch chefs prepare your food or alternately visit the neighbouring bar to kick back with a drink. At The Market, which is open 24/7, you'll find a range of packaged food and drinks that you can purchase at market price - as a

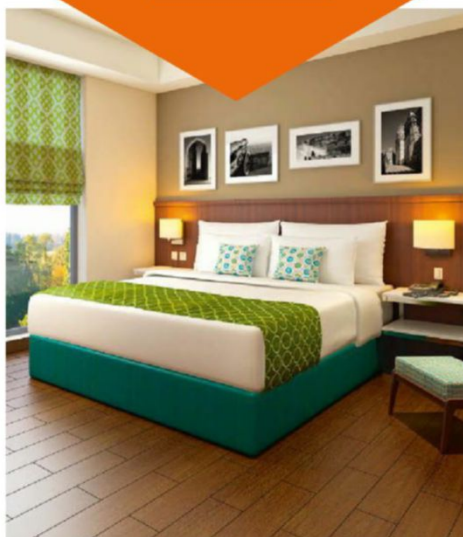


community pantry that is available to all hotel guests. If all that eating gets to you, make your way to the fitness centre to work out with a range of free weights and workout equipment to stay in shape.

Well-rested, well fed and fit, you'll be ready to take on the day, and explore everything that this multifaceted city has to offer.

**For more information visit
www.fairfieldjodhpur.com.**

**To make a reservation email
ffi.jdhfi.reservations@fairfieldinn.com
or call 0291 711 2222.**



FAIRFIELD™
Marriott
Jodhpur



UDAIPUR

THE CITY OF LAKES

SEE & DO ♦ EAT & DRINK ♦ SHOP ♦ STAY ♦ GET AWAY

PLUS INSIDER SECRETS

LAKSHYARAJ SINGH MEWAR ♦ BHUWNESHWARI KUMARI
♦ ARJUN SHAKTAWAT



THE CITY OF LAKES

Cities are changed by water. By their propinquity to the sea. By the rivers that run relentlessly through them. By the lakes carved deep into their chests. In Udaipur, everyone I speak to, immigrant or local, says this is what they love about the city — Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Swaroop Sagar. The lakes around which their lives cluster. It's the first thing I notice when I drive in, the wide expanse of blue, shimmering cleanly in the sun, and in the distance the gentle ochre Aravalis fading into the sky.

The former historic capital of the kingdom of Mewar, Udaipur lies sprawling in the fertile Girwa Valley of Rajasthan, about 655km south west of Delhi. The city was founded in 1559 by Maharana Udai Singh II following the final sacking of nearby Chittorgarh by the Mughal emperor Akbar. And arguably its most picturesque sections are contained within the walled city, hemmed by gates built at the time for protection against external attacks. Colonel James Tod, the East India Company's first political agent in the region, called it "the most romantic spot on the continent of India" in 1829, and happily, little has changed. Despite the strain of hectic tourism, where almost every building on the edges of the lakes is a hotel, shop, café or restaurant, the city of lakes — some call it Venice of the East — still oozes unbeatable charm.

Udaipur is liberally dotted with royal architectural delights. The gorgeous white marbled Lake Palace, built between 1743 and 1746 by Maharana Jagat Singh II, rises in the middle of Lake Pichola. To its north, lies the pretty Jag Mandir, or the Lake Garden Palace, constructed in 1551, and used by the royal family as their summer resort; you can now make your way over to the island palace for a sunset drink or meal. On the banks, the City Palace reclines over the hillside like a dream. Fusing Mughal and Rajasthani architectural styles, construction on the structure began in 1559, by Maharana Udai Singh II, and continued over four hundred years, added on to by various Ranas and Maharanas who lived and administered their kingdom from here. On the other side of the lake, perched on a hill, is the turreted Monsoon Palace, built in 1884, by Maharana Sajjan Singh, as a hunting lodge which offers a grand view.

Apart from gazing at beautiful buildings, the quintessential thing to do in Udaipur is wander

through the Old City. These winding alleys are lined with bustling shops selling silver, leather goods, batik and bandhani fabric, and local handicrafts. Watch an artist at work at one of the many "art schools"; pick up a beautifully carved marble souvenir, sign up for a cooking class, or watch the world go by from a charming coffee shops. The Old City is also home to many lovely temples — from the busy Jagdish Mandir in the heart of town, to the quiet Hanuman Temple at Hanuman Ghat, along the water's edge, to Maaji Mandir at Ambrai Ghat from where you'll see stunning views across Lake Pichola.

Beyond the Old City lie a plethora of delights. Traditional markets selling pottery, nagra (camel skin) slippers, puppets, pichvai art and toys spill around the city. There is also a profusion of sizzlingly tempting street food on offer — crisp jalebis at Delhi Gate, spicy kachoris near Asthal Mandir, hot aloo parathas at Gulab Bagh, homemade samosas near Thokar Chauraha. As with most places in Rajasthan, local culinary fare in Udaipur includes mainly mutton dishes like laal maas, cooked to creamy, tender perfection. But there are also wonderful vegetarian thali options to be found. The bati is a must-try; these small balls of wheat flour dough, baked in a tandoor, are meant to be crumbled into dal or meat gravy, and the sweet version is had as a palate cleanser before you begin on the rest of your scrumptious meal.

Come winter, November through to February the city springs alive with events including the World Music Festival, with performers from around the globe, the Shilpgram utsav with hundreds of participating artisans from all across the country, and the Mewar Festival to welcome spring.

Don't forget to take a trip on one of the lakes, drifting on a barge or boat. The favoured time is sunset, when the water turns liquid gold, but early mornings also summon lovely misty vistas. There is nothing quite like being on the water, with a changing view, watching the stars litter the sky at twilight, and the lights reflecting, glimmering on the lake. It is what makes Udaipur unique. It is what will make you wish to return. *JANICE PARIAT*

Opposite page: **women performing within the sprawling City Palace walls.** Previous page: **a view of the Taj Lake Palace hotel in the middle of Lake Pichola**





WHAT TO SEE & DO: UDAIPUR

City Palace Museum Built over a period of 400 years beginning 1559, the City Palace sprawls over a lakeside hill. A section of it has been converted into the City Palace Museum, and more fascinating than its exhibits—furniture, fans, toys, kitchen utensils—is the building itself, with its unexpected courtyards, graceful arches, and rooms resplendent with intricate thekri (mosaic glass) work. (0294 241 9021).

Cycle ride around Fateh Sagar Rent a cycle from the shop just beyond the gates of The Lalit Laxmi Vilas Palace, and spend

a morning cycling around Fateh Sagar Lake. Head out before 9am, when it's for pedestrians and cyclists, only.

Bagore ki Haveli This restored rambling old haveli, by Lake Pichola, in the midst of the Old City was built by Amar Chand Badwa, an 18th-century prime minister of Mewar. Watch light reflect off the water and dapple the walls, find a hidden turret room overhanging the lake, and wander through the museum filled with an assortment of display items, including swings, furniture, thekri work and bed chambers. Stay on for the

evening light and puppet show. (Gangori Ghat)

Boat ride What's the point of being by the lake and not in it? If you're not brave enough to jump off Hanuman Ghat straight into the water, like the local boys do, hire a boat to take you around Lake Pichola. There are a number of options along the waterfront, from the more official to the informal, but they'll all take you to the primary sights, including Jag Mandir, Lake Palace, and the City Palace. The best time to go? Undoubtedly at sunset, when blue changes to gold.

Jagdish Temple Completed in 1651 by Maharana Jagat Singh, this towering multi-terraced temple forms the most prominent structure of the Udaipur Old City skyline. Stroll around outside, admiring the intricate carved stone sculptures on the walls, or head inside to the inner sanctum for a moment of quiet prayer. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Ambrai Ghat This is the loveliest place to spend an evening outdoors in the city. If you don't mind being amidst local couples canoodling and posing for selfies, head to Ambrai Ghat



A view of this city seen from the City Palace Museum complex



for the most splendid panoramic views, especially at sunset, as Lake Pichola turns liquid gold and the City Palace looks like a dream. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

ALL NEW Lets Trip Cycle Tours

Run by Dushyant Singh Jhala and Bhawani Singh Chandela (who quit their corporate jobs to do this), it offers the experience of pedalling around several cities in Rajasthan. You can take a Short Tour, which may be a sunrise ride around the city, or for the more adventurous there are overnight tours, including one that takes you through the Aravalis—with your stay for the night at a Deogarh campsite. From adventure jaunts to languid trails, you can tailor your trip as per your fitness and experience levels. (www.letstrip.in)

Vintage and Classic Car Collection Museum Perfect for a lazy afternoon ramble, this small museum showcases a collection of shiny vintage vehicles that belonged to the

Maharanas of Mewar that were used to ferry persons of state and celebrity. Ogle at the glorious 1938 and 1939 Cadillacs, the 1934 Rolls Royce Phantom II, and the cute 1950s Morris Minor. (www.eternalmewar.in)

Monsoon Palace Accessed by a winding, steeply sloping road through Sajjan Garh Wildlife Sanctuary (where leopards roam free), this turreted white marble structure, once called Sajjan Garh, was built in 1884 by Maharana Sajjan Singh as a hunting lodge and grand viewpoint. Now run by the state government, different parts of the palace are in varying states of disrepair, but the views are nothing less than breath-taking. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Above from left: **cyclists enjoy a trip through the Aravali hills organised by Lets Trip Cycle Tours; a pichvai by Pichvai Tradition & Beyond.** Opposite page: **a restored room in the City Palace Museum**

INSIDER Vinayak Bhandari

OWNER, BEYOND SQUARE



Vinayak Bhandari's family has been in the home interior business for 11 years, and have recently opened **Beyond Square**, an expansive multi-storey space dedicated to furniture and decorative art objects. He's a pichvai enthusiast—explaining that these paintings originally hung

as backdrops to Srinathji's idol in the Nathdwara temple, 48km from Udaipur. His collection includes fabulously rich canvases by Raja Ram Sharma, famed local artist, as well as more modern renditions by artists such as Nitin and Nilesh Sharma, who also work with natural stone colours but use traditional motifs—cows, peacock feathers—in largely abstract designs. Apart from local cafés that dot the Old City, his favourite place to dine is the open-air **Sheesh Mahal** at **The Leela Palace Udaipur**. Here, at one of a limited number of tables, you may sip your wine and feast on a thali of regional fare, although you're likely to be distracted from your (albeit excellent) bati-dal and lal maas by the glittering view.





WHERE TO EAT & DRINK: UDAIPUR

1559 AD This charming old-world villa is a great hang-out, with a coffee shop and splendid bakery. The indoor and al fresco dining options are also well-regarded at this lounge-like restaurant named after the year Udaipur was founded by Maharana Udai Singh II. (www.1559ad.com)

Charcoal by Carlsson If you'd like to take a break from local Rajasthani fare, head to Charcoal by Carlsson for all things grilled. They're very accommodating, willing to grill even vegan options for you on their barbecue and tandoor. There's only a few tables at this terrace restaurant, so call ahead; book the balcony for a romantic evening or a family mattress for groups of up to eight. (www.charcoalpb.com)

Garden Restaurant A thali-only restaurant set within the classical club-like environs of the Garden Hotel, the eatery offers an excellent seasonal vegetarian thali (sans garlic and onion). The food is fresh, hearty and wholesome. (www.hrhhotels.com)

Hotel Hilltop The terrace here is the perfect spot for a sundowner. As the name suggests, Hotel Hilltop is set atop Ambavgarh Hill, the highest point in Udaipur, and overlooks Fateh Sagar, Swaroop Sagar and the sprawl of town. It doesn't matter what you drink, the view will leave you giddy. (www.udaipurhotelhilltoppalace.com)

Jheel's Ginger Coffee Bar & Bakery Perched like a bird over Lake Pichola, this no-frills café makes a super range of coffees and chocolate shakes.



The thali at The Leela Palace Udaipur's Sheesh Mahal

Making it the best place for a little downtime with a book, and vast views over the lake. (www.jheelguesthouse.com)

Millet's of Mewar Said to be the city's first dedicated health food restaurant, Millets of Mewar focuses on being creative, authentic, and sustainable. Their ingredients are locally-sourced, organic, and their menu includes vegan and gluten-free options. They're known for their chappati pizzas, so why not try one? (www.milletsofmewar.com)

Palki Khana Drop by this lovely Art Nouveau café, at the Shiv Niwas Palace, just before you embark on a tour of the palace's museum, or after, when you need to rest. The coffee is splendid, and the food

menu is European influenced, contemporary and eclectic. (www.hrhhotels.com)

Royal Repast Run by the Bedla family, famed for their culinary expertise over years of hosting royal events, the restaurant is located within a plush, tastefully decorated home with an airy courtyard. The food, too, is delectable—light and tangy murg dahi booththa, creamy, gently spiced mutton mitti ki handi, and rich makkai ka meetha (ground corn cooked in milk and ghee) to sweeten your palate. (www.royalrepast.com)

Sheesh Mahal Located in the Leela Palace Udaipur, this is a great spot for a romantic meal or just to gaze out at Lake Pichola's serene waters while

indulging in a traditional feast. Get the thali to remove the guesswork from your order. The restaurant is open only for dinner. (0294 670 1234)

Tribute The loveliest thing about this restaurant is its waterfront setting, from where you can birdwatch, as migratory avifauna traverse Swaroop Sagar, the lake near which the restaurant is located. Don't be puzzled by the horse motifs around the restaurant; it's a "tribute" to Chetak, the legendary horse of Maharana Pratap, the 16th century ruler of Mewar. (www.tributeudaipur.com)

Udai Art Café The café is run by the charming Meropi Mitrou, a photographer from Greece, who first visited Udaipur in 2011, and then moved here in 2014, leaving home and family behind. Serving some of the best coffee in town, with crepes that are fresh and sizzling, this is the kind of place where conversation flows freely between tables. (www.udaiartcafe.com)

Upre This popular lakeside restaurant by 1559 AD's Arjun Shaktawat, is popular with both locals and tourists alike. At the Lake Pichola Hotel, it serves a great kebab platter. Also recommended are the Rajasthani specialities that Udaipur is known for. (www.lakepicholahotel.com)

Wok by the Lake Head to Wok by the Lake at the Radisson Blu Udaipur Palace Resort and Spa for everything Chinese, Thai, Burmese and Indonesian. Their signature dishes include sui mui and Thai curry. Enjoy the fine food and immaculate service. (www.radissonblu.com)



1559 AD AND UPRE

Two restaurants that bring together traditional hospitality and flavours with an international vibe.

Both 1559 AD and Upré are at the tip of Udaipur insiders tongues, when it comes to eating out in the lake city. It might be because of how skilfully the restaurants marry world cuisine with local specialities, or maybe its their location - while 1559 AD (which is named for the year Udaipur was founded by Maharana Udai Singh) is housed in a standalone art nouvelle property, Upré is on the grounds of Lake Pichola Hotel and offers breath-taking views of the lake and the city beyond it, glistening in the twilight as you enjoy your meal. It might be the lal maas and Rajasthani specialities that have won over tourists and locals alike at Upré, or the continental fare at 1559 AD, the first standalone restaurant in the city to garner praise. It could be that Arjun Shaktawat; the Les Roches School of Hotel Management graduate that runs both the restaurants manages to effortlessly combine his international experience with traditional Rajasthani hospitality.



**ARJUN SHAKTAWAT
OWNER**

◆ MUST TRY DISHES ◆

At 1559 AD, the roasted quail and Ker Sangri, while at Upre you must order the dhungaar maas and khargosh ka keema.



Whatever it may be, both restaurants have succeeded in making a name in a city that enthusiastically blends its rich heritage with opulent luxury. When you finally do make the trip, don't forget to order the roasted quail and ker sangri at 1559 AD. At Upré - Shaktawat himself recommends dhungar maas and khargosh ka keema. You'll leave an insider, ready to pass on the recommendation to the next person travelling to the lake city.

For more information visit

www. 1559ad.com,

1559AD, P.P. Singhal Marg, Udaipur

or call 073570 41559

Upré, Lake Pichola Hotel, Udaipur

or call 091161 73737



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

INSIDER Arjun Shaktawat

HOTELIER AND RESTAURATEUR, LAKE PICHOLA HOTEL



Shaktawat tells us that his favourite out-of-city venue is **Badi Lake**, 12 kilometres away and accessible by bus or taxi. He's a keen swimmer, and recommends taking a plunge in the lakes only in September, or early October, when the water's fresh and flowing.

For Shaktawat, an evening out would involve a movie at **Ashoka Cinema** (093522 88888), a meal at **Wok by the Lake** (0294 305 0000) at the Radisson Blu Udaipur Palace Resort and Spa, and on festive occasions, a visit to **Jagdish Temple**. This graceful 17th-century structure, built by Maharana Jagat Singh, stands tall on a raised terrace embellished with ornate, intricate carvings. Local delights, Shaktawat says, include **Jheel's Ginger Coffee Bar & Bakery** and **Jaiwana Bistro Lounge** (099283 93339) where you can kick back with a cup of coffee.

A view of Upré, a restaurant at the Lake Pichola Hotel

HOTEL AMETH HAVELI AND AMBRAI RESTAURANT

A stunning heritage property on the banks of Lake Pichola makes for an ideal retreat, with a restaurant that serves up local favourites.

With 20 distinctive rooms across 3 categories, Amet Haveli offers intimate luxury for those that want to immerse themselves in Rajasthan's history. Built by Maharana Jagat Singh between 1734 and 1752, the property belongs to the royal family of Amet, which is about 100km from Udaipur. The historic haveli has played host to painter Raja Ravi Verma, among other well-known names.

Today, the property boasts of a restaurant, Ambrai that is popular with guests, tourists and locals alike. From the kitchen, which is helmed by chef Bharat Singh, be sure to order the fiery lal maas for meat-eaters and Ambrai special paneer (which is cooked in three different gravies before being presented together) for vegetarians. For those hoping to sample something from the tandoor, the quails and pankhudi kebab are our pick, to be washed down with Chandra Haas or Keshar Kasturi. Those not looking for a specially made drink are sure to find classic cocktails and great spirits on the bar menu.

For those looking for a quieter experience, the hotel can organise a private meal for a couple or a family in the garden, from which you can look out at City Palace and Gangaur Ghat. Lush gardens, a swimming pool and traditional architecture transport you to another era, but don't worry, your room



boasts modern amenities like a television, and for those looking to unwind, a mini-bar. While some rooms boast four poster beds and delicately arched windows, each has its own distinct interior that draws on Rajasthan's rich heritage.

Ideal for everything from family holidays, to romantic getaways, the building's rich history and stunning views make it suitable for any kind of holiday. For those planning a trip, the haveli's lakeside location guarantees a cooling breeze even during the summer, but October to March is the best time to make a trip.

For more information visit

www.amethaveliudaipur.com

To make a reservation

email mail@amethaveliudaipur.com

or call 0294 243 1085



RAWAT PRABHU PRAKASH SINGH
OWNER

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

The Badi Mahal Special Dinner, which sees a table set up under glass inlay jharoka overlooking Lake Pichola is not to be missed.



WHERE TO SHOP: UDAIPUR

MARKETS

Bada Bazaar Spilling down from the Jagdish Temple junction, Bada Bazaar is lined with silver and camel bone jewellery shops, fabric stores from where you can pick up local batik and bandhani saris, and a host of other colourful offerings. Haggle with vendors for a souvenir, or take a stroll through here in the evenings for some local colour. (Near Jagdish Chowk, Bohrwadi)

Bapu Bazaar This market, abuzz with sellers and shoppers, is a convenient place to pick up handicrafts and souvenirs. While it offers the usual assortment of goods, it also has a wide range of local pottery items. If you're peckish, stop for some of the market's famous street food, and try the gol gappas for sure. You can thank us later. (Jawahar Nagar, Nada Khana)

Chetak Circle The area around the statue of (riderless) Chetak, the legendary steed of Maharana Pratap, is a great place to shop for an array of handicrafts, jewellery, toys, and puppets. If you're a fan of pottery, this is a good place to seek out pretty pots, plates and vessels. Mandi Bazaar, behind Chetak Circle, is famous for its freshly ground spices and herbs. (Palace Road)

SHOPS

Beyond Square It's an expansive multi-storey space dedicated to furniture and decorative art objects. Take your pick from an exquisite traditional pichvai painting, a table inlaid with marble or thekri work, a throne made



A solid silver swing for sale at Beyond Square

with agate, or a pair of chairs made of solid silver. Each floor is dedicated to various aspects of interior decoration, including puja room accessories. (www.beyondsquare.co.in)

Bougain Villaea Here's an art gallery run by Tanuja and Bhupesh Kavadia, spread over two airy floors and a bamboo sheltered garden lined with sculptures. Filled with an array of artwork by mostly contemporary Rajasthani artists including Basudeb Biswas, Madan Meena, and Lalit Sharma, there's enough to peruse. (www.bougainvillaea.co.in)

Indian Spice Box This little shop is packed to the gills with splendid spices, various types of tea leaves, and delicious incense and oils. As a treat, sign up for one of their cooking classes (for individuals and groups), where you'll learn to make a variety of Indian vegetarian meals. (www.spicebox.co.in)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Pichvai Tradition & Beyond

Pichvai is a traditional art form that depicts scenes from the life of Lord Krishna. Pichvai Tradition & Beyond founder Payal Singhal works with artisans, both traditional and modern, to create collectibles. (www.facebook.com/PichvaiTraditionandBeyond)

Sadhna Emporium Founded in 1988, Sadhna is the crafts outlet for Seva Mandir, an NGO working with rural and tribal people in Rajasthan. This emporium in particular provides income to women, selling their hand-woven and hand-printed textiles as bed covers, table linen, bags, dupattas, cushion covers and more. (www.sadhna.org)

Sandouk, The House of Fashion

If you're in Udaipur with a bit of time, head to this famous tailoring destination, to get measured and suited up.

They're immensely dedicated, and are known for the quality of their finishing; order customised shirts, bandhgallas, poushaks. You won't be disappointed. (098294 10069)

Shilpgram Translating literally into Craftsmen's Village, this living museum is located three kilometres west of Udaipur. Here you may watch traditional artists at work, and, in the last ten days of December, attend their fabulous mela, where hundreds of craftspeople and performers gather from all over the country. (www.shilpgram.in)

The House of Things This gorgeous shop, founded by Astha Khetan, offers a carefully curated collection of interior objects, table linen, jewellery, and quirky curios. Choose from delicately embroidered cushion covers, vintage boxes and contemporary, chic tableware. (www.thehouseofthings.com)

INSIDER Ananya Mehta

ART CURATOR

Ananya Mehta likes to stroll around the city's three lakes—Pichola, Fateh Sagar, and Swaroop Sagar—in the evenings with her young son, Kabir. He's the main reason she and her husband recently moved back to Udaipur from the capital—"away from the pollution, the traffic, to this..."

She plans to start an art initiative that blends the contemporary with the region's rich craft traditions. Until that materialises, she recommends a visit to **Shilpgram**, a living art museum, to watch artists at work, and also attend one of their numerous festivals. Within the city, she would send you to **Bougain Villaea**, an art gallery.



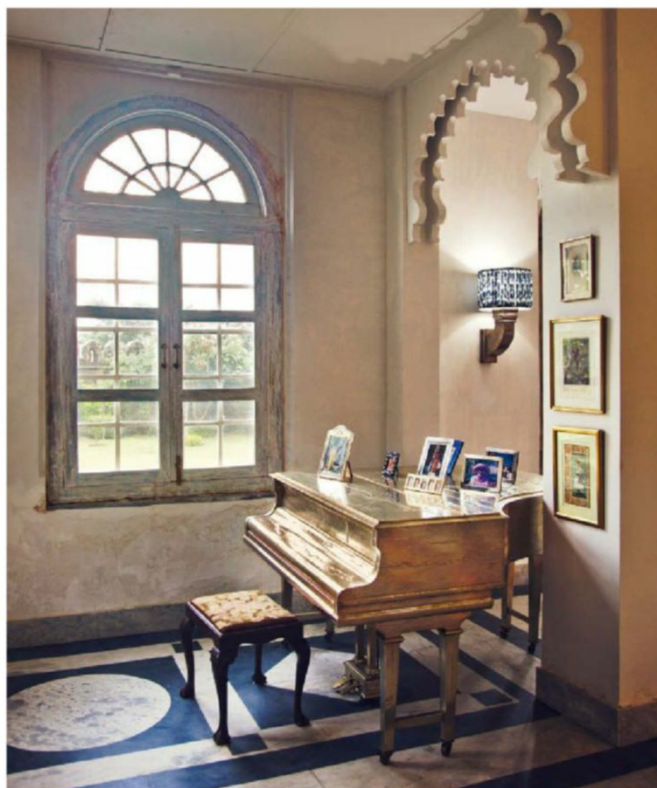
WHERE TO STAY: UDAIPUR

Amet Haveli Built during the rule of Maharana Jagat Singh II between 1734-1752 (who also built the Lake Palace), Amet Haveli was designed along the lines of the Mughal gardens of the Agra Fort and the Red Fort in Delhi. Its 20 rooms are beautifully elegant with heavy dark wood furniture, cool whites and bright pops of colour. A romantic dining experience awaits one at Ambrai, which overlooks Lake Pichola. (www.amethaveliudaipur.com; doubles from ₹4,000)

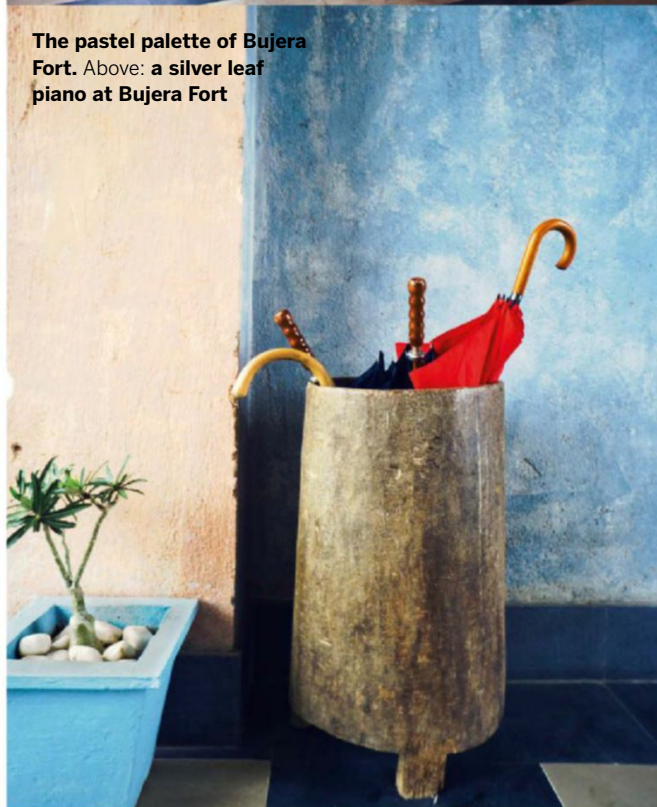
Boheda Palace Close to Lake Pichola, and in the Old City, this tasteful hotel is housed in a heritage style property, and is within walking distance of most major tourist sights. The 16 rooms are well appointed. Aside from the room service and massages there's also (very excitingly) an astrologer on request, as well as painting and cooking classes. (www.hotelbohedaipalace.com; doubles from ₹3,000)

Bujera Fort This might be a newly built "fort", which opened in September 2015, but the place exudes rustic charm, and a sense of having been there forever. The focus is on natural materials like wood and stone, with plenty of airy spaces, water features, hidden nooks to relax in, and a splendid organic garden. Explore Udaipur, 20 minutes away, or lock yourself away in this luxurious resort for a well-deserved break from the world. (www.bujerafort.com; doubles from ₹24,200)

Chunda Palace This cheesecake confection is all arched windows and pastel domes. A former Mewar nobleman's house, Chunda Palace now plays host to 46 rooms including 16 suites.



The pastel palette of Bujera Fort. Above: a silver leaf piano at Bujera Fort



Two restaurants, a bar and a pool round out the offerings at the centrally located property. (www.chundapalace.com; doubles from ₹12,500)

Lake Pichola Hotel Grazing the waters of Lake Pichola, this family-run hotel, set in a haveli is one of the oldest in Udaipur. It exudes charm and prettiness, with elegant arches, overhanging bougainvillea, and splendid views across the lake, from the ground floor verandah, or from Upré, their fantastic rooftop restaurant. (www.lakepicholahotel.com; doubles from ₹6,920)

Lake View Villa This gorgeous premium homestay is located on the banks of Fateh Sagar, set within a former royal residence. Run by Meena Singh, and her husband Mahesh Pratap Singh, Lake View Villa has six rooms (each with a balcony), and a charming casual chic air. (www.lakeviewvilla.in; doubles from ₹1,800)

The Lalit Laxmi Vilas Palace Near Fateh Sagar, The Lalit Laxmi Vilas Palace is housed within a former royal palace built in 1911. The place has been meticulously restored, blending modern conveniences with quiet splendour. Don't miss the royal salute performed every evening by a bagpiper band, then head for a private dinner at the Maharana Courtyard. (www.thelalit.com; doubles from ₹9,700)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

The Leela Palace Udaipur This luxury hotel on the banks of Udaipur's Lake Pichola, fits in with the city's low slung skyline. Two restaurants and a bar, in addition to the ESPA spa and salon are

INSIDER Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HRH GROUP OF HOTELS

As the scion of the royal family that once ruled Mewar, Lakshyaraj Singh is a well-known name and face of the city. It's no surprise then that his recommendations manage to combine local favourites with plush finds.

For those looking for freshly squeezed juices, "Udaipur has an answer tucked away inside Suraj Pol. You have to get to **Chhana-Manna Juice Centre** (098299 47658)." The juices here are fresh and generously portioned. Open through the day, the evenings are when the numbers swell.

Cool off with **Gujarat Ice Cream** (0294 242 0203), which packs a delightful desi punch. Cross the busy Bapu Bazar Road to get to the

parlour. "The badam anjeer, kesar pista ice creams and kulfis are a hit with palates of all ages," he says.

"If there is a hidden talent, or a gem of a tailoring talent in Udaipur, it is undoubtedly **K & R Tailors**" (098878 57383). Singh adds, "They have a good selection of local and foreign branded textiles, but it is their tailoring prowess that gives them an edge over the rest."

When it comes to wooden furniture, if you're looking for great designs head to the **Liberty** (099830 55555), run by Naresh Manwani.

Shikarbadi Deer Park (0294 258 3202), an integral part of **Hotel Shikarbadi** (www.hrhhotels.com), is teeming with wildlife even

though it is just a ten-minute drive from the hustle-bustle of the city. Says Singh, "It is a delight when the spotted deer, nilgais and long-tailed macaques can be seen in their natural environs. Long and winding nature walks have been laid out, and for those with more days on hand, the hotel lays out its red, or should I say green, carpet for you."

Traversing Udaipur's warren of narrow streets, you're bound to spot temples regularly. Singh recommends a visit to the **Shri Eklingji Temple** (Eklingji Village, Rajasthan), that is a 30-minute drive from the city. There, you will see a sea of fresh flowers awaiting the devotees who throng the centuries-old temple.

Finally, if you're looking for a short escape from the city, **Kumbhalgarh** is one of Rajasthan's best kept secrets. If you ask Singh, "Its 36km-long wall is unbroken and is second only to China's Great Wall. One gets to see the wall long before you reach Kumbhalgarh, along the winding mountain roads." Built by Rana Kumbha, you have to visit the fort to realise how strategically it is located and how tough it must've been for those trying to conquer it. If you're looking for a getaway, stay at nearby **The Aodhi** (www.hrhhotels.com; doubles from ₹11,000), with 26 rooms and multiple dining options, and "soak in the spirit of valour that is Kumbhalgarh" says Singh.



WHERE TO STAY



to be found on the property. With 80 rooms including eight suites, you'll feel like modern-day royalty. (www.theleela.com; doubles from ₹36,875)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

The Oberoi Udaivilas Built over 50 acres across the sloping banks of Lake Pichola, Oberoi Udaivilas is an architectural achievement with its canal-linked lakes, and labyrinth of interconnecting domes and corridors. The views are precious, across their gardens and beyond, and are perfect for al fresco dining or your evening aperitif. (www.oberoihotels.com; doubles from ₹40,000)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

RAAS Devigarh Overlooking the village of Delwara, 26km outside of Udaipur, RAAS Devigarh provides modern luxury with a royal touch. This restored palace is minimalist yet visually arresting. Dining options abound, and an ILA spa on the property pampers. (www.raasdevigarh.com; doubles from ₹17,200)

Taj Lake Palace Rising out of Lake Pichola like a dream, the Taj Lake Palace was built by Maharana Jagat Singh II in 1746. The service is still fit for royalty, and the décor gorgeously tasteful both inside and out. Stay in one of the 83 rooms, avail of

their butler service and never leave. (www.tajhotels.com; doubles from ₹39,600)

Trident Udaipur Escape to the verdant greenery of the Trident Udaipur which is spread over 43 acres on the banks of Lake Pichola. The hotel is ideal for a retreat with the children (they have a kids club for when you want to visit the spa), or a romantic getaway. (www.tridenthotels.com; doubles from ₹11,000)

Udai Bagh Owned by the Udai Kothi family, this is a garden tented camp (with the addition of newly-built cottages), surrounded by the Aravalis and blessed by a

river that flows at its periphery. Take a picnic on its quiet banks, before making it back to the rush of the city, which is a mere ten minutes away. (www.udaiabagh.com; doubles from ₹7,000)

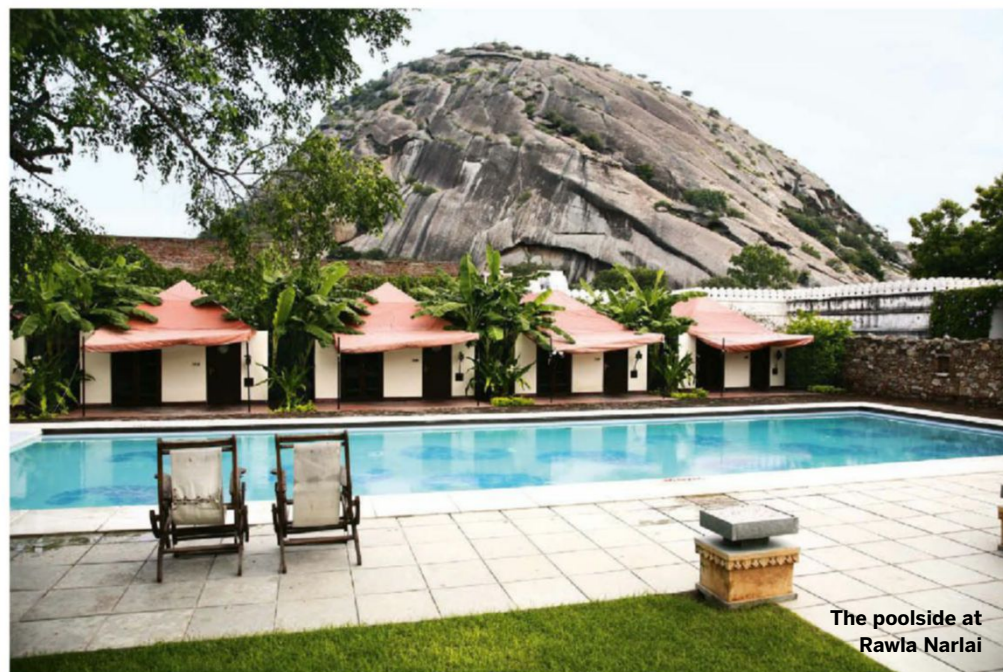
Udai Kothi Run by the lovely Bhuvneshwari Kumari, who opened this hotel in 2001, Udai Kothi offers pristine rooms, a gorgeous garden, and rooftop pool and restaurant to the most discerning of travellers. Make friends with Kumari's dachshund, Tope Singh, and basset hound, Ladoo Singh. While there, book the hotel's Barge Bahadur for a sunset sail around Lake Pichola. (www.udaikothi.com; doubles from ₹6,500)

GET AWAY FROM: UDAIPUR

Chhitorgarh It's a UNESCO World Heritage site, and well worth the trek from Udaipur. About 120km away, and located on the banks of the rivers Gambhiri and Berach, the historic town is home to India's largest fort complex. Stay at the nearby **Fort Begu** (www.fortbegu.com; doubles from ₹10,000), where you can look out at peacocks from your room, which incidentally feature mosaic mirror work on the walls, and colourful glass panels in the arched windows.

Kumbhalgarh Another UNESCO World Heritage site where you can try your hand at ziplining through the hilly terrain. About 85km from Udaipur, the nearby Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary is home to some fascinating creatures—hyenas, sloth bears, leopards, the rare chinkara and numerous birds. Night drives here are truly magical. Your base while in the area should be **Fateh Safari Lodge** (www.fatehsafarilodge.com; doubles from ₹16,000 for a minimum two-night stay), a family-owned boutique hotel, for the stunning scenery around it. The 35-room property, built 3,600ft above sea level, provides uninterrupted views of the Aravali range, which give way to the charming village of Narlai.

Mount Abu/Dilwara Jain Temples Billed as Rajasthan's only hill station, Mount Abu is home to a wildlife sanctuary (where you can spot civets, porcupines, sambhar and more) as well as multiple Jain temples. Stay at **Palace Hotel, Bikaner House** (www.palacehotelbikanerhouse.com; doubles from ₹10,550), a



The poolside at Rawla Narlai

heritage palace that was built in 1893 by Sir Swinton Jacob. Now a hotel with 33 rooms, there's a lot to look forward to after a day spent in the area. Come back for a game of tennis on the two courts, or try your hand at table tennis and board games. Dinner is either a traditional Rajasthani meal or Continental fare. Rooms are spacious, with oodles of charm and modern amenities.

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Narlai Planning a visit to the Chaturmukha Jain Temple in Ranakpur, on the Udaipur-Jodhpur Highway? About two hours away from Udaipur, and close to the Ranakpur temples in the town of Narlai—is **Rawla Narlai** (www.rawlanarlai.com; doubles from ₹8,000)—a heritage hotel that was once the hunting lodge of Jodhpur's royal family. With 32 rooms, the hotel's pastel walls and mirrorwork are sure to make you feel like royalty as well. Meals can be

taken at Jharoka Café while those looking to unwind with a drink can do so at JBar. The hotel can also set up dinner at the Narlai stepwell or a leopard safari to catch a glimpse of the elusive big cats. Close by is the Seli Bandh, a dam that is a stop for migratory birds.

Deogarh Surrounded by the state's major cities—Udaipur(135km), Jodhpur(150km) and Jaipur (275km)—this hamlet (which was also a fort at one point) is far enough from them that you feel a sense of peace. Surrounded by woods, **Dev Shree** (www.devshreedeogarh.com; doubles from ₹15,300) a five-room homestay, is a stone's throw from Ragho Sagar Lake. The hosts will happily take you on walking tours or drives. You can explore Deogarh village and picnic by the lake (the area attracts many migratory birds) or at the nearby Gokul Garh Fort.

Dungarpur Make a trip to Dungarpur, the seat of the elder branch of the Sisodiyas of Udaipur, where you can visit the Dev Somnath Mandir, Juna Mahal, Badal Mahal and more. There's also an archaeological museum and the annual Baneshwar fair, in February, to look forward to. The clear waters of Gaib Sagar Lake and a private forest reserve frame the grey façade of **Udai Bilas Palace** (www.udaibilaspalace.com; doubles from ₹9,900), which features pillars, marble carvings and grand balconies. Dotted with intricate murals, carvings and miniature paintings, this 23-room property is a great setting for an intimate wedding or a destination birthday bash with character. The Zenana Chowk, a partially open-air dining space, is lit up at night, and the poolside is great for lunch. Go boating, explore the hilly terrain or picnic amid the ruins—Dungarpur has loads to offer.

INSIDER

Bhuwneshwari Kumari

OWNER, UDAL KOTHI

From Jaipur, Kumari moved to Udaipur 18 years ago, and fell in love with the city. She particularly loves shopping in the city's many bazaars. "Andraab (<http://andraab.com>) sells exquisite, very high quality shawls. And the store Lehariya Bandhej (0294 242 1373), in Hathipole Bazaar, has the best Bhopal Shahi lehariyas. It's the style that originated here and makes for a great souvenir. For kids, I recommend a painting class at Bharat Art School (0197847 64175)".





BIKANER

THE RED CITY

SEE & DO • EAT & DRINK • SHOP • STAY • GET AWAY

PLUS INSIDER SECRETS

PRINCESS SIDDHI KUMARI • YUVRAJSAHEB RAISINGH OF MALIYA



THE RED CITY

“Where are the dunes?” That was the question on my mind as we drove to Bikaner from Jaipur, the closest city with an airport. It was a long drive under the blue skies filled with fluffy cumulus clouds, past what could be easily mistaken for grasslands on both sides of the highway. This was not the Bikaner of my imagination. But then, the desert is known for its mirages, this one being exceptionally enchanting in every way possible.

The former capital of the princely state of Bikaner, the city was founded in 1488 by Rao Bikaji and was an important stop on the ancient Silk Route before the traders moved to newer regions that offered better tax policies. Signs of these early traders are seen all over the city, from the European influence in the havelis around Kote Gate, to the tiles on the walls of Junagarh Fort, where if you look closely, you can see Dutch, Chinese and Indian artwork.

Often considered a one-night stand on the itineraries of European tourists visiting Rajasthan, Bikaner is slowly finding its spot under the hot desert sun. Indian and international travellers are discovering the beauty of this dusty yet charming city, one red sandstone monument at a time. Each newly restored palace, fort and haveli seems to add to the coral undertone that permeates the city. Bikaner is a great spot for those who want to take their time exploring all that the state has to offer in one place, but stay away from the hustle and bustle of the bigger cities. There is a lot that Bikaner offers other than being the base for a night safari into the Thar Desert. There are heritage sites from the 16th century, traditional havelis, inspired by the Art Deco movement, that were home to Marwari traders who handled and sometimes supplied money to the royal treasury. Jain temples with intricate carvings, cenotaphs and museums are a must-visit if you are a lover of art. You can also visit local artists like Mahaveer Swami, who have been working hard to revive the Bikaner School of Painting, famous for its Mughal and Rajasthani miniatures. Do remember to bring back a few reminders of this magical region for your home. Or visit stores such as The Charkha and Abhivyakti, which are run by NGOs that support local weavers and artisans and help them showcase and sell their wares.

To truly feel the pulse of the place, walk around the Old City and explore the architecture of the havelis that dot the streets around Kote Gate. Or just for an afternoon, experience the city like royalty once did, by signing up for a tonga ride. While out, do take a selfie outside Rampuria Haveli, the star of the street with its Victorian exterior. Wander around the old streets and shop for soft camel-leather mojris and leheriya dupattas in multicoloured hues. You will find cows and locals sitting on both sides of the streets, in no particular rush to get anywhere. Such is life in this beautiful red sandstone city—self-sufficient and calm. You can sense this everywhere. Even in what remains of the old prison: the compound includes gardens and places to sit and contemplate—something that space-deprived city folk would give an arm and a leg for.

When you're done walking around the city, stopping for bhujiyas, or if you're looking to indulge your sweet tooth, the kaju barfis at Chhappan Bhog, take a trip outside the city. The desert that extends from the edge of the town offers undulating dunes and a golden glow to those that are willing to explore the vast sandy expanse. Camel safaris and nights spent camping under the stars should form an integral part of your trip.

From young couples looking for unique locations to get married at, to the modern traveller who wants to go beyond the standard itinerary, Bikaner is slowly but surely making its presence felt. Much of the credit for this is due to young royals like Princess Siddhi Kumari, who's spearheaded the opening of the Prachina Museum, housed within Junagarh Fort, and Manavendra Singh Shekhawat (of Narendra Bhawan and Laxmi Niwas hotels). Thanks to their interest in the development of the entire region, new hotels are opening with the promise of night safaris, music and dance shows, and more.

So plan your visit to explore everything that the city has to offer, and try to catch that post-monsoon window when the desert transforms. *JYOTI KUMARI*

The façade of Junagarh Fort

Previous page: **hand-carved detailing at Junagarh Fort**



WHAT TO SEE & DO: BIKANER

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Take a tour of Junagarh Fort

In the heart of the city sits Junagarh Fort, which was built in 1589 by Raja Rai Singh. A composite structure, it consists of various palaces and temples that are worth a visit (the Darbar Hall, with a throne made of sandalwood, is a particular highlight). For art, architecture and interior design lovers, the fort is an opportunity to see how royalty used to once live. The Prachina Museum, housed in the fort is also worth a visit. (www.junagarh.org)

Visit local palaces and museums

There are other royal residences to visit when in Bikaner, from **Gajner Palace** (www.hrhotels.com) on the edge of the lake of the same name, to **Lallgarh Palace and Museum** (www.lallgarhpalace.com). Both are now heritage hotels, and stopping by for a meal and tour are definitely recommended. When it comes to museums, you should check out the Ganga Government Museum where you can see objects from the Indus Valley civilisation, or Sadul Singh Museum, which is housed in the Lallgarh Palace and features clothing and armoury from the Maharaja's collection. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Visit an NGO While you're exploring the city, take the time to stop at **Abhivyakti by URMUL** (www.urmul.org) and shop for bedspreads, cushion covers, dhurries and more. Another store to consider is **The Charkha by Hastshilp** (www.thecharkha.com), which

also showcases a range of handicrafts made by local craftspeople. Both stores are run by NGOs that support weavers and artisans in the hinterlands of Rajasthan, so you can be sure that your purchases are supporting a good cause, while brightening up your home as well.

Spot animals at Gajner Wildlife Sanctuary

A day trip worth considering is a morning visit to Gajner Wildlife Sanctuary, which features deer, antelope, nilgai, chinkaras, blackbucks and more. The sanctuary is about 36km from the city, and has a jeep safari that will take you into the verdant undergrowth for a chance to spot the wild animals and birds that live there. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Test your fortitude at Karni Mata Temple

You may not know the name of the temple, but you've probably heard of it. Karni Mata Temple is crawling with rats—thousands of them—and though it's a 30km drive from the city, the devotion of believers is worth soaking in. If you can stomach it, take off your shoes (it's mandatory) and walk among the scurrying rats to do darshan as well. (www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

Stop by an artist's studio

Mahaveer Swami has been working to revive the Bikaner School of Painting, and with a prior appointment, you can visit his studio. He is influenced by his studies of Mughal and Rajasthani miniatures; you might just walk out with some art for your walls. (094141 39043)



Birds at the Gajner Wildlife Sanctuary

INSIDER Princess Siddhi Kumari

MLA AND FOUNDER, PRACHINA MUSEUM



"Bikaner is the cultural capital of Mewar. You could **walk along the buzzing KEM Road** (Chaukhunti Mohalla), which is about 2km long, and see all the havelis and markets along the way. Even better, take a tonga ride through the many tiny lanes that make up the city. Each lane has a different community that lives and works

there, making the experience of visiting them quite unique. You must check out **Bhanwar Niwas** (www.bhanwarniwas.com) to see how the nobles lived. For buying saris and poshaks head to **Kesari Chand Manak Chand** on KEM Road or **Manpasand** (098281 39453) on Panch Sati Circle. And to taste the Bikaneri bhujia that is now exported the world over, go to **Bhikharam Chandmal** (www.bhikharamchandmal.in) or **Chhotu Motu Joshi**, both in the Kote Gate area. While you're there, you should get your fill of papad, kachori and other snacks.

Finally, if you tire of Rajasthani food, head to **Swarna Mahal** at Laxmi Niwas Palace (www.laxminiwaspalace.com); it serves good Italian and Chinese food, in addition to a traditional Rajasthani thali."

NARENDRA BHAWAN BIKANER

Opulent luxury that skilfully pleases all the senses.



MANVENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT
MANAGING DIRECTOR

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

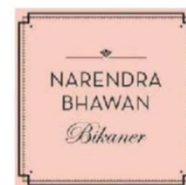
The White Nights of the Rajput dinner serves up fiery local food, under a cloth canopy and twinkling yellow lights, a perfect accompaniment to the full moon and stars.



When you're ready to step out, there's the city to explore, but the hotel can also put together a range of experiences that are tailored to leave you with lasting memories - from a dinner that consists of grilled meats and vegetables, to a thali meal under the stars.

For more information visit
www.narendrabhawan.com.

To make a reservation email
reservation@narendrabhawan.com
or call 0782 715 1151



The vision of a singular man - HH Narendra Singhji is the brains, and design influence behind Narendra Bhawan Bikaner. This superlative property brings together influences as varied as Bombay's Art Deco history, Singhji's stint in the army and local crafts for an experience that is unique to the hotel.

So there's a bright red piano to greet you in the lobby, but it's the 82 rooms that are done up to reflect both India's bounty of colour and its adept craftsmanship. Once you've taken in your room, there's the Clinic - where Bach's Flower Therapy is the basis for spa treatments that aim to provide serenity and calm. For those that have the energy after a day spent in the city, there's an inviting pool to cool off, or then a state of the art gymnasium in which you can release those endorphins.

If you're hungry, make sure to check out P&C, where there are tiffin lunches for those who want to sample an array of flavours. Order a wine from the extensive menu, and commence your feast - which is made up of dishes that delighted successive generations of the Bikaner royal family. Other options include Diwali Chowk, where Marwari food is available or for a light snack, make your way to Mad Hatter, where pastries, pudding and more - all of which can be enjoyed with coffee, tea or hot chocolate.



Gold inlay work detail at Karan Mahal in Junagarh Fort. Below: ceramic tiles in the Fort



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK: BIKANER

Chhappan Bhog Known for its variety of sweets—mewa bites, pandhari, motipak and shahi laddoo—this is a must-visit. Don't forget to pack some dried fruit and heeng kachoris on your way back. (www.chhappanbhog.com)

Station Road joints If you want a no-frills traditional Bikaneri thali then head straight to **Ramlalji ka Basa** or **Laxmi Hotel**. Also on Station Road, **Chhotu Motu Joshi** (0151 222 3827) is great for those with a sweet tooth. Get a taste of the Bikaneri rasgulla and kesar peda or go for a kachori with a helping of methi ki sabzi.

Bhikharam Chandmal As the legend goes, this is where the Bikaneri bhujiya originated more than 125 years ago. Pioneers or not, they sure make the best bhujiyas and sweets in this part of the country. Pack lots for home and indulge in kesar peda, rajbhog, gondpak ka halwa and some dhokla while you wait for your order. End with a sinfully rich malai paan. (www.bhikharamchandmal.in)

Chunnilal Tanwar Sharbatwale All the walking around is bound to make you thirsty. For the best quality sharbats in Bikaner, go to this tiny shop on Jail Road and ask for the special saunf and white-rose concoction. The gulab, kevada, khas and bela sharbats are as exotic as they sound. Go crazy! (094137 70022)

WHERE TO SHOP: BIKANER

Rajwadi Safa House From jodhpurs to hunting shirts, from soft leather mojris to ornate sarpeches, men will get it all here. And as the name suggests, there's a vast variety of safas and readymade pagdis available as well. (www.rajwadigroup.com)

Kesari Chand Manak Chand You cannot come back from Bikaner without a bagful of the colourful leheriyas and bandhej that the state is so famous for. Head to this shop in the Old City for traditional women's clothing. (099299 33666)

Kishan Lal Jewellers and Sons These famous jewellers have been around since 1927 and are known for their kundan and jadau work on gold. Their unique designs will compel you to not leave empty handed. (www.kishanlaljewellers.co.in)

Labuji ka Katla market The lightweight Nokha quilts that come from the nearby Nokha village can be bought from various shops across Labuji ka Katla market. These bright tie-and-dye quilts are perfect for curling up with a book on gloomy winter evenings.

KEM Road This busy street is home to stalls selling soft camel-leather mojris in various colours and for all occasions. Stores like **Magga Ram Mojariwala** (near Kote Gate) and **Rajasthan Mojari House** (92524 82940) are famous with locals and tourists alike.

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WHERE TO STAY: BIKANER

Gajner Palace From nature walks and boat rides to memorable dinners out in the forest and desert safaris, this lakeside palace less than an hour's drive from Bikaner is a great base to explore the region. The former hunting lodge, which was converted into a heritage hotel back in 1976, has hosted dignitaries like the Prince of Wales and Lord Mountbatten, who've taken part in hunts here. You can even see the remnants of a disused railway station on the property. (www.hrrhotels.com; doubles from ₹8,000)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Narendra Bhawan Reflecting the life of the last ruler of Bikaner, HH Narendra Singhji, this 82-room hotel's décor showcases the various phases of His Highness's life—from world traveller to nationalist. Seemingly contrasting design elements come together in harmony: Bombay Art Deco motifs go well with jaali-work railings salvaged from old havelis, tiles from Portugal with wall hangings by Rajasthani tribal artisans, bidri-work guldastas and chairs crafted at Jaipur-based AKFD Studio. The hotel arranges exquisite experiences in and around the city, but if you want to sit back and relax there's a gym, spa and library in-house. The infinity pool on the terrace is a definite win! (www.narendrabhawan.com; doubles from ₹7,000)

Bhanwar Niwas Located in the heart of the Old City, this 25-room property offers a glimpse into the traditional trader havelis of Bikaner. Originally belonging to the Rampuria



INSIDER

Yuvrajsaheb Raisingh of Maliya HOTELIER AND PROJECT DEVELOPER

"When in Bikaner, one must visit **Gajner Palace**. It sits on a serene lake dotted with ducks and a variety of migratory birds, plenty of blackbucks and wild boar and other animals. A chilled glass of beer and roasted papad on the quiet, sun-dappled Ganga Bhawan terrace is a magical experience. While in the city, **Junagarh Fort and museum** is an absolute must-see. **Lallgarh Palace** is where childhood and early youth was spent blissfully, and now, parts of it are run as a beautiful heritage hotel.

To completely experience Bikaner, one must experience the divine. The temples are stunning and found in abundance all over the city. The renowned **Karni Mata Temple** is one of a kind, and an integral part of the cultural fabric around which the city and its history pivot. I have found peace, strength there. Famous for its rats, said to be reincarnations of those that serve as the priests, its rare white rat or 'kaba' is said to be the incarnation of the Goddess herself."

family, the architecture is a mix of Indian and European styles, seemingly inspired by the Art Deco movement of the 1920s. Do not miss out on the special vegetarian thali served in the grand dining room. (www.bhanwarniwas.com; doubles from ₹4,500)

Laxmi Niwas Palace This opulent hotel is for those who want a slice of the royal life in its purest form. With views of Lallgarh Estate, most rooms have furniture that is almost 100-year old, with the original layout still intact. Hang out at the delightfully old-school bar, The Billiards Room or spend your time lazing around the pool. (www.laxminiwaspalace.com; doubles from ₹10,500)

Lallgarh Palace The red sandstone palace hotel is a part of Lallgarh Estate, where the royal family still continues to stay. The 56-room heritage property has elements of various architectural styles—European, Rajasthani and Islamic—is known for organising customised weddings, and the property is the perfect backdrop for those mehndi pictures. But if weddings are not on your mind, then sign up for the camel safari or go for dinner on the sand dunes. (www.lallgarhpalace.com; doubles from ₹8,000)

Heritage Resort Bikaner This 11-acre resort, located on the outskirts of the city, has 50 well-appointed cottages, a restaurant and the Ganga Rasala Bar. The desert safaris give you a chance to soak in the local culture. (www.heritageresortbikaner.com; doubles from ₹6,000)



GET AWAY FROM: BIKANER

Alsisar Perhaps best known with the hipster set for playing host to the annual Magnetic Fields music festival in December, Alsisar is popular for its quiet comfort and immersion into a different side of Rajasthan. If you're staying at **Alsisar Mahal** (www.alsisarmahal.com; doubles from ₹3,000) the staff will organise tours of the beautiful havelis and cenotaphs in the surrounding area. The property itself—owned by Abhimanyu Alsisar, who happens to be the Raja of

Khetri—features 51 rooms, a swimming pool and gorgeous dining room.

Churu Churu isn't close to Bikaner, it's about 180km away, but the rewards once you get there are exceptional. Well-maintained havelis with colourful frescoes on the walls, gorgeous temple complexes and the crumbling Sethani Ka Johara reservoir are all worth a visit. But first, check in to the ornate and opulent **Malji Ka Kamra**, (www.maljikakamra.com; doubles from ₹4,700) that was originally built by Mal Chand Kothari, over 100 years ago, to entertain artists and guests. Today, it has been converted into a hotel, where you can sample some delicious Rajasthani food before retiring for the night. The hotel is happy to organise visits to the local village, or arrange for guests to see potters and artisans at work.

Desert safari A trip to Bikaner is incomplete without spending a day, or better yet, a night in

the desert. Let camels take you into the Thar Desert where the golden sand beckons in every direction. While most people opt for a day-long excursion, the intrepid can bed down for the night in tents that are functional. **Rao Bikaji Camp Safari** (www.raobikajicamelsafari.com) organises both types. For those looking to see the sunset in the desert, Rao Bikaji also offers a day-long tour that includes evening tea and views of the sun descending into the sandy expanse of the arid region.





**A camel safari is the
best way to explore the
outside of the city.**



JAISALMER

THE CITY OF GOLD

SEE & DO ♦ EAT & DRINK ♦ SHOP ♦ STAY ♦ GET AWAY

PLUS INSIDER SECRETS

MANVENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT ♦ DEVIKA NARAIN ♦ MAME KHAN



THE CITY OF GOLD

Jaisalmer is all earth; brown and parched, yet rich and giving. The town is synonymous with the great Thar Desert, which spreads over 60 percent of the state. A few centuries ago, this desert was an important trading post on the Silk Route between China and Central Asia, a place where caravans converged for the night and parted ways in the morning.

In this city filled with stories of romance and royalty, it is almost possible to breathe in the heady scents of the spices and opium that once passed through its markets.

Rajput chieftain Rawal Jaisal, founded Jaisalmer, in 1156. He gave the city not just his name but also its most popular landmark, the Jaisalmer Fort, recently listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Today, it is the second oldest fort in the state.

They say it's a living fort. And this is true in more ways than one. Early in the morning, when the first rays of the sun fall upon its gates, the mini city of over 4,000 residents contained inside the citadel opens its eyes. At that moment, it becomes clear that the heart of Jaisalmer is not really brown, but golden. In the early 1970s, Satyajit Ray paid tribute to this golden fortress in his book, and later film, *Sonar Kella*.

And through the day, the fort bustles with life, its shops, cafés and guest houses welcoming tourists from all over the world. Although the most significant building here is the Raj Mahal or Royal Palace, the highlight is definitely the cluster of seven Jain temples dedicated to various saints of the sect. Constructed of the same yellow sandstone as the fort walls, these temples have intricate carvings similar to those seen in the Dilwara temples at Mount Abu.

Another of Jaisalmer's tourist attractions includes the havelis across the "new town" at the base of the fort. These mansions of the prosperous merchants who lived in the city, are known for their elaborately carved wooden ceilings and jharoka windows. Some of them still retain their opulence, at least in the parts open to the public. Of these, the Nathmal Ki Haveli and the Patwon Ki Haveli are particularly worth visiting.

The former, from the late 19th century, is an

erstwhile Prime Minister's house, with glorious exteriors and a small art museum on the first floor. Patwon Ki Haveli (also known as Patwa Ki Haveli) is even older, with construction beginning in 1805 and going on for 50 odd years. The house was built by a brocade merchant for his five sons, each of whom owned one of its five sections. One of these is now a private museum showcasing the life and times of the privileged class in those times.

As in the other major cities in Rajasthan, the street markets are the best places to shop in Jaisalmer. Most tourists start with the Bhatia Bazaar inside the fort, its boutiques offering both unique and kitschy stuff such as jutis made of camel leather, hand-embroidered garments and silver jewellery. The same things are available at the wholesale markets inside city, like Sadar Bazaar, Manak Chowk, Pansari Bazaar and Sonaron ka Baas.

The food here is also the stuff of legend, going way beyond usual suspects like dal baati choorma and ker sangri to bhang biscuits. And in the unlikely event that Jaisalmer begins to feel boring, there is the option of a day trip to the haunted village of Kuldhara, just 35km away. The story goes that the small collection of abandoned houses was once a bustling settlement of Paliwal Brahmins, who cast a curse when they were forced to leave their land by an oppressive local ruler.

Jaisalmer particularly sparkles during the first week of February, when the Desert Festival organised by the State Tourism Corporation showcases the best of local traditions and culture. Most of this takes place on the Sam Sand Dunes just outside the city, yet another shade of the molten gold hues of Jaisalmer.

Part of the town's charm lies in the fact that it is not easy to reach. The closest airport is Jodhpur, 300km away, from which Jaisalmer is a four-hour drive through arid desert landscape. But at journey's end, it becomes apparent that it is all worth it. *CHARUKESI RAMADURAI*

Opposite page: **light streams through Patwon Ki Haveli**. Previous page: **rolling sand dunes outside Jaisalmer**



WHAT TO SEE & DO: JAISALMER

Desert Cultural Centre and Museum and the Rajasthan Folklore Museum These twin attractions may not be as sophisticated as modern-day museums, but they do a good job of telling the story of the region. Both have been set up by one NK Sharma, who is usually happy to show you around. The Desert Cultural Centre has a **wide range of Rajasthani puppets, and a 30 minute show** every few hours. The adjoining folklore museum meanwhile gives you a crash course in the region's history. There can be no better place to start your Jaisalmer trip. (*Gadisagar Road*)

Visit Jaisalmer Fort Built in 1156, this is the second oldest fort in Rajasthan and features

on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Predictably, it has a fascinating history, packed with stories of valour and deceit. Today, its tiny **lanes are filled with temples, havelis, palaces** and souvenir shops. Nearly 4,000 residents still live inside its walls, which is why they call it the 'living fort'. (*Fort Road, Amar Sagar Pol*)

Watch a Manganiyar music performance The villages around Jaisalmer have nursed a centuries-old tradition of folk music. Called Manganiyars or merasis, these performers consider themselves as keepers of stories. Their songs tell the tales of wars and kings going all the way back to Alexander the Great. Ask your hotel concierge where to catch a performance.

Tour the havelis Jaisalmer featured prominently on the trade routes of yore, which is why many wealthy merchants built their homes here. Built from top-quality sandstone, many of these havelis survive to this day. Their intricate latticed balconies, elaborately carved jharokhas and sculptures are testament to the taste and pomp of old-time Rajasthan. **Patwon Ki Haveli** is the most popular of the lot, but do make time for **Salim Singh Ki Haveli** and **Nathumal Ki Haveli**.

Boating at Gadisar Lake Unlike Udaipur, Jaisalmer has but one lake, so naturally it has always received a lot of love. The early maharajas built chhatris in it, their descendants built shrines and temples on its banks. Today,

you can sit on the ghats and watch the serene waters or take a paddle boat for a quick lap around the reservoir. In winter, **the lake also attracts several bird species** who are migrating across the region, so pack your binoculars.

Adventure sports For something a lot more thrilling, ask your hotel to hook you up with a safe and certified adventure sports organiser. **The Sam Sand Dunes** (www.samsanddunes.com) just outside Jaisalmer host a bunch of crazy activities: from **quad-biking to paramotoring to jeep safaris**. For some old-fashioned action, sign up for a round of archery on the dunes, test your aim and don't give up till you hit bullseye.

Manganiyar singers perform near Suryagarh

JAISALMER MARRIOTT RESORT AND SPA

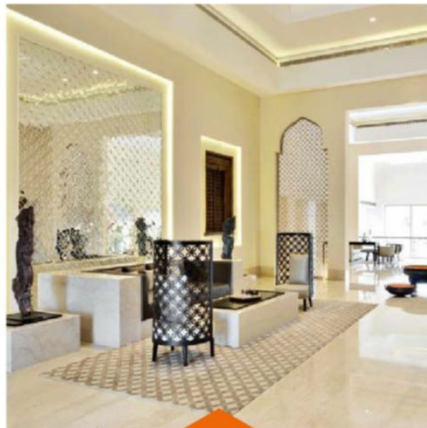
A luxury retreat in the Golden City.

If you're planning on exploring all of Rajasthan, then Jaisalmer, on the edge of the Thar Desert should definitely be on the list of cities to visit. Well-connected to the rest of the state by train and about a 300km drive from Jodhpur airport, the rolling sands and intricate havelis are worth a visit, especially between October and March, when the sun is not at its harshest, and your days can be spent exploring the property and the city.

While in the city, make the Jaisalmer Marriott Resort and Spa your base, and enjoy your time in this sand coloured modern property. Marble bathrooms, 42" flatscreen televisions and comfortable bedding can be found in each of the hotel's 126 rooms and 9 suites.

The property, with a golden brown façade that matches the neighbouring sand dunes aptly, has a bar named Dunes - where you can relax with a glass of wine or cocktail. Also in the hotel is Jaisalmer Kitchen, the all-day dining restaurant that serves up an eclectic mix of Indian and international cuisines. On the rooftop is Wyra, where you can order a meal of succulent grills, while gazing out at the city, or then make your way to The Mithai Company for tea, coffee or a traditional pastry.

If you're looking to celebrate a special occasion, like a royal wedding in the Golden City, the hotel provides the perfect venue with its verdant lawns and intimate indoor spaces. Customised menus, lavish décor



RAHUL MAINI
GENERAL MANAGER

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

The Signature Thar Massage using natural ingredients of the land, is a one-of-its-kind and a must experience at the hotel.

and traditional Rajasthani hospitality come together to create an unforgettable experience for all involved. 35,000 sq ft of lawn space which adjoins the 6,000 sq ft Grand Ballroom, so you can have an outdoor celebration complete with folk dances and even a cavalry on camel back, or then choose for put the hotel's state of the art equipment to use, for a dance filled night that you won't soon forget.

For those looking to escape the rat race, and reset the body clock, a visit to the Quan Spa is a great way to let the massage therapist's able hands work their magic and let go of any niggling aches and pains. The heated pool means the water maintains a steady temperature even as the temperature drops, especially towards the end of the year, and children needn't feel left out, as the hotel has a play area, Crayon, just for them.

The only international brand to have a property in Jaisalmer, bed down at this luxurious property and indulge your senses.

For more information visit
www.jaisalmermarriott.com.

To make a reservation
call 02992 266 688.



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK: JAISALMER



A market place in Jaisalmer Fort

Desert Boy's Dhani For some earthy, vegetarian Rajasthani food, we'd recommend Desert Boy's Dhani. Stop by for dinner, when the place comes alive with fairy lights, puppet shows, folk dance and music. (094622 50149)

Gaji's Restaurant If you think you've had too much ghee, laal maas and dal-baati, shock your tongue with some brilliant, spicy Korean food. Gaji's does Italian cuisine as well, but it is the bibimbap and pajeon you should order. Views of the city and the fort from its rooftop perch are a bonus. (098290 30701)

Trio With a great location, folk music and a strong pitch for laal maas, Trio pulls off every trick in the book to serve the quintessential Rajasthan experience. The terrace restaurant has low-seating, and friendly service, perfect for a languorous dinner. (02992 252 733)

Jaisal Italy After a long morning up and around the Fort, transport yourself to Italy at this restaurant. Sitting above the main gate of the Fort, Jaisal

Italy has the fort walls as its backdrop, and artistes and buskers performing down below provide the soundtrack to your meal. As you'd expect of any Italian restaurant, the coffee is excellent, as is the tiramisu. (www.jaisalitaly.com)

Bhang Shop A government-approved hole-in-the-wall joint that serves some splendid marijuana-laced concoctions. The bhang lassi and thandai are the hot-sellers, but the shop also sells bhang-flavoured cookies and chocolate. Choose your strength (mild, medium or strong), pick your poison, and enjoy the happy high. (095718 25008)

Dhanraj Ranmal Bhatia Sweets By the time you reach Jaisalmer, chances are you have already tasted much of Rajasthan's iconic sweets and savouries. Still, you must wend your way to this tiny but legendary sweet shop in Bhatia Market, that's been in business for 10 generations. The crispy pyaaz kachoris, moist ghotua laddoos and the spicy chilli pakoras are a must-have. (02992 251 643)

INSIDER

Manvendra Singh Shekhawat

MANAGING DIRECTOR, MRS GROUP



(091665 57300) at The Chundhi Maharaj temple about 10km outside of the city."

"Take a trip to the lesser known villages of Ghotaru and Shahgarh which are old and abandoned but breathtakingly beautiful. Lastly, **attend a traditional Goth** (cook out session of the Brahmin Community) with the charming conversationalists, Lalit Purohit and Vimal Gopa

WHERE TO SHOP: JAISALMER

Bellissima It's unlikely that you will walk out of Jaisalmer Fort without stopping by at this bright and beautiful handicraft store right opposite the palace. Bellissima stocks a range of handmade clothes and accessories—from shawls and stoles to turbans, rugs, dhurries. It has developed a reputation as a fixed-price outlet, but if you buy the claims that a huge chunk of the proceeds go to destitute women from villages nearby, you may just want to pick up that pricey bedcover. (094143 91302)

Jai Shankar Handicrafts Easily among the most popular shops for handicrafts in Jaisalmer, and only some of it has to do with its location—right outside the walls of the fort entrance. This little shop has it all—from bed sheets and upholstery to wall hangings and scarves. They will also tailor a dress to your size, often in under a day. Shankar is a gregarious owner-host, and will

happily sit you down for a cup of tea, but don't let that stop you from haggling for a deal. (Dhibba Para)

Silk Route Art Gallery The name builds up great expectations, and this tiny sandstone-walled store does its best to deliver. It stocks fabrics, antiques, leatherworks, accessories and knick-knacks, all handmade by local Rajasthani tribes. The gallery will also ship your cargo by air, if you end up buying more than you can carry. (094144 78125)

Hari Om Jewellers It may not look like much from the outside, but this is easily among the most popular jewellery boutiques in the city. Walk in for gorgeous silver rings, earpieces, bracelets all carved intricately with a motif of your choice. Fashioned from silver or bronze, these make for pretty keepsakes. (094146 71025)



SURYAGARH

An immerse getaway for those looking to enjoy some culture and comfort.

If you want to experience everything that Rajasthan has to offer in one property, Suryagarh is the place to do so. Its unique architecture is a seamless blend of traditional techniques with concessions made to modern lifestyles. So while there are courtyard spaces, reminiscent of old Rajasthani havelis, there is also an indoor swimming pool, an extravagance that no Maharaja would have considered. A state of the art gym, rubs shoulders with blooming frangipani gardens and of course, there are two restaurants to eat at.

When it comes to your rooms, you can choose from rooms, suites and havelis, each of which draws on indigenous desert culture for their design and execution. Local fabrics give jolts of colour to rooms that are brimming with detail.

Take some time to explore the hotel, including its card and billiards room, Taash, and the spa, Rait. In the evenings grab a drink at Draksh, before sitting down to a royal repast at The Legend of Marwar, the hotel's speciality restaurant. For a more causal bite, make your way to Nosh, where you'll find an airy space that compliments the light bites on the menu.

On the edge of the Thar, the hotel offers a range of trails for those looking to discover

the surrounding region or hoping to spot the Great Indian bustard. There are local temples, forts and more to spend the day driving to, before a meal under the stars - whether outdoors in the sand dunes or in a shaded courtyard on the property.



MANVENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT
MANAGING DIRECTOR

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

Dinner on the Dunes: The evening is set against the backdrop of a mesmerizing folk singer. The food prepared on site is glorious; the ambiance is majestic as music floats and the stars shine down on you, a night like this is an experience that is unmatched. Featured in Jenny Linford's 1001 restaurants you must experience before you die.



Learn more about local cultural traditions by taking in a performance by Mehboob Khan and his Manganiyars. Music aficionados, craft lovers and those concerned with the mystical, will find something to keep them busy. For an effortless holiday that connects you with the state, look no further than Suryagarh.

For more information visit
www.suryagarh.com.

To make a reservation email
reservation@suryagarh.com
or call 078271 51151.

SURYAGARH
Jaisalmer

WHERE TO STAY: JAISALMER

The Gulaal This “luxury boutique haveli” is a good option for those with a busy itinerary. It puts you within walking distance of most Jaisalmer attractions—the fort, Gadisar Lake and the folklore museum are all a short walk away. The hotel has 24 rooms and suites. A pool, spa and rooftop restaurant with views of the fort, altogether give you enough options with which to wind down your day. (www.thegulaal.com; doubles from ₹5,100)

Hotel Jaisalkot A fortress-hotel, the Jaisalkot occupies 25 acres of desert landscape on the outskirts of Jaisalmer. The rooms are simple but elegant, and the service is warm without being overbearing. Space is the true luxury here: the property has a lawn for croquet and mini-golf, while the swimming pool lends much-needed relief to the arid

landscape. A bar, fine-dining restaurant and poolside lounge complete the package. (www.jaisalkot.com; doubles from ₹10,000)

Jaisalmer Marriott Resort and Spa

If the sand and heat get too much for you, take some time to book yourself into the Quan Spa, or take a dip in the hotel's expansive pool. 137 rooms offer the best of modern technology, while staying true to the architecture of the region. Three restaurants (including a grill-focused eatery on the rooftop) and a bar round out the offerings at this luxurious desert property. (www.marriott.com; doubles from ₹12,000)

The Serai Jaisalmer It sits on a 100-acre patch of desert scrub, but that doesn't stop the camp from packing every conceivable luxury. There are 14 tented

suites on offer, but you may want to splash out for one of the six luxury tented suites, each of which comes with a private, al fresco plunge pool. Or, go all the way and get yourself the royal tented suite, which has a heated outdoor pool, separate tents for lounging and dining, butler, its own private spa and other surprises. (www.sujanluxury.com; doubles from ₹40,000)

Sonaar Haveli This boutique property rides high on its location—in the heart of the city, with brilliant views of the palace and the fort. But the real highlights are the aesthetics—from the intricate latticed marble to the bright, pop coloured wallpaper. The contemporary touch extends to the three restaurants and an in-house spa at this cosy but chic family-run hotel. (www.sonaarhaveli.com; doubles from ₹14,000)

★EDITOR'S PICK★

Suryagarh Jaisalmer

If Rajasthani royalty were to build a fort today, this is perhaps what it'd look like—sprawling, ornate and packed with every conceivable comfort. Suryagarh offers three levels of accommodation—elegant rooms, spacious suites and havelis—all opulent but not overbearing. Its location—on the sands just outside Jaisalmer—cuts it away from all the bustle, but puts you close to the top attractions in the region. With a well-kitted sports centre, a covered pool, an indulgent spa and restaurants serving belt-loosening Rajasthani fare, you may want to spend more time indoors. If you're brave enough, sign up for the spooky haunted trail to villages and ruins nearby that takes place at midnight. (www.suryagarh.com; doubles from ₹18,000)



The Serai Jaisalmer

INSIDER Devika Narain

WEDDING PLANNER



"I am not local to Rajasthan, but no other place in India has as much meaning to me as all of Rajasthan does. The Pakistan border is about two hours from Jaisalmer, head there to see the temple that was bombed during the last war. The aarti at the

Shri Tanot Mata Temple (097279 68342) is done by both Hindu and Muslim soldiers. If you're lucky you may spot some gazelle on the way."

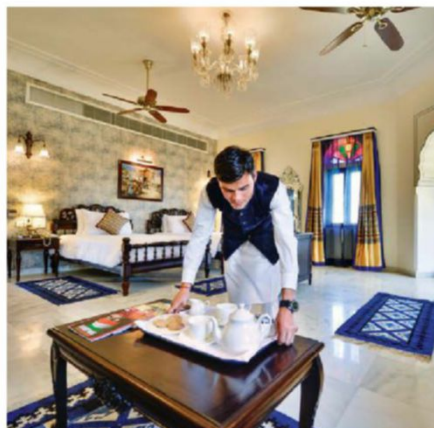


JAISALKOT

This newly built property offer an immersive escape.



Sprawling across 25 acres, perhaps the first thing that strikes you about Jaisalkot is its size. You've driven through the gates of a fort to get to it, and when you see the building, with its imposing arches, indigo blue accents and gorgeous marble fountains you're instantly transported to another world - one of polo players on horseback, croquet lawns, and drinks served from behind a wood-panelled bar. On the edges of Jaisalmer, both the imagined reality of days gone by, and newer forms of leisure like sunbathing by the pool are available to those that want to indulge in a little rest and relaxation.



The hotel features four categories of rooms (Kunwar, Rawal, Maharani and Maharawal), and all of them are well appointed and have a colour scheme that draws attention to the wealth of handicrafts that are practised in Rajasthan. So colourful stained glass panels fan across the top of doors and windows and expertly woven carpets add a pop of brightness to the space. Carved wooden headboards are complimented by concessions to modernity like flat screen TVs and Wi-Fi. Manvendra Singh Chauhan, the owner, is the person who has conceptualized the interiors and



MANVENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN
OWNER

◆ **SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE** ◆

The thali meal at Suraman Mahal is a must try, for those that want to experience sit down dining as it was in the day of the Maharajas. You sit on the carpeted floor and enjoy a meal fit for a king.

put together these various elements, for a property that reflects his heritage.

Besides the rooms though, the property has an array of options for those looking to spend the day outdoors. Play a croquet match against family or friends, try your hand at kite flying, or schedule a camel safari to see the sights atop the ship of the desert. Very soon, you can expect to take a bicycle tour of Jaisalmer or then start your day with yoga - to stretch out your weary joints and feel invigorated through the day. If you'd like that same feeling without the hard work, give yourself over to the spa, where you get the same result, with minimal work. In the

midst of the city's oppressive summers, the inviting azure pool is ready to dip into, and for those seeking something to do once the stars are out, let the resident astronomer teach you about the constellations up above.

When it comes to dining, you must try a thali at Suraman Mahal, while seated under the watchful eyes of two lifesize paintings or aristocracy dining. The bar, Shatranj, is unsurprisingly chess themed, and features mammoth chess pieces, in addition to an array of spirits that are available for the discerning drinker. By the pool, you can find Tat, the restaurant that serves grills and more for those that are looking for a light, easy to order bite.

With a wealth of things to do, at this magnificent property, you'll never feel like you've exhausted all options, or explored all there is to see and do at this one of a kind resort.

For more information visit www.jaisalkot.com. To make a reservation email reservations@jaisalkot.com or call 091160 10801.



GET AWAY FROM: JAISALMER

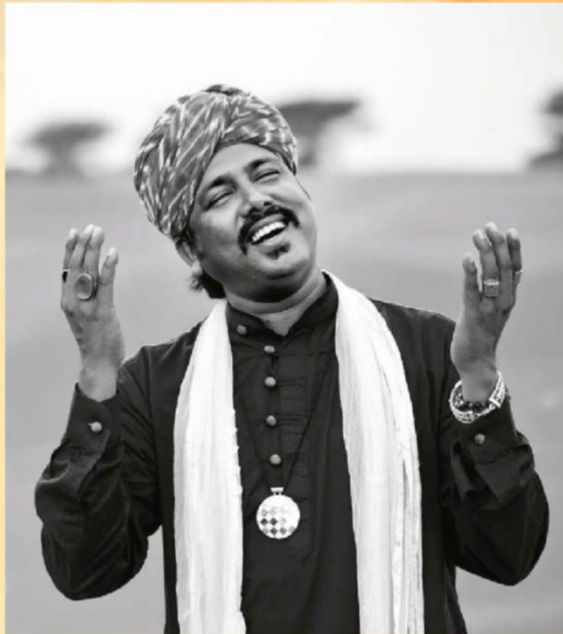
Jain temples at Lodhruva

Lodhruva suffered several assaults from Mughals. But each time, its rulers resurrected this village into a place even more beautiful. Today, the ruins of Lodhruva, 7km from Jaisalmer, have some of the more stunning temples in the region. A 10th century Jain temple that was rebuilt 500 years later, a Shiva temple and other shrines are worth a visit for their architecture and design.

Abandoned village of Kuldihara

This was once a thriving village, about 40mins away from the city, of thousands. What exactly happened is a mystery, but local lore says that the villagers abandoned their homes overnight and cursed misfortune on anyone who tried to settle there. Naturally, stories of ghosts and ghouls are rampant, and an adventurous few even dare to visit at night. We'd recommend a daytime visit, when it still wears a haunted look, so that you can get back to the safety of your hotel by nightfall.

Desert safari Those who want to get under the skin of the Thar Desert should sign up for one of the several overnight desert safaris. These range anywhere from two to seven days, and give a good taste of life on the sands. **Damodra Desert Camp** (www.damodra.com; doubles from ₹9,400), which sits on the sands en route to the Sam Sand Dunes,



INSIDER Mame Khan

FOLK AND SUFI SINGER

"Shopping in Jaisalmer is good fun, as there isn't a lot of vehicular traffic and the myriad small lanes invite you to stroll around and find some hidden gems. One such gem is a shop called **Panwar Juti Charm Udyog** (095719 26517) at Hanuman Circle. No Rajasthani outfit is complete without his colourful leather jutis.

When it comes to food, you should not miss an unforgettable vegetarian lunch at **Riddhi Siddhi** (02992 250 676) near Gita Ashram. For those with a sweet tooth, do try the Jaisalmer ghotwa, a real mouth-watering treat. The original can be found in the main bazaar. Just ask for **Dhaniya Bha Ka Ghotwa** near Gopa Chowk in the main market. It's right by the main entrance to Jaisalmer Fort. A winter day for me ends with a warm glass of kesar milk at **Prabhu Tea Stall** (Shop No. 8, Hanuman Circle).

A visit to our golden city would not be complete without some music. Do get to know more about the Manganiyars and our musical heritage. One special place is a small artists village on the outskirts of the city. The owner, **Taga Ram** (096022 80491)—an alghoza player—is a real gem when it comes to music and Rajasthani hospitality. Do pay a visit and indulge in music and a home-cooked meal."

about 30km from Jaisalmer is worth considering. The camp pitches its experience as rustic luxury, and offers sandboarding, camel safaris and evenings spent taking in local folk music.

Go birding at Desert National Park

This sandy national park, with its ponds and lakes, the park is a haven for birds such as the great Indian bustard, falcons, and kestrels. In winter, migratory birds bring their own dash of colour. Also on prowl are foxes, wolves, blackbucks and chinkaras. The sparse vegetation means only serious wildlife enthusiasts brave the sun. It also means that sightings are nearly guaranteed. The closest town is Khuri, which is 45km from the city, where **The Mama's Resort & Camp** (www.themamasjaisalmer.com; doubles from ₹6,500) is the best place to bed down for the night.

Longewala About 120km from Jaisalmer, just short of the India-Pakistan border is the site of an epic battle between the two countries. It was here in 1971 that a small company of soliders refused to vacate their post under a severe assault from Pakistan, and successfully repelled the incursion. Today, you can visit the border post, for a day trip, interact with soldiers and see the Pakistani tanks and jeeps that were captured in 1971. Check with local tour operators for permits and procedures.

TEXT: SALIL DESHPANDE PHOTOGRAPH: YOGI TRIVEDI



MANDIR PALACE, A WELCOMHERITAGE HOTEL, JAISALMER

A boutique property that will leave you spellbound.

Let ornate balconies, scalloped arches and intricate carvings welcome you to Jaisalmer at Mandir Palace, A WelcomHeritage Hotel. Built by various kings that, it's no surprise that Mandir Palace is opulently designed that exudes luxury. The most pleasing part of the palace was built by HH Maharawal Jawahir Singh, who then gifted the property to his son Maharaj Hukum Singh (who incidentally still stays in the palace today). The spectacular golden stone façade, gives way to 28 rooms, but there's more to explore within the property for those that want to truly experience palatial living.

Relive a bygone era, when wandering through the hotel, or then look out on the city and Jaisalmer Fort from the Roof Top restaurant, where the intricate arches and imposing stone stand out against the dark night sky. For indoor dining, the Palace restaurant serves an array of cuisines in a royal setting.

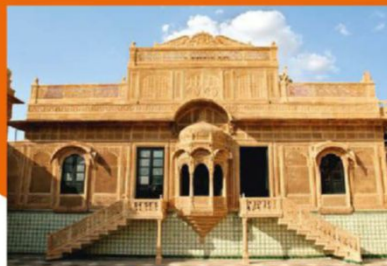
Also on the grounds is a swimming pool and play area for children. The spa too is not to be missed, as it specialises in Ayurvedic and Meditative massages, with guests being partial to the deep tissue kneading that is sure to leave you refreshed and ready to take on the rest of the day.



**RAJ KUMAR DR. JITENDRA SINGH JI
OF JAISALMER**

◆ SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE ◆

Definitely, a meal at Roof Top restaurant with golden-hued Jaisalmer Fort in the background. Also, for those that want to see the palace fully, ask for a guided tour, to learn more about the history of Jaisalmer, and the palace itself, while accessing parts of the building that usually off limits to guests.



A trip to Jaisalmer wouldn't be complete without a visit to the sand dunes - ask the hotel to organise a safari on camel back, or take a jeep out to the edge of the Thar desert, to see the rolling sands and partake in an adventure sport.

From family trips, to romantic getaways or even business off-sites, the team at the Palace will ensure that your stay there matches your overall goals for the visit. From private dining options if it is just you and your significant other, to rooms and public spaces with free Wi-Fi for those that are staying on business, this culture filled property is ideal for everyone.

**For more information visit
www.mandirpalace.com.**

**To make a reservation
email info@mandirpalace.com
or call 02992 252 788**



MANDIR PALACE

GET AWAY

Visit Bada Bagh for its cenotaphs

Back in the 18th century, Maharaja Lunkaran built a gorgeous, intricately-carved cenotaph in the form of a chhatra for his father. Over the years, the royals built many such cenotaphs for their loved ones, turning this into a massive complex of memorials. An eerie and beautiful experience at the same time, this one is a must-do. The best part? It's only 6km from the city.



Royal cenotaphs in
Bada Bagh

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID CROOKES

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RAJASTHAN

➔ ADAPTING HISTORY

Jaisalmer's Nachana Haveli is a building all about creative reuse. The old stable, which is located under the main durbar hall is being converted into a bar and restaurant. Also on the cards is the addition of a swimming pool on the second floor to compliment the hotel's thirteen rooms, which are arrayed around two gorgeous, light-filled courtyards. Maharaj Kesri Singh built the haveli for his younger son Vairisal Singh, and the descendants Vikram and Kesri Singh have recently converted it into a hotel. The family still stays in part of the property, and you can be sure of an exceptional, personal stay at this boutique hotel.

www.nachanahaveli.com



← FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE

The Alila Fort Bishangarh, which opened in February 2017, is the second Alila property in India, and occupies a heritage fort that has breath-taking views of the Aravalli hills on all sides. Away from the hustle of Rajasthan's cities, the hotel features plush rooms, multiple dining options and a spa. In a haveli down the hill, you'll find a pool, bar, fitness centre and more. www.alilahotels.com



SECRETS

Our pick of the most stylish finds and travel-related news

DAZZLING DESIGN

The Rani Haar from the Adaa collection gets its name from the queen, and wearing it, you're bound to feel like royalty. The necklace features traditional polki work as well as diamonds and rubies. With a natural motif that unifies the different colours and elements, the haar is one that will attract attention wherever it is worn. Taken from Birdhichand Ghanshyamdas Jewellers Adaa collection, which celebrates six historic Indian women, each piece is a sublime beauty, which dazzles without overpowering the outfit. With two stores in Jaipur, you can explore this, and the other collections that are handcrafted by skilled artisans.

www.bgjewellers.in



↑ RAJASTHAN REINTERPRETED

If the colours of Rajasthan - in all their saturated glory - inspire you, why not take a little bit of it back home, to add colour to your house or more. At Jaipur Pink by Sunita Burad, a store that takes its inspiration from the city's famous Hawa Mahal, you'll find printed home accessories, as well as a range of sumptuous womenswear and menswear. The pret line features Mughal prints and fine cottons, while a semi-formal line consists of outfits made of delicate chanderi and fine silks. The best-seller at the store though is their formal cushions that allow travellers to bring some of the pink city home with them. The peacock ones, are especially popular. www.jaipurpinkstore.com

← ROYAL RETREAT

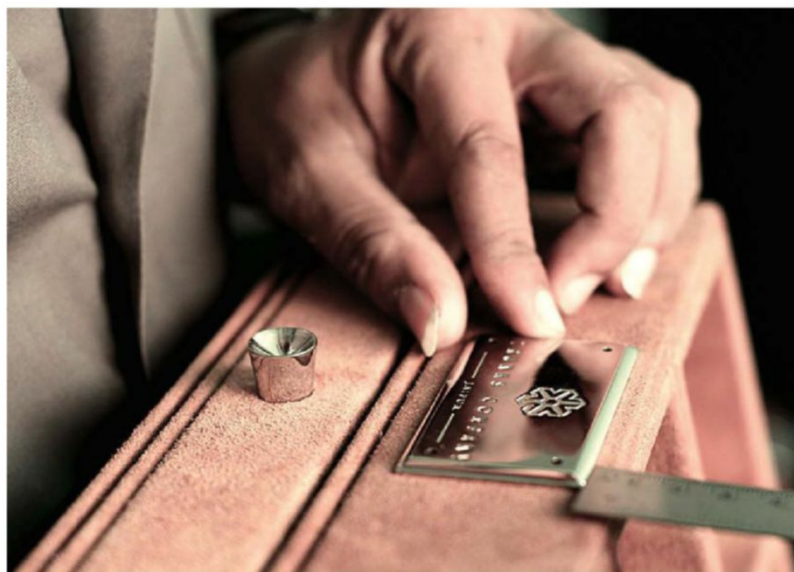
There are two Surya Mahal Suites at the Mandir Palace, both of which were built by Maharaja Jawahir Singh for his personal use. These lavish rooms feature private balconies and painstaking inlay and carvings and immediately transport you back to a time when royalty's reign extended over the surrounding lands. Book a stay at one of these opulent rooms to truly feel like a king. www.mandirpalace.com



→ HERITAGE HANDLOOMS

For elaborate custom designed poshaks - the traditional lehnga worn by Rajput families, look no further than Mangalmayee by Sandeep Burad Since 1911, which has a legacy that dates back to 1911. Still run by the same family, today the store is headed by Sandeep Burad. The emporium is a treasure trove of handcrafted fabrics and outfits - from the poshak to sari and everything in between. Delicate zardozi work, hand blocking and other traditional crafts are employed across fabrics - as well as accessories like potlis, jootis and shawls. Using traditional know-how to satisfy the modern woman. Before leaving Jaipur, why not buy one of their traditional gota patti saris. Other options include designs that are made up of fine aari work, which are embroidered onto hand-dyed chiffon.

www.facebook.com/Mangalmayee



→ TAILORED TRUNKS

At the Trunk Company, each piece is handcrafted to exacting standards by a team of trained artisans. A number of skilled man-hours are spent to ensure that the trunk you receive is perfect in every way, with impeccable stitching and precise cutting. Each trunk marries the best of 21st century innovations with the skill and practise of craftsmen that have been working with leather for generations. The result is a one of a kind piece that can be used for the years to come.

www.trunkscompany.com



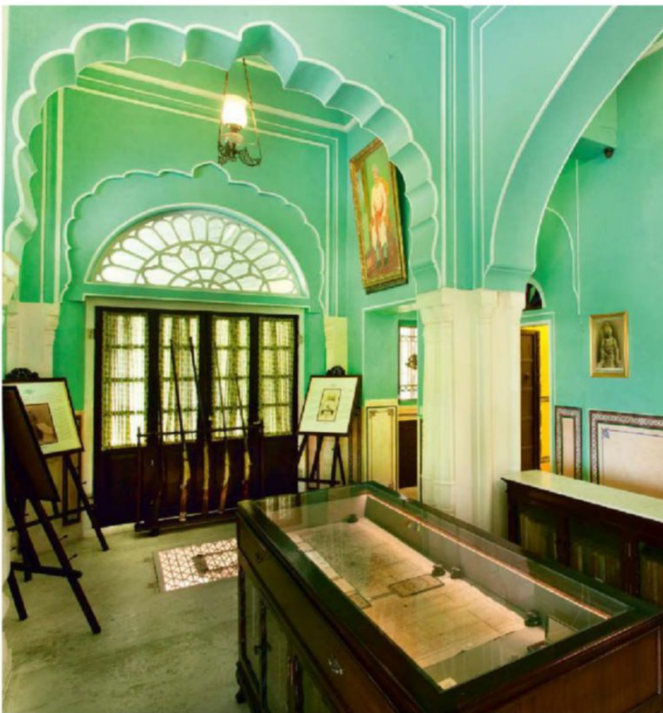
➔ HIGH STRUNG

The jewels at Raniwala Jewellers range from unobtrusive to the in you face, but for those that want to make a statement, the seven string necklace of uncut diamonds is the way to go. Sporting different shapes, the necklace is an heirloom that is to be handed down to future generations. www.raniwalajewellers.com

⬇ SINGULAR VISION

The Kanota Library and Museum in Castle Kanota, just outside Jaipur is a testament to Thakur Amar Singh, who was one of the first Indians to be commissioned as an officer in the British Army. The Library is a collection of his personal effects and things that he picked up from countries like China, France and Afghanistan while travelling as part of the Jaipur Lancers. Together, they offer a peek into what life was during the tumultuous period that ended with the Thakur's death in 1942.

www.hotelnarainniwas.com



➔ SPRING AWAKENING

The clothes at Saachi effortlessly bring together the vibrant colours, intricate motifs and stunning handiwork that Rajasthan is known for - all in modern, comfortable silhouettes. The newest collection is entitled Jaipur Spring and features bright floral motifs and vivid imagery to bring to life a singular vision.

www.facebook.com/saachijpr





ROOM WITH A VIEW

BHAINSRORGARH SUITE, BHAINSRORGARH FORT

Unexplored pockets of Rajasthan are hard to come by, but few people have visited Bhainsrorgarh Fort, an 18th century labyrinth of cloisters, turrets and terraces high on a promontory overlooking the Chambal River, 50km south of Kota. Thought to be one of the cleanest rivers in India, the Chambal has been dammed nearby, and so is never dry. As a result, you can see a range of wild animals and flowers all year around. The owners are descendants of the Chundawat clan of Sisodia Rajputs, who have lived in the fort on and off since the 14th century. They opened it as an intimate hotel in 2006 to help fund the ongoing restoration of the fort complex. This view is from the balcony of the second floor Bhainsrorgarh Suite, one of the six now open to guests. **FRANCESCA SYZ**

Contact: Bhainsrorgarh Fort, Rajasthan. (www.bhainsrorgarh.com; doubles from ₹12,500; ₹16,500 for the Bhainsrorgarh Suite)

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