

# Robert's Royal Rajasthan Rider's Roughguide

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## CONTENTS <sup>1</sup>

HISTORY OF INDIA - AN OVERVIEW .....	3
POLITICAL INTRODUCTION TO INDIA .....	4
TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR INDIA.....	6
ABOUT RAJASTHAN .....	9
NEEMRANA (ALWAR) .....	16
MAHANSAR.....	16
BIKANER .....	17
PHALODI .....	21
JAISALMER .....	23
JODPHUR .....	26
PALI .....	28
MT ABU .....	28
UDAIPUR.....	31
AJMER/PUSKAR.....	36
JAIPUR.....	38
BHARATPUR.....	42
FATEHPUR SIKRI .....	43
AGRA.....	45
DELHI .....	47

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the contents of this booklet have been taken from the official website of the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan. The section on Delhi is from the website of the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation. Some other tourism sites were also used. No responsibility is taken for errors in any information.

# HISTORY OF INDIA - AN OVERVIEW

The people of India have had a continuous civilization since 2500 B.C., when the inhabitants of the Indus River valley developed an urban culture based on commerce and sustained by agricultural trade. This civilization declined around 1500 B.C., probably due to ecological changes.

During the second millennium B.C., pastoral, Aryan-speaking tribes migrated from the northwest into the subcontinent. As they settled in the middle Ganges River valley, they adapted to antecedent cultures.

The political map of ancient and medieval India was made up of myriad kingdoms with fluctuating boundaries. In the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., northern India was unified under the Gupta Dynasty. During this period, known as India's Golden Age, Hindu culture and political administration reached new heights.

Islam spread across the Indian subcontinent over a period of 500 years. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Turks and Afghans invaded India and established sultanates in Delhi. In the early 16th century, descendants of Genghis Khan swept across the Khyber Pass and established the Mughal (Mogul) Dynasty, which lasted for 200 years. From the 11th to the 15th centuries, southern India was dominated by Hindu Chola and Vijayanagar Dynasties. During this time, the two systems--the prevailing Hindu and Muslim--mingled, leaving lasting cultural influences on each other.

The first British outpost in South Asia was established in 1619 at Surat on the northwestern coast. Later in the century, the East India Company opened permanent trading stations at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, each under the protection of native rulers.

The British expanded their influence from these footholds until, by the 1850s, they controlled most of present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In 1857, a rebellion in north India led by mutinous Indian soldiers caused the British Parliament to transfer all political power from the East India Company to the Crown. Great Britain began administering most of India directly while controlling the rest through treaties with local rulers.

In the late 1800s, the first steps were taken toward self-government in British India with the appointment of Indian councilors to advise the British viceroy and the establishment of provincial councils with Indian members; the British subsequently widened participation in legislative councils. Beginning in 1920, Indian leader Mohandas K. Gandhi transformed the Indian National Congress political party into a mass movement to campaign against British colonial rule. The party used both parliamentary and nonviolent resistance and non-cooperation to achieve independence.

On August 15, 1947, India became a dominion within the Commonwealth, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister. Enmity between Hindus and Muslims led the British to partition British India, creating East and West Pakistan, where there were Muslim majorities. India became a republic within the Commonwealth after promulgating its constitution on January 26, 1950

# POLITICAL INTRODUCTION TO INDIA<sup>2</sup>

## Government and Politics of India

### Constitutional Democracy

The Republic of India is a constitutional democracy made up of 28 states and seven union and national territories. The Constitution came into force on 26 January 1950 and lists the powers of the federal government (known as "the Centre" or "Union Government"), those of the states, and those which are shared responsibilities. The President of India is obliged to act on the advice of the Council of Ministers, chosen by the Prime Minister.

Parliament is bicameral, comprising the 543-member Lok Sabha ('people's' or lower house) and the 245-member Rajya Sabha ('states' or upper house). Lok Sabha members are elected by universal adult suffrage every five years (except for two nominated Anglo-Indian members) using the 'first past the post' voting system. The Rajya Sabha is not subject to dissolution; one-third of its members retire every second year.

### Recent Political Developments

National elections were held in stages throughout April and May 2004. The Indian National Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) defeated the incumbent National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The new UPA government is headed by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, generally regarded as one of the main architects of India's economic reform program which began in the early 1990s.

The United Progressive Alliance did not win enough seats in its own right to hold a majority. It is governing with the support of a number of left-wing parties whose influence is evident in the government's guiding policy document, the "Common Minimum Program".

### Foreign Relations

The basic parameters of India's foreign policy have traditionally reflected a broad national consensus on security and foreign relations. Since independence in 1947, India has regarded itself as a major international player. It has been at the forefront of developing country activism and was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India has also been an active member of the United Nations and the Commonwealth and has recently sought to expand its cooperation with East Asia, including ASEAN countries .

As its economic power develops, India is seeking to consolidate further its international role and to increase its focus on 'economic diplomacy', particularly to secure energy supplies. In terms of its international role, India is lobbying for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council and taking a more prominent role in fora such as the World Trade Organization. Also India, along with China, Brazil, South Africa and Mexico, participated in the 2005 G8 summit at Gleneagles and will participate in a G8 climate change dialogue emerging from this meeting.

### The Indian Economy

The Indian economy comprises a wide spectrum of activity, ranging from high technology to subsistence agriculture. After decades of failing to realise its full economic potential, India was one of the world's fastest growing large economies

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<sup>2</sup> From DFAT Web Site

between 1994-2006. Indian economic engagement with the rest of the world has increased, particularly in the services sector.

Despite recent progress, significant challenges remain, including addressing the fiscal deficit and government debt and improving infrastructure. Another challenge is to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are experienced more widely. Despite the emergence of tens of millions from poverty during the 1990s, average incomes and literacy levels remain low and India is one of the largest recipients of World Bank lending. India's score in the United Nations Human Development Index has increased marginally over recent decades, but it is still very low and its rank has fallen in recent years, from 115 th in 2001 to 127 th in 2003.

### **The Reform Process**

While selective economic reform was attempted from as early as 1960, the reform process began in earnest in 1991, due to a balance of payments and foreign currency reserve crisis. This reform process has focused on liberalising the economy through increased openness to financial and technology transfers, reform of the financial sector, trade liberalisation and reduced government administrative controls. GDP growth has been strong, with an annual average growth of 5.8 per cent from 1994-2004. Capital inflows have increased, contributing to a significant rise in foreign exchange reserves, making India better placed to withstand external shocks. One recent development in terms of attracting foreign investment is the decision to increase the ceiling on foreign direct investment in Indian telecommunications services from 49 to 74 per cent.

The structure of the economy has changed over this time, with services playing an increasingly important role. In 2004 services represented 51 per cent of GDP compared to 21 per cent for agriculture and 27 per cent for industry. This dominance of services is unusual for a low-income country such as India. It demonstrates the difference between India's services-led economic growth and the manufacturing-led development model followed in much of east Asia, including China. This reliance on services may be difficult to sustain, however, and some economists argue that India will have to generate stronger manufacturing growth to continue current levels of economic performance.

# TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR INDIA<sup>3</sup>

## Summary

- We advise you to exercise caution and monitor developments that might affect your safety in India because of the risk of terrorist activity by militant groups.
- Following a series of explosions on the rail network in Mumbai on 11 July 2006 that killed over 100 people, alert levels remain raised across India with additional security measures in place at airports and railways stations. Additional security measures may cause delays for passengers.
- You should pay close attention to your personal security and monitor the media and other local information sources for information about possible new safety or security risks.
- Prominent government buildings, public transport, places of worship and commercial and public areas are potential targets for terrorist attack. You should be particularly vigilant in the lead up to and on days of national significance such as Republic Day (26 January) and Independence Day (15 August), as militants have in the past used such occasions to mount attacks.
- We advise you not to travel to Jammu and Kashmir, except for travel to Ladakh via Manali, or travel to Leh by air, because of armed clashes and terrorist activities.
- Explosions in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, on 11 July 2006 killed at least five people and injured several others.
- We advise you to reconsider your need to travel to the north-eastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur because of the risk of armed robbery, kidnapping, extortion and terrorism related incidents. If you do decide to travel to these areas, you should exercise extreme caution.

## Safety and Security

### Terrorism

We advise you to exercise caution and monitor developments that might affect your safety in India because of the risk of terrorist activity by militant groups. Pay close attention to your personal security and monitor the media for information about possible new safety or security risks.

There is an ongoing risk of terrorist activity in India by militant groups. In planning your activities, consider the kind of places known to be terrorist targets. These include prominent government buildings, national institutions, places of worship, public transport, airports and aircraft, religious sites and festivals and tourist sites. There is also a risk of attacks in commercial and public areas and at events and places known to be frequented by foreigners.

A series of explosions on the rail network in Mumbai on 11 July 2006 killed over 100 people and injured several hundred. Alert levels remain raised across India and enhanced security measures remain in place at airports and railway station. These may cause delays for passengers.

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<sup>3</sup> From DFAT Web Site

On 29 October 2005, shortly before the religious festival of Diwali, three bombs exploded in New Delhi, killing at least fifty people and injuring a significant number of others. Two of the explosions occurred in markets frequented by foreigners and the expatriate community and the third explosion occurred on a bus.

Australians should be particularly vigilant in the lead-up to and on days of national significance such as Republic Day (26 January) and Independence Day (15 August) as militants have in the past used such occasions to mount attacks.

Extremist and militant groups, such as the Communist Party of India-Maoist, operate in the east and north of India and as far south as the state of Karnataka. In July 2006, three separate attacks by Naxalites (Maoist terrorists) in the State of Chhattisgarh killed 70 people.

### **Civil Unrest/Political Tension**

You should pay close attention to your personal security and monitor the media and other local information sources for information about possible new safety or security risks.

A series of explosions on 7 March 2006 occurred at a Hindu temple, a railway station and on a train in the city of Varanasi in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The explosions killed and injured a significant number of people. Incidents of sectarian violence can lead to communal violence and retaliatory attacks in which travellers could inadvertently be caught up.

In October and November 2005, communal violence resulting from inter-religious tensions occurred in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, resulting in at least 12 deaths.

Communal violence in the western state of Gujarat in 2002 resulted in hundreds of deaths.

You should avoid protests and demonstrations throughout India as they may become violent.

**Jammu and Kashmir:** We advise you not to travel to Jammu and Kashmir, other than travel to Ladakh via Manali, or by air to Leh.

There is an on-going dispute between India and neighbouring Pakistan regarding Jammu and Kashmir and serious security problems remain in Srinagar, as well as elsewhere in the Kashmir valley, and in other parts of the state. Large numbers of people, including civilians, have been killed and injured in armed clashes and terrorist attacks. In June 2006, several attacks targeting local tourists occurred. A series of explosions occurred on 11 July 2006 in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, killing at least five people and injuring several others. A grenade attack injured seven pilgrims travelling to Amarnath on 31 July 2006. Further such attacks are possible. Foreigners have in the past been kidnapped in Kashmir and further such incidents are also possible.

**North-eastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur:** We advise you to reconsider your need to travel to the north-eastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur. If you do decide to travel to these areas, you should exercise extreme caution. Armed robbery, kidnapping, extortion and terrorism related incidents occur regularly throughout the region, particularly in the states of Assam and Nagaland. Insurgent groups have attacked civilians, and bombed buildings. Public transport, including buses and trains, has also been targeted.

## **Crime**

Hikers have been attacked or have disappeared in the Kulu/Manali district in Himachal Pradesh, particularly on more remote trekking routes. Trekkers can register their presence with the local police.

Petty theft is common in crowded areas such as markets, airports and bus and railway stations.

Thieves on motorcycles commonly snatch shoulder bags and expensive jewellery, especially gold chains.

Travellers have been robbed and assaulted after consuming 'spiked' drinks or food.

Touts and taxi and rickshaw drivers use aggressive tactics to persuade you to accept offers of tickets, tours and accommodation. Tourists riding in taxis and rickshaws have been robbed and assaulted at their destination, particularly in Kashmir and Rajasthan.

Some travellers have been intimidated or tricked into purchasing items which are grossly overvalued after accepting unsolicited approaches for provision of various services, particularly for assistance with shopping for jewellery, gems and carpets. You can purchase authentic items at government jewellery and carpet outlets in India.

Women travellers, especially when travelling alone, often get unwanted attention and have been sexually harassed and assaulted.

In some parts of India there are sensitivities about religious missionary activity. In January 1999, an Australian missionary and his two young sons were murdered in the eastern state of Orissa.

There are persistent allegations and media reports of sexual misconduct made against certain prominent cults and their leaders in India.

## **Local Travel**

Some areas along the India-Pakistan border are heavily mined.

Driving in India is dangerous due to poorly maintained and congested roads and accidents frequently occur. Roads are often shared with pedestrians, carts, cattle and other livestock and are particularly dangerous at night due to insufficient or non-existent street lighting. Local driving practices are often undisciplined and aggressive with poorly maintained vehicles.

Motorcycle riders are required by law to wear helmets. If you intend to ride a motorcycle, you should check that your travel insurance policy covers injuries sustained in motorcycle accidents.

An international driving license and an Australian driving license is required to legally operate a vehicle or motorcycle in India and to validate any applicable insurance. An Australian licence alone is not sufficient, despite advice to the contrary provided by some car and motorcycle rental companies.

## ABOUT RAJASTHAN



Amazing legends of heroism and romance still resound from Rajasthan's equally amazing architecture, which still stands to narrate its tale of a bygone era. The magic of Rajasthan is unequalled in the world for its heritage, culture, safaris, sand dunes and lush green forests with its wildlife. Rajasthan is often expressed as huge open-air museum, with relics so well preserved for the travellers and the curious of the day.

### History of Rajasthan

The history of India dates back almost five thousand years. Rajasthan plays a crucial and unique role, especially with regard to the development of Indian culture. Its impressive story reaches through an heroic past. The appearance of its grand forts perched on rocky hills still tells the story of the bravery of its men and the stoic sacrifice of its women, and the chivalrous old world manners of all.

The Rajputs rose to prominence in the 9th and 10th centuries. They were a major force to reckon with in medieval India. Passionately attached to their land, family and honour, the Rajputs treated war as a sport, and followed a strong chivalric code of conduct. Myths and legends of their valour, gallantry, sacrifice and courage are legion. There are many heroes among the Rajputs, such as Prithviraj Chauhan, who fought successfully against the invader Muhammad Ghori in the battle of Tarain (1191), although he died on the same battlefield the following year. The great Rana Pratap of Mewar defiantly withstood the might of the Mughal, and continued to raid on them even after his defeat. He died in 1597. His son, Ambar Singh took over the mantle of opposition to Mughal rule. Rana Pratap was the lone exception, as most of the leading Rajput clans finally married into Mughal royalty and nobility, and went into direct State service of the Mughal Empire. This was chiefly at the behest of the Mughal emperor, Akbar, who was able to consolidate and expand his empire because of his close ties with the proud Rajputs, the men who made formidable enemies and also steadfast and loyal friends.



At the time of independence on 15th August 1947, Rajasthan was known as Rajputana (country of Rajputs). It comprised 18 Princely States, two chieftains and a British administered province of Ajmer-Merwara besides a few pockets and territories outside its main boundaries.

It took seven stages to form Rajasthan as defined today. In March 1948, the Matsya Union, comprising Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli, was formed. Also in March

1948, Banswara, Bundi, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Kishangarh, Kota, Pratapgarh, Shahpura and Tonk joined the Indian union and formed a part of Rajasthan. In April 1948, Udaipur joined the state and the Maharana of Udaipur was made Rajpramukh.

Therefore in 1948, the merger of south and southeastern states was almost complete. Still retaining their independence from India were Jaipur and the desert kingdoms of Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer. From a security point of view, it was vital to the new Indian Union to ensure that the desert kingdoms were integrated into the new nation. The princes finally agreed to sign the Instrument of Accession, and the kingdoms of Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Jaipur were merged in March 1949. This time the Maharaja of Jaipur, Man Singh II was made the Rajpramukh of the state and Jaipur became its capital. Later in 1949, the United State of Matsya, comprising the former kingdoms of Bharatpur, Alwar, Karauli and Dholpur, was incorporated into Rajasthan. On January 26th 1950, 18 states of united Rajasthan merged with Sirohi to join the state leaving Abu and Dilwara to remain a part of Greater Bombay and now Gujarat.

In November 1956, further merges set the existing boundaries of Rajasthan. Today, has become the largest state of the Indian Republic.

The princes of the former kingdoms were constitutionally granted handsome remuneration in the form of privy purses and privileges to assist them in the discharge of their financial obligations. In 1970, Indira Gandhi, who was then the Prime Minister of India, commenced under-takings to discontinue the privy purses, which were abolished in 1971.



Many of the former princes still continue to use the title of Maharaja but the title has little significance other than a status symbol. Many of the Maharajas still hold their palaces and have converted them into profitable hotels, while some have made good in politics. The democratically elected Government runs the state with a Chief Minister as its executive head and the Governor as the head of the state.

### **The Land and Topography**

The State has an area of 343,000 sq km. The capital city is Jaipur

The Aravali Range runs across the state from southwest Guru Peak (Mount Abu), which is 1,722 m in height to Khetri in the northeast. This divides the state into 60% in the north west of the lines and 40% in the southeast. The northwest tract is sandy and unproductive with little water but improves gradually from desert land in the far west and northwest to comparatively fertile and habitable land towards the east. The area includes the Great Indian (Thar) Desert.

The south-eastern area, higher in elevation (100 to 350 m above sea level) and more fertile, has a very diversified topography. In the south lies the hilly tract of Mewar. In the southeast a large area of the districts of Kota and Bundi forms a tableland, and to the northeast of these districts is a rugged region (badlands) following the line of the Chambal River. Further north the country levels out; the flat plains of the northeastern Bharatpur district are part of the alluvial basin of the Yamuna River.

Rajasthan is a northwesterly state of India. It is bound on the west and northwest by Pakistan, on the north and northeast by the States of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, on the east and southeast by the States of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, and on the southwest by the State of Gujarat. The Tropic of Cancer passes through its southern tip in the Banswara district.

## The Architecture of Rajasthan

The mixture and brilliance of Rajasthan's architectural heritage can amaze a visitor. Majestic forts, intricately carved temples and havelis (meaning mansion) and even 'step wells' make Rajasthan a paradise for an architecture buff. The desert state of Rajasthan is a land of irony and extremes. This vibrant and striking region is the home of the Rajput warrior clans who had ruled here for many years. Rajasthan is also home to some of India's most romantic cities. The Rajputs were prolific builders and have dotted the arid Aravali landscape with their legacy of some of the most imposing and magnificent forts and palaces in the world. Today the structures defy time to tell the story of gallantry, courage and tragedy of the bygone era and its story of survival in the harsh Thar Desert

### Forts and Palaces



The architecture is basically secular and draws a lot of inspiration from the Mughals, while latter day architecture also embraces European interiors. These structures encompass mahals (palaces), zenanas (women's quarters), diwan-I-aam (public audiences), diwan-I-khas (private audiences), sils (galleries), mandir (temples), bagh (garden) chatris and ramparts for display and parades.

### Temples



The great architectural movement which swept Rajasthan from the 8th to the 11th century was really a later flowering of the virile development inspired by the Guptas during the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries. The 8th and 9th centuries also saw new styles of temples emerging from the Gurjara Pratihara dynasty from Mandore. Temples built around this time also include temples at Chittorgarh and Osian in western Rajasthan. The familiar feature of these temples is a single sikhara or spire and an intricately carved outer chamber called the mandap before the inner sanctum. In many temples the main temple would be surrounded by a series of small and finely carved temples. A good example of these are Kalika Mata Temple and Kumbha Shyam temples in the Chittorgarh fort. Temples at Kiradu in western Barmer known as Solanki style are known for sculptured frescos. The best example in this is the Someshvara Temple, which has fine sculptured fresco, and a multi tiered spire.

The 10th century saw the construction of many splendid Jain Temples, notable amongst them are the Dilwara Temples at Mt Abu, Mahavira Temple at Ghanerao in southern Rajasthan and Ranakpur near Udaipur. At Ranakpur the Chomukha meaning four faced

is the finest. It features a series of mandupas decorated with intricate carving giving a breath taking symmetry. A group of Jain Temples at Jaisalmer are also noteworthy.

A great deal of this fine architecture, however, was destroyed during the earlier Muslim invasions

### **Havelis**

The Merchants of Rajasthan built sumptuously decorated mansions as residences known as havelis. The merchants had commissioned artisans to ensure that they construct and decorate the havelis in a manner that befits the prosperity of the owner. Havelis are common everywhere in Rajasthan but havelis at Shekhawati and Jaisalmer are worth visiting.

#### **Havelis of Shekhawati**

Shekhawati as a region is known for its beautifully painted Havelis, that spreads over Jhunjhunu, Sikar and Churu districts in north-western Rajasthan. Built by rich Marwari merchants of the region, Shekhawati's magnificent mansions display a unique architectural style that evolved around the courtyards to ensure safety and privacy of the womenfolk and protection from the heat of the long and harsh summers.



Painted predominantly in blue, maroon, yellow, green and indigo, the Havelis of Shekhawati have beautiful frescoes that adorn their walls. Earlier wall paintings were largely based on mythological themes, depicting gods, heroes, epics and local legends; and animals, portraits of hunting and wrestling scenes and glimpses of every day life.

The turn of the 19th century saw the appearance of new motifs, an outcome of the British Raj's influence upon the Indian culture. The paintings continued with the mythological themes, but the new entries included European oleographs, lithographs and photographs. Trains, cars, balloons, telephones, gramophones, English men in hunting attires and portraits of Haveli owners primly dressed were painted profusely.

#### **Jaisalmer Havelis**



Patwon ki Haveli is the most elaborate and magnificent of all the Jaisalmer havelis.

Salim Singh ki Haveli was built about 300 years ago and is still partially lived in. Salim Singh was the prime minister of the princely state and his mansion has a beautifully arched roof with superb carved brackets in the form of peacocks. The mansion is just below the hill. It is said that it once had two additional wooden storeys, in an attempt to make it as high as the Maharaja's Palace. The Maharaja of Jaisalmer had the upper storey torn down.

The late 19th century Nathmal ki Haveli was also a prime

minister's house. The left and right wings of the building were carved by brothers and are very similar but not identical. Yellow sandstone elephants guard the building and the front door alone is a work of art.

### **Wells and Tanks**

The importance of a water source in a water scarce area like Rajasthan can be hardly exaggerated. So it is hardly surprising that wells and tanks or 'sagar' (lakes) were decorated ornamentally with beautiful edifices. The water table was very low and step wells (locally known as 'baodi') leading to the water table are beautiful examples of architecture. Some excellent pavilions can be seen on the banks of lakes also.



### **The People**

Rajasthan according to the 2001 census has a population of 56.5 million.

Rajasthan has a large indigenous populace Minas (Minawati) in Alwar, Jaipur, Bharatpur, and Dholpur areas. The Meo and the Banjara are travelling tradesmen and artisans. The Gadia Lohar is the Lohar meaning ironsmith who travels on Gadia meaning bullock carts; they generally make and repair agricultural and household implements. The Bhils are one of the oldest peoples in India, who inhabit the districts of Bhilwara, Chittaurgarh, Dungarpur, Banswara, Udaipur, and Sirohi and are famous for their skill in archery. The Grasia and nomadic Kathodi live in the Mewar region. Sahariyas are found in the Kota district, and the Rabaris of the Marwar region are cattle breeders.

The Oswals hail from Osiyan near Jodhpur are successful traders and are predominately Jains. While the Mahajan (the trading class) is subdivided into a large number of groups, some of these groups are Jain, while others are Hindu. In the north and west, the Jat and Gujar are among the largest agricultural communities. The Gujars who are Hindus dwell in eastern Rajasthan. The nomadic Rabari or Raika are divided in two groups the Marus who breed camels and Chalkias who breed sheep and goats.



The Muslims form less than 10% of the population and most of them are Sunnis. There is also a small but affluent community of Shiite Muslims known as Borhas in southeastern Rajasthan.

The Rajputs, though representing only a small proportion of the populace, are the most influential section of the people in Rajasthan. They are proud of their martial reputation and of their ancestry.

## Religion

*Hinduism*, the religion of most of the population, is generally practised through the worship of Brahma, Shiva, Shakti, Vishnu, and other gods and goddesses. Nathdwara is an important religious centre for the Vallabhacharya sect of Krishna followers. There are also followers of the Arya Samaj, a reforming sect of modern Hinduism, as well as other forms of that religion.

*Jainism* is also important; it has not been the religion of the rulers of Rajasthan but has followers among the trading class and the wealthy section of society. Mahavirji, Ranakpur, Dhulev, and Karera are the chief centres of Jain pilgrimage.

The *Dadupanthis* forms another important religious sect. They are followers of Dadu (d. 1603), who preached the equality of all men, strict vegetarianism, total abstinence from intoxicating liquor, and lifelong celibacy.

*Islam*, the religion of the State's second largest religious community, expanded in Rajasthan with the conquest of Ajmer by Muslim invaders in the late twelfth century. Khwajah Muin-ud-Din Chishti, the Muslim missionary, had his headquarters at Ajmer, and Muslim traders, craftsmen, and soldiers settled there. The State's population of Christians and Sikhs is small.

## Cuisine

Land of Princes, as Rajasthan is called, is famous for its excellent cuisine both within the palaces and outside. In the royal kitchens of Rajasthan, the preparation of food was a very complex matter and was raised to the levels of an art form. Thus the 'Khansamas' (the royal cooks) worked in the stately palaces and kept their most enigmatic recipes to themselves. Some recipes were passed on to their descendants and the rest were passed on as skills to the chefs of semi states and the branded hotel companies.

Rajasthani cooking was inclined to the war-like lifestyle of the medieval Rajasthan and the availability of ingredients of the region. Food that could last for several days and could be eaten without heating was preferred, more out of necessity than choice. Scarcity of water and fresh green vegetables have had their effect on cooking.

In the desert belt of Jaisalmer, Barmer and Bikaner, cooks use a minimum of water and prefer, instead, to use more milk, buttermilk and clarified butter. A distinct feature of the Maheshwari cooking is the use of mango powder, a suitable substitute for tomatoes, scarce in the desert, and asafoetida, to enhance the taste in the absence of garlic and onions.

Generally, Rajasthani curries are a brilliant red but they are not as spicy as they look. Most Rajasthani cuisine uses pure ghee (clarified butter) as the medium of cooking. A favourite sweet dish called *lapsi* is prepared with broken wheat (*dalia*) sautéed in ghee and sweetened.

Perhaps the best-known Rajasthani food is the combination of dal, bati and churma (dal is lentils; bati is baked wheat ball; and churma is powdered sweetened cereal), but for the adventurous traveller, willing to experiment, there is a lot of variety available. Besides, each region is distinguished by its popular sweet - Mawa Kachori from Jodhpur, Alwar ka Mawa, Malpuas from Pushkar, Rasogullas from Bikaner, Ghevar from Jaipur to name a few.

Contrary to popular belief, people of Rajasthan are not all vegetarians. The unique creation of the Maharaja of Salwar is the Junglee maas. Junglee maas was a great favourite among the Maharajas and due to the paucity of exotic ingredients in the camp kitchen, the game brought in from the hunt was simply cooked in pure ghee, salt and plenty of red chillies. However, now this dish has been adapted to the less controversial ingredients like kid/lamb, pork or poultry.

The personal recipes of the royal KHANSAMA still rotate around their generations and are the highlights of regal gatherings. Each state of Rajasthan had its own style of the recipes, and are continued in the Rajput households. It was mainly the men folk of the family that prepared the non-vegetarian dishes. Some of the Maharajas apart from being great hunters relished the passion of cooking the SHIKARS themselves for their chosen guests and the trend continues down the generations.

## NEEMRANA (ALWAR)

### NEEMRANA FORT PALACE

**History :** Built in 1464 AD, Neemrana Fort-Palace is among India's oldest heritage resorts. Neemrana became the third capital of the descendants of Prithviraj Chauhan III, who was killed in battle by Mohammad Ghori in 1192 AD. This picturesque site was chosen by Raja Rajdeo. Neemrana derived its name from a brave local chieftain Nimola Meo, who when defeated by the Chauhans, pleaded that his name be given to his lost kingdom.



**Location :** It is Rajasthan's closest palace from New Delhi, situated at 122 kms. on the Delhi-Jaipur highway - only 100 kms from Delhi's international airport. Sited on a majestic plateau, concealed in a horseshoe formation of the billion year old Aravalli ranges.

**Description :** The property covers 25 acres/10 hectares and the stepped palaces of this architectural jewel cut into the hillside to sprawl over 3 acres/1.2 hectares and rises to 10 levels commanding the most splendid views. Including a vista pool to the horizon. From 1986, the ruins of this Fort-Palace have been sensitively restored and reconstructed. The rooms are furnished with an eclectic mix of traditional Indian and colonial furniture, antiques and objects d'art. Most rooms have private balconies or terraces and the loos are designed to have views!

## MAHANSAR

The relative inaccessibility of **MAHANSAR**, marooned amid a sea of scrub and drifting sand 27km northeast of Fatehpur, has ensured that its monuments, which include a fortress and some of the most elaborate and accomplished interior paintings in Shekhawati, rank among the least visited in the region. A ribbon of hopelessly potholed tarmac leads out here from Mandawa, and another runs due west to Ramgarh, but aside from sporadic buses, the only traffic along them are camel carts and herds of goats. This makes Mahansar an eminently peaceful and pleasant place to hole up for a day or two, and a much more enticing prospect than more touristy Mandawa, a thirty-minute Jeep ride south.

Narayan Niwas Castle was founded by Thakur Nahar Singh in 1768. It was built in phases; and the castle is now run by the seventh descendant of its founder. The fort too has some frescos, and the large rooms are arched.

## BIKANER



Lying in the north of the desert state, the city is dotted with scores of sand dunes. Bikaner retains the medieval grandeur that permeates the city's lifestyle. The city is distinguished for the best riding camels in the world; and hence boasts of having one of the largest camel research and breeding farms in the world.

The ship of the desert is an inseparable part of life here. A camel, besides doing transportation duties, also works on wells. These are built on high plinths with slender minarets on each of the four corners and can be noticed even from a distance.

The history of Bikaner dates back to 1488 when a Rathore prince, Rao Bikaji, founded his kingdom. Bikaji was one of the five sons of Rao Jodhaji the illustrious founder of Jodhpur. But Rao Bikaji was the most adventurous of them. It is said that an insensitive remark from his father about his whispering in the Durbar provoked Bikaji to set up his own kingdom towards the north of Jodhpur. The barren wilderness called Jangladesh became his focus point and he transformed it to an impressive city. He accomplished his task with 100 cavalry horses and 500 soldiers, and established his kingdom on 84 villages abandoned by the 'Shankhlaas'. When Bikaji died in 1504 his rule had extended to over 3000 villages.

Modern Bikaner is the result of the foresight of its most eminent ruler Maharaja Ganga Singh (1887-1943), whose reformative zeal set the pace for Bikaner's transformation from a principality to a premier princely state.

The strategic location of Bikaner on the ancient caravan routes that came from West/Central Asia made it a prime trade centre in those times. Bikaner stands on slightly raised ground and is circumscribed by a seven km long fortified wall with five gates. The magnificent forts and palaces, created with delicacy in reddish-pink sandstone, bear testimony to its rich historical and architectural legacy. Surging lanes, colorful bazaars with bright and cheerful folks make exploring Bikaner an interesting experience.

## Junagarh



Junagarh is an unassailable fortress, which has never been conquered. Built in 1593 by Raja Rai Singh, one of the most distinguished generals in the army of Emperor Akbar, the fort is a formidable structure encircled by a moat.

The main entrance to the fort is Karan Pol [gate], that is east facing. Next to it is the Suraj Pol meaning the sun gate. Situated in the fort are several magnificent palaces like Anup Mahal, Ganga Niwas and Rang Mahal or palace of pleasure. The Har Mandir is the majestic chapel for the royal family for worshipping their gods and goddesses. These palaces, constructed in red sandstone and marble, make a picturesque ensemble of courtyards, balconies, kiosks and windows dotted all over the structure. The premises also house a museum which has a rich collection .

## Lal Garh Palace



This grand palace is an architectural masterwork in red sandstone, and was built by Maharaja Ganga Singh Ji in the memory of his father Maharaja Lal Singh Ji in 1902. Sir Swinton Jacob designed this oriental fantasy. This architecture is a fusion of Rajput, Mughal and European architecture. The exterior contrasts dramatically with the oriental interiors and amenities. The palace has beautiful latticework and filigree work, which are hallmarks of a great craftsmanship.

The Palace has an amazing collection of well-maintained paintings and hunting trophies. Sprawling lawns with blooming bougainvillea and dancing peacocks make a visual extravaganza.

**Bhandeswari Jain Temple** is a fifteenth century temple and is the oldest monument of Bikaner. The temple is decorated with rich mirror work, frescoes and gold leaf paintings.

**Havelis** are ancient mansions of dwelling of the noble and wealthy. They are known for their opulent life style and intricate carvings and craftsmanship along with sprawling courtyards. Bikaner is full of such havelis and the notable amongst them belong to Kotharis, Rampurias, Vaidas and Dagas. To view these havelis the suggested route is Gogagate, Daddhon Ka Chowk, Rangari Chowk, Assanion Ka Chowk, Mohta Chowk, Binnanion Ka Chowk Daga Chowk, BK School and Jassuar Gate.



**Shiv Bari Temple** (6 kms from Bikaner)

Fortified by a high wall, the temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Maharaja Doongar Singh constructed it in the ninth century in the memory of his father Maharaj Lal Singhji. The temple has a beautiful wall painting of Nandi Bull facing the Shiva Lingam. This is located on the way to the camel town.

**Devi Kund** (8 kms from Bikaner)

The royal crematorium has several exquisite cenotaphs (Chhatris). Each Chhatri is dedicated to the memory of rulers of the Bikaji dynasty and is situated on the exact place where they were cremated. The Chhatri of Maharaj Surat Singh is a fine example of architecture. The ceilings of the Chhatris display some delicate Rajput paintings.

### **Deshnok**

Deshnok is a small village situated 32 km south from Bikaner city along the Jodhpur Road. It is connected by national highway and rail. It is a pilgrim centre of Karni Mata. Karni Mata, considered as an incarnation of the Goddess Durga, lived here in the fourteenth century and was formed by taking ten corners of ten villages.

Before the temple is a beautiful marble facade, which has solid silver doors built by Maharaja Ganga Singh. Across the doorway are more silver doors with panels depicting the various legends of the Goddess. The image of the Goddess is enshrined in the inner sanctum.

### **Gajner palace**



Gajner is an incomparable Jewel in the Thar. It was built by the great Maharaja Ganga Singhji of Bikaner on the embankment of a lake with a generous dose of flora and fauna. Basically a hunting and relaxing lodge, the maharaja and the family shared their passion with their exclusive guests and hosted exotic holidays for them.

Around the palace is a thick forestation that attracts the guests to take up a simple walk around admiring the migratory birds in winters like imperial sand goose, antelopes,

black bucks and the animal species that wander around in the form of Nilgais, chinkaras, deers etc. The hotel is spread in a large area, and the ambiance around is as raw and authentic as it was before.

### **Laxmi Niwas Palace**



The palace was the personal residence of Maharaja Ganga Singhji of Bikaner. The residential rooms were designed keeping in mind the fact that they would be used by the royal family itself or by the personal guests of the Maharaja as only guests of equal status to the Maharaja would be invited to spend the night in the palace. Most of the rooms are decorated lavishly using gold wall paintings and have painted or carved wood ceilings.

## PHALODI

About 70 kms from Osian lies the town of Phalodi, a happy little discovery of an ancient desert town. Surrounded by the Thar, Phalodi is equidistant from the famed cities of Bikaner and Jaisalmer, making it an ideal place to visit. The town is filled with really grand red and white sandstone havelis, each a work of art. Old Jain and Hindu temples too charm the visitor, marvels of an ancient sculpted work, done in a remote place.

Phalodi town is home to the 'jooti' and these fine embroidered shoes can be ordered or bought ready made. Glass bangles abound; and the local women put out stalls every day regardless of the heat, selling ornaments and clothes. A small bead jeweller's shop quickly puts together Bishnoi-style necklaces complete with enormous pendants. An early morning trip into the desert is perfect, so cool and pleasant. The sight of the first Bishnoi woman leading a camel is so thrilling, really transporting one to the sands, so strange for one from a far-off coastal city. These women are always splendidly attired, in colourful ghagras, usually red, a nylon odhni, a long blouse and oodles of silver and beaded ornaments. The unmarried girls reveal their faces, but the married ones are modestly covered from head to toe. The camel too is grandly dressed, with embroidered cloth thrown over its dignified hump. The Bishnoi men take it easy, wrapped in mild opium, and immersed in card games through the day.



The fort in Phalodi was built by Rao Hammir Narawat, the grandson of Rao Suja, Maharaja of Jodhpur (Marwar) in the year 1488. Phalodi fort is well renowned with its origins traced to more than 300 years back.

The temple of Jambaji, a few kms from Phalodi, is a simply lovely place, on the banks of a small, very blue lake. It's a perfect picnic spot, to bathe and relax and have a leisurely picnic spread. The temple of Ramdevra too is a popular place, locally much revered.

One drives into Phalodi, often pursued by a sandstorm in summer, with rains beginning in July. The region thus begins its holiday season - a perfect opportunity to explore, and enjoy, a lovely new place, seemingly having excited forever.

### **Demoiselle Cranes of Phalodi**

Adding more glamour to this Kaleidoscope of Rajasthan are the Demoiselle cranes of Phalodi. The advent of these winged visitors has seen an increase in bird watching tours to Phalodi. The Demoiselle cranes of Eurasia and Mongolia have made Phalodi their summer retreat of choice.

An intricately carved palatial haveli that belonged to Seth Sarangdas, Dewan to the Maharaja of Jaisalmer, has been tastefully converted into a luxury Heritage Hotel. An affordable luxury stay in the vast confines of the Thar at WelcomHeritage Lalniwas coupled with a close encounter with the Demoiselle cranes of Phalodi is an experience by itself for avid bird watching tourists.



The Jain temple, established in 1847 by the Oswal Jain community, has been made only in stone and does not have any girders or RCC construction. It is totally made in old Belgium glass. This Jain temple has marvels in architecture which one needs to see to believe.



The Osian Jain temple, 2,500 years old, is a masterpiece in creamy sandstone. Graceful thorans (arches), freestanding pillars and fantastic sculptures make this unique temple something of a fantasy. The dome temple has exquisite figures of apsaras in cream and pink stone, quarried locally long ago. This temple has been restored with care, without using cement or iron. The only materials used for restoration were those used in the original construction

### **Kheechan**

Kheechan is a village is situated 130 kms from Jodhpur and 5 kms from Phalodi. This is a natural sanctuary to the bird Kurjan. This bird belongs to South Western Europe, Black sea, Poland, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, North and South Africa and Mongolia. In India, this bird is known as Kurjan, karkara and kunch. When the European cold becomes intolerable, these birds migrate to India, surviving on insects, frogs, fish, wheat barley and seeds of watermelon. While flying, it makes lot of noise and sounds like kurr-kurr, thus it is known as kurjan. The birds, having great affinity towards the Indian land, occupy a massive area for their stay, transforming it into a bird sanctuary

Kheechan village becomes absolutely deserted when these birds return to Europe.

# JAISALMER

## jaisalmer

Nothing else is like this on this planet and no place would even distantly look like it...



Jaisalmer is like something straight out of an Arabian Nights fable. The name Jaisalmer induces a dramatic picture of utter magic and brilliance of the desert. The hostile terrain, notwithstanding the warmth and colour of the people, is simply overwhelming. One of the main attractions is the daunting 12th century Jaisalmer Fort.

The beautiful havelis, which were built by wealthy merchants of Jaisalmer, are another interesting aspect of the desert city. And you can let your eyes caress the sloppy sand dunes while you ramble your way in a camel safari. The desert citadel is truly a golden fantasy in the Thar Desert.

Bhatti Rajput, ruler Rawal Jaisal, after whom the city finds its name, founded Jaisalmer in 1156. On advice of a local hermit Eesaal, he chose the Tricut Hills as his new abode, abandoning his vulnerable old fort at Luderwa just 16 kilometres northwest. In Medieval times, its prosperity was due to its location on the main trade route linking India to Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Africa and the West. The Bhatti Rajput rulers lined their coffers with gains from traditional taxes on passing caravans and sometimes through illicit gains by rustling cattle.

Over the years the remote location of Jaisalmer kept it almost untouched by outside influences. In the 13th century, Ala-ud-din Khilji, Emperor of Delhi, besieged the fort for nine years in an effort to take back the treasures taken by the Bhatti Rajput from his imperial caravan train. When the fall of the fort was imminent, the women of the fort committed Jauhar, an act of mass self-immolation, while men donned saffron robes and rode to their certain death. Duda, son of Jaitasimha, a Bhatti hero, also perished in the battle. Duda's descendants continued to rule Jaisalmer. In 1541, they even fought Mughal Emperor Humayun, though their relations with Mughal were not always hostile. Sabala Simha won the patronage of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan for battle distinctions in Peshawar and the right to rule Jaisalmer. In the days of the Raj, Jaisalmer was the last to sign the Instrument of Agreement with the British



Ages have gone by and the monuments of Jaisalmer have withstood the buffeting winds of the desert. Jaisalmer is a marvel of beautiful culture and harsh climatic conditions, together amounting to a memorable experience. The old city was completely encircled by a wall but much of it is now pulled down sadly for want of building material in recent years.

## Jaisalmer Fort



Known as SONAR QUILA or the Golden fort, rising from the sand, the mega structure merges with the golden hues of the desert ambience and the setting suns to give it a fairy tale look.

The massive golden fort, which is the essence of Jaisalmer, is entered through 'First Gate.'

It's simply magic. The bastions envelop a whole township, which consists of the palace complex, the havelis of rich merchants, several temples and the residential complexes of the armies and traders.

The fort is placed strategically on the trade routes for ancient caravans bringing riches for the prosperity of an otherwise non-resourced kingdom. These merchants acquired a great deal of power and noble status in the royal courts of the Bhatti Rajputs, who founded the state in the 12th century. The rich merchant, inspired by the classic style of the royals, constructed huge mansions (havelis) adjacent to each other in the nature of medieval culture, with profusely decorated walls and ceilings and intricately carved outdoors and interiors.

## Salim Singh Ki Haveli



This haveli was built about 300 years ago and a part of it is still occupied. Salim Singh was the prime minister when Jaisalmer was the capital of the princely state and his mansion has a beautifully arched roof with superb carved brackets in the form of peacocks. The mansion is just below the hill and it is said that once it had two additional wooden storeys in an attempt to make it as high as the maharaja's palace, but the maharaja had the upper storey torn down

## Nathmal Ji Ki Haveli

Two architect brothers built it in the 19th century. Interestingly, while one concentrated on the right, the other concentrated on the left and the result is a symphony epitomising the side by side symmetry during construction. Paintings in miniature style monopolise the walls in the interior. Mighty tuskers carved out of yellow sandstone stand guard to the haveli

### **Patwon-Ji-Ki-Haveli**

This is one of the largest and most elaborate Haveli in Jaisalmer and stands in a narrow lane. It is five storeys high and is extensively carved. It is divided into six apartments, two owned by archaeological Survey of India, two by families who operate craft-shops and two private homes. There are remnants of paintings on some of the inside walls as well as some mirror work

### **TaziaTower**

The delicate pagoda-like Tazia Tower rises from Badal Mahal (Cloud Palace). Rising in its five-tiered splendour, with each storey graced by a delicately carved balcony, the tower is of historical significance. Muslim craftsmen built it in the shape of a Tazia and gifted it to their royal patron

# JODHPUR

## jodhpur

Jodhpur stands at the edge of the Thar Desert and was citadel of the ancient Marwar kingdom...



This bustling desert city is the second largest city in Rajasthan after Jaipur and has a landscape dominated by the massive Meherangarh Fort topping a sheer rocky ridge. The old city is fenced by a 10 km long wall with eight Gates leading out of it. The new city is outside the walled city. Rao Jodha, a chief of the Rathore clan, founded the city in 1459 and it is named after him.

The Afghans drove the Rathores out of their original homeland of Kaunaj and they fled to the region around Pali, a short distance from present day Jodhpur. A manoeuvre led to marriage between Rathore Siahaji and the sister of a local prince that helped the Rathores to establish and strengthen themselves in this region.

In fact, they flourished so well that they managed to oust the Pratiharas of Mandore, just 9 km from present day Jodhpur.

By 1459, the need for a more secure capital led to the founding of Meherangarh Fort on its rocky perch; and Jodhpur was thus founded by Rao Jodha. The Rathores enjoyed good relations with the Mughals and Maharaja Jaswant Singh (1678) supported Shah Jahan in the latter's struggle in a war of succession.



The only problematic relationship they had was with Aurangzeb. After Aurangzeb's death, Maharaja Ajit Singh drove out the Mughals from Ajmer and added it to Marwar.

In the reign of Maharaja Umed Singh, Jodhpur grew into a fine modern city. The quintessence of Jodhpur was its valour and equestrian skill. Polo has been the traditional sport of the Jodhpur nobility since medieval times

## UMAID BHAWAN PALACE



Maharaja Umaid Singhji who built this palace was fascinated with western lifestyles, so he marshalled the services of a well-known Edwardian architect, Henry Vaughan Lanchester, a creditable equal of Edward Lutyens (architect of New Delhi) to construct a three hundred and forty seven roomed Umaid Palace.

This was to become the last of India's great palaces and the biggest private residence in the world. Spectacular Central Rotunda, the cupola rises to a hundred and five feet high; the Throne Room with its exquisite Ramayana murals; an elegant wood-panelled library, and even a private museum; an indoor swimming pool, a Billiards Room, tennis courts and unique marble squash courts make Umaid Bhawan Palace unabashedly the most magnificent. The palace was also built with superficial intentions of providing employment to famine stricken farmers. The Palace now is a five star deluxe palace hotel. The museum of the palace is highly recommended for its display of weapons, an array of stuffed leopards, a huge banner presented by Queen Victoria and an incredible collection of clocks.

### **MEHRANGARH FORT**

Perched on a 150m high hill, its sprawl is the most formidable and magnificent fort in Rajasthan. Rao Jodha founded it in 1459 but subsequent rulers of Jodhpur have also added to it over the centuries. A meandering road leads from the city 5 kms below. Battle scars of canon ball hits by attacking armies of Jaipur can still be seen on the second gate.



To the left is the chhatri of Kirat Singh Soda, a soldier who fell on the spot while defending the fort against the armies of Amber. There are seven gates, which include Jayapol meaning victory, built by Maharaja Man Singh to commemorate his victories over Jaipur and Bikaner armies. Fattehpole also meaning victory gate was built by Maharaja Ajit Singh to mark the defeat of the Mughals. The palm imprints still attract devotional attention and are covered by vermilion paste and paper-thin silver foil.

The fort includes one of the finest museums in Rajasthan and certainly the best laid out. In the palanquin section of the fort museum, you can see an interesting collection of old royal palanquins including the elaborate domed gilt Mahadol palanquin, which was won in a battle from the Governor of Gujarat in 1730. The museum exhibits the heritage of the Rathores in arms, costumes, paintings and decorated period rooms.

## PALI



Pali is named after the Paliwal Brahmins who once inhabited the area. Ancient Pali housed a highly evolved civilization. The land, was leased by the then chief of Mandore (the former capital of Jodhpur district), was cultivated diligently by the Paliwals who abandoned their former priestly profession. The temples of Somnath and Naulakha are very old. Naulakha Jain temple has elaborate carvings while Somnath Shiv temple is known for its handsome bulling having exquisite mouldings

## MT ABU



In the Raj period, Mt Abu was used as a relaxation place, along with the royalties and semi royalties. Mt Abu has an interesting contrast of British style bungalows, the holiday lodges of the royals (Thikhana), along with the presence of the various communities of the tribals located amidst the thick lush of the forest on the hills surrounding the region.

The flora and fauna enjoy the adulation of the tourist to the fullest. Among the flourishing ranges is the highest point of the Aravalli is the 'Gurushikhar' with a vast sanctuary that shelters a number of species like langur, wild boars, Sambar, leopards and many more along with a number of flowering trees thus enhancing the whole scenario. This glorious ambience suited mainly to the likes of sages and tribals and both made a great impact in the history of the region

## Dilwara Temples

Mount Abu was an important Vaishnava and Shaivite pilgrim centre up to the 11th century. Today, it is recognized the world over for its magnificent Jain temples. No visit to Abu can be complete without a trip to the famed Dilwara temples. These temples are the greatest draw of Abu, apart from its salubrious climate.



Half hidden by mango groves, their sober exterior belies the wealth of their interior ornamentation. Wondrously carved in marble, the Dilwara temples enshrine various Jain tirthankaras, saints. Built between the 11th and 13th century, they are famous for their superb carvings in marble.

Vimal Vasahi, the oldest temple, was built by Vimal Shah, Minister of Solanki, ruler of Gujarat in 1031. It is dedicated to Adinath, the first of the Jain tirthankaras. Constructed out of white marble from Arasoori Hill, near Ambaji, 23 km from Abu Road, it is an outstanding example of Jain temple architecture.



The central shrine has an image of Rishabhdev and large courtyard with 52 small shrines, each housing a beautiful statue of thirthankaras, with 48 elegantly carved pillars from the entrance to the courtyard.

The Vasahi Temple, dedicated to the 22nd tirthankara – Neminath, was built in 1231 by two brothers - Vastupal and Tejpal, Minister of Raja Viradhavala, a ruler of Gujrat belonging to the Porwal Jain community.

The door casings, friezes, architraves, pillars, the sculptures of porticos, are astonishing in their workmanship.

Rewards, in the form of silver and gold equivalent to the weight of marble covered, were offered to the labourer. A great deal of inspiration, devotion, love and encouragement was involved in the construction of this temple.

The most striking feature of this Jain temple built in the Solanki style of architecture is the marble pendant in the dome of the porch. It drops from the ceiling like an enchanting cluster of half-open lotuses with cups so finely carved that they appear to be transparent.

## Gaumukh Temple (Vashistha Ashram)

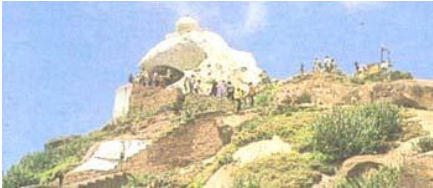
Sages and sheers had their retreats on Mt. Abu, the most famous being sage Vashistha. To regenerate the human race, he performed a yagya or magic fire from which were born the agnikula clans of Chauhan, Solankis, Pannars and Pratiharas. A natural spring that flows through a sculpted cow's head, gives the shrine its name. Nearby is the marble image of Nandi who was rescued by the mighty serpent 'Arbuda'.

Carved out of a rock, the hill temple of Arbuda lies against a picturesque back drop. It is accessible by car or jeep up to 3 km, from where a descent of 750 steps has to be covered on foot.

### **Gurushikhar(15 km)**

The highest peak on the mount (1722 mts above sea level) allows a bird eye view of the sylvan surroundings of Mount Abu.

A small shrine and a temple of Dattatreya standing on the shikhar are worth a visit.

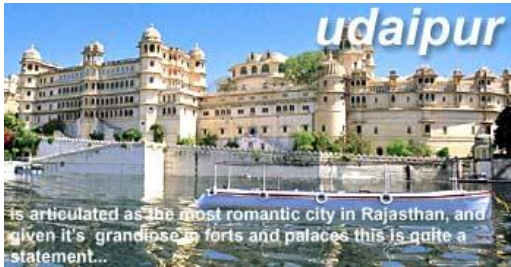


Medieval monument of Mt Abu, is the Achalgadh fort commissioned by Rana Kumbha, who was responsible for dozens of gigantic fortresses in southern Rajasthan, with massive battlemented walls and a situation on a mountain peak offering great views.

A steeply winding path leads up to the 15th century fortress and the temples within the fortified walls, great for a view of the countryside.

The carved Jain temples are a 10 minute climb, worthwhile for the view and the sculpture. Below the path is the Achleshwar temple, with a Nandi said to be made of the five metals-gold, silver, copper, brass and zinc, called Panchadattu, and weigh more than 4 tons. The temple is believed to have been built in the 9th century around a toe print of lord Shiva, with a hole claimed to reach the netherworld, a natural Shivalinga and idols of a crystal like stone, which looks opaque, but when a candle is placed behind it sparkles like crystal. Nearby is the pleasant looking Mandakini lake, enclosed by rocky hills, with images of a Rajput king and buffaloes. According to legend, the tank was filled with ghee and the watering hole of demons disguised as buffaloes until they were shot by Raja Adi Pal.

# UDAIPUR



Udaipur is known as the Venice of the east. It is also called the city of lakes. The Lake Palace on Jag Niwas Island in the middle of Pichola Lakes is the finest example of its architectural and cultural explosion. The grand City Palace on the banks of the lake complements the palace along with the Monsoon Palace (Sajjan Garh) on the hill above.

Udaipur is also the centre for performing arts, craft and its famed miniature paintings. The Ship Gram festival is a centre of attraction during the season

Maharana Udai Singh II founded Udaipur in 1568 after his citadel Chittorgarh was sacked by Mughal Emperor Akbar. The legend says that Udai Singh was guided by a holy man meditating on the hill near Pichola Lake to establish his capital on this very spot. Surrounded by Aravali Ranges, forests and lakes, this place was less vulnerable than Chittorgarh. Maharana Udai Singh died in 1572 and was succeeded by Maharana Pratap, who valiantly defended Udaipur from subsequent Mughal attacks. Maharana Pratap is the most revered Rajput icon and gallantly fought the Mughals at the Haldighati in 1576. Mewar continuously defied foreign invaders and has a history of bloody battles until the British intervention in the nineteenth century, when a treaty was signed to protect Udaipur. Upon independence Udaipur merged in the union of India

## City Palace

City Palace towers over the Pichola Lake. Maharana Uday Singh initiated the construction of the palace, but succeeding Maharanas added several palaces and structures to the complex, retaining a surprising uniformity to the design. The entry to the Palace is from the **Hati Pol**, the Elephant gate.



The **Bari Pol** or the Big gate brings you to the **Tripolia**, the Triple gate. It was once a custom that the Maharana would weigh under this gate in gold and silver, which was distributed to the populace. It is also now the main ticket office. Balconies, cupolas and towers surmount the palace to give a wonderful view of the lake. **Suraj Gokhada** or the balcony of the sun is where the Maharana would grant public audiences mainly to boost the morale of the people in difficult times. The **Mor Chawk** is the peacock square and gains its name from the vivid blue mosaic in glass of a peacock that decorates its walls.

The main part of the palace is now preserved as a museum displaying a large and diverse array of artefacts. Down steps from the entrance is the armoury museum exhibiting a huge collection of protective gear and weapons including the lethal two-

pronged sword. The City Palace museum is then entered through the **Ganesh Deori** meaning the door of Lord Ganesh. This leads to the **Rajya Angan**, the royal courtyard that is the very spot where Maharana Udai Singh met the sage who told him to find a city here. The rooms of the palace are superbly decorated with mirror tiles and paintings. **Manak Mahal** or the Ruby Palace has a lovely collection of glass and mirror work while **Krishna Vilas** display a rich collection of miniature paintings. **Moti Mahal** or the pearl palace has beautiful mirror work and the **Chini Mahal** has ornamental tiles all over. The **Surya Chopar** or the sun square depicts a huge ornamental sun symbolising the sun dynasty to which the Mewar dynasty belongs. The **Bari Mahal** is a central garden with view of the city. Some more beautiful paintings can be seen in the **Zenana Mahal** or the ladies chamber, which leads to **Lakshmi Chowk** a beautiful white pavilion.

### Fateh Prakash Palace

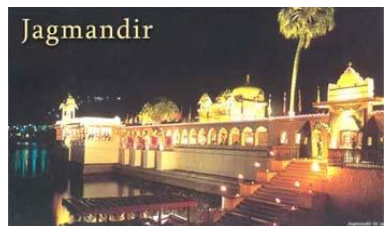


It's like being cocooned in authentic royal luxury at the Fateh Prakash Palace, the grand heritage palace of the HRH group. The warmth of royal hospitality greets you as you walk along the corridors lined with large paintings of the Mewar school that flourished in the seventeenth through nineteenth century.

The lake-facing suites in the turrets are suitably appointed with four poster beds and period furniture, festooned with maroon velvet curtains and delicate silk tassels. It's a legacy kept alive since the early decades of the twentieth century when Maharana Fateh Singh (period of reign: 1884 - 1935) used to be the royal occupant of this palace. Till date the formality of royal occasions is maintained

### Jagmandi

This is the other island palace in Lake Pichola, which was constructed by Maharana Karan Singh as a hideout for Prince Khurram the estranged son of Emperor Jehangir the implacable foe of the Maharana. The reason for the aid was that the prince was the son of a Rajput mother. It is also said that Shah Jahan [prince Khurram] derived some of these ideas for the Taj Mahal from this palace when he stayed there in 1623-24.



The island has some striking carvings including a row of elephants that looks as though they are guarding the island. The exquisitely carved chhatra in grey and blue stone is another example.

Maharana Jagat Singh who made a number of additions to it later renovated the place. Within the palace was the temple dedicated to the Lord Jagdish and hence the name is derived from that. There is a museum detailing the history of the island as well and the neat courtyards

## The Lake Palace



The Lake Palace is located on the Jag Niwas Island and covers the whole of 1.5 hectare of the island in the middle of the Pichola Lake. Built by Maharana Jagat Singh in 1743, it was meant as a royal summer palace and now converted in to a five star palace hotel.

It is a magical palace and its image in the middle of the lake is like a leaf straight out of a fairy tale book with an excellent taste of intricate craftsmanship and the ethnic themes using the textiles and handicrafts all over highlight the beauty that is simply beyond compare the lake around makes a pleasant murmur with its rippling waves and lapping that adds to the mesmerising moments.

## Jagdish Mandir

Built by Maharana Jagat Singh I in 1651, the temple enshrines a black stone image of Lord Vishnu. There is a brass image of Garuda the Lord bird carrier. The exterior and the plinth are covered with base relief of alligators; elephants, horsemen and celestial musicians rise in tiers. Chanting, bells and music can be heard throughout the day. It is the largest and most splendid temple of Udaipur.

## Bagore-Ki Haveli

This is a very congenial old building built right on the waterfront of Lake Pichola at Gangori Ghat. Amir Chand Badwa, the Prime Minister of Mewar built it in the eighteenth century. The palace has over a hundred rooms and some very interesting display of costumes and modern art. The glass and mirror in the interiors of the Haveli are delicate work and well preserved. It also preserves a fine example of Mewar Painting on the walls of Queen's Chamber.



The two peacocks made from small pieces of coloured glass are fine examples of glasswork. After the death of Badwa the building became the property of Mewar State. It came to be occupied by Maharana Shakti Singh of Bagore who built the palace of the three arches also in 1878 and it acquired its name of Bagore-ki-haveli, the house of Bagore. After independence, the structure lay in neglect until 1986 when it housed the West Zone Cultural centre.

The haveli now stages a delightful evening's entertainment; the pleasurable performance of Rajasthani traditional dance and music in the moody surroundings of the haveli. It is an ideal place for an evening entertainment while enjoying the view of Lake Pichola.

## Kumbhalgarh Fort



Located 64 kms north of Udaipur in the wilderness, Kumbhalgarh is the second most important citadel after Chittorgarh in the Mewar region. Cradled in the Aravali Ranges the fort was built in the 15th century by Rana Kumbha. Because of its inaccessibility and hostile topography the fort had remained un-conquered.

It also served the rulers of Mewar as a refuge in times of strife. The fort also served as refuge to the baby king Udai of Mewar. It is also of sentimental significance as it is the birthplace of Mewar's legendary King Maharana Partap.

The fort is self-contained and has within its amalgam almost everything to withstand a long siege. The fort fell only once - to the combined armies of Mughal and of Amber for scarcity of drinking water. There are many magnificent palaces and an array of temples built by the Mauryas, of which the most picturesque place is the Badal Mahal or the



palace of the clouds. The fort also offers a superb bird's view of the surroundings. The fort's thick wall stretches some 36 kms and is wide enough to take eight horses abreast. Maharana Fateh Singh renovated the fort in the 19th century. The fort's large compound has very interesting ruins and the walk around it can be very rewarding.

## Chittaurgarh



Chittorgarh is the epitome of Rajput pride, romance and spirit. It reverberates with history of heroism and sacrifice, which is evident as it echoes with the tales sung by the Bards of Rajasthan. The main reason for visiting Chittorgarh is its massive hilltop fort, which is a depiction of Rajput culture and values.

The fort stands on a 240-hectares site on an 180m high hill that rises rapidly from the plains below.

Thrice a stronger enemy sacked Chittorgarh. The first sack occurred in 1303 when a Pathan King Ala-ud-din Khilji overwhelmed by the beauty of Queen Padmini besieged the fort in order to capture the regal beauty. In 1535 Bahadur Shah the Sultan of Gujarat besieged the fort causing immense carnage and it is said that 32,000 men donned the saffron robes of martyrdom and rode out to face a certain death, and the

women folk committed Jauhar (an act of self immolations by plunging in a large fire) led by Rani Karnawati

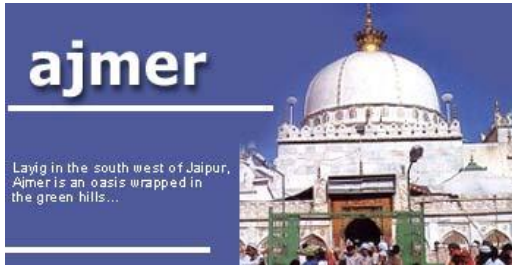
In 1568, Mughal Emperor Akbar razed the fort to the rubble and once again the history repeated itself. In 1616 Mughal emperor Jehangir restored the fort to the Rajput but it was not resettled. Today a new township sprawls below the hill on the west side.



Chittorgarh Fort is a massive structure with a 1 kilometre zigzag accent to it. The road leads through seven gates to the main gate Rampol (meaning Gate of Ram). On the climb between the second and third gate you see two Chattris cenotaphs built to honour Jaimull and Kulla heroes of 1568 siege by Emperor Akbar. The main gate of the fort itself is Surajpol (meaning Sun Gate). Within the fort a circular runs around the ruins of the fort.

According to often told legend, the construction of the fort was started by Bhim a Pandav hero of mythological epic Mahabharata. The fort has many magnificent monuments. Akbar carried away all the distinctive pieces of architecture and sculpture and placed them in his capital. These are still manifested in the fort of Agra. Even though the fort is in ruin but it is an overwhelming reminder of past history and its walls resonate with unbelievable legend of extra ordinary men and women and their equally astounding deeds.

## AJMER/PUSKAR

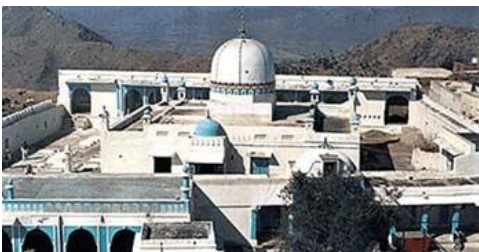


South west of Jaipur, Ajmer is an oasis wrapped in the green hills. The city was founded by Raja Ajay Pal Chauhan in the 7th Century and continued to be a major centre of the Chauhan power till 1193, When Prithviraj Chauhan lost it to Mohammed Ghauri. Since then, Ajmer became home to many dynasties.

Today, Ajmer is a popular pilgrimage centre for the Hindus as well as Muslims. Especially famous is the Dargah Sharif-tomb of the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, which is equally revered by the Hindus and Muslims. It is a centre of culture and education. The British chose Ajmer for its prestigious Mayo College, a school exclusively for Indian nobility. Ajmer is also the base for visiting Pushkar (11 km.), the abode of Lord Brahma, lying to its west with a temple and a picturesque lake. The Pushkar Lake is a sacred spot for Hindus. During the month of Kartik (Oct./Nov.), devotees throng in large numbers here to take a dip in the sacred lake.

Ajaipal Chauhan founded Ajmer in the seventh century. He constructed a hill fort "Ajameur" or the invincible hill. The Chauhans ruled Ajmer till the 12th century when Prithviraj Chauhan lost Mohammed Ghauri. Thereafter it became a part of the sultanate of Delhi. Ajmer was also a favourite residence for the great Mughals. One of the first contacts between the Mughal King Jahangir and Sir Thomas Roe took place here in 1616. The Scindias took over the city in 1818 and then handed it over to the British and it became one of the only parts of Rajasthan controlled directly by the East Indian Co.

### TARAGARH FORT



The giant fort stands guarding the city. It has six gates. The fort also has Miran Saheb ki Dargha who was the governor of the fort and laid down his life in an encounter. It gives a panoramic view of the city situated in Nagpahari of Aravalli ranges, this fort has immense archaeological and historical importance

### ADHAI - DIN KA- JHONPRA

This is a masterpiece of Indo - Islamic architecture. As legend goes, it was constructed in two and a-half days (Adhi-Din). It is a relic of an old mosque consisting of a quadrangle with a front screen wall of seven pointed arches. The distinct pillars and arched screen with its ruined minarets make it a splendid architectural masterpiece.

## **PUSKAR CAMEL FAIR**

The Pushkar Camel Fair is one of the largest in India and the only one of its kind in the entire world. During the fair, Lakhs of people from rural India flock to Pushkar, along with camels and cattle for several days of live stock trading, horse dealing, pilgrimage and religious festivities.

This small town becomes a cultural phenomenon when colourfully dressed devotees, musicians, acrobats, folk dancers, traders, comedians, sadhus and tourists reach here during the Pushkar fair. According to Hindu chronology, it takes place in the month of Kartika (October or November) beginning on ashtmi 8th day of Lunar Calendar and continues till full moon (Poornima). The camel and cattle trading is at its peak during the first half of festival period. During the later half, religious activities dominate the scenario. Devotees take dips in the holy "Sarovar" lake, as the sacred water is known to bestow salvation.

This small town is transformed into a spectacular fair ground, as rows of make shift stalls display an entire range of objects of art to daily utility stuff. Decoration items for Cattle, Camel and women, everything is sold together. Small handicraft items are the best bargain for buying souvenir. The camel and horse races have crowds to cheer. Camel judging competitions are popular with animal lovers. Each evening brings different folk dances and music of Rajasthan, performers delivering live shows to the roaring and applauding crowds.

Pushkar fair has its own magic and it's a lifetime experience for travellers. It has featured in numbers of travel shows, films and magazine. According to lonely planet – "it's truly a feast for the eyes. If you are anywhere within striking distance at the time, Its an event not to be missed." Foot print India handbook 200I writes- "The huge mela is Pushkar's biggest draw an unforgettable experience."

## **BRAHMA TEMPLE**

This is the only existing temple dedicated to lord Brahma and was constructed in the 14th century, standing on a high plinth with marble steps leading up to it.

A beautiful carved silver turtle sits on the floor facing the sanctorum or Garbha Griha. The marble floor around the silver turtle is embedded with hundreds of silver coins, with donors' names engraved on them.

## **OLD RANGJI TEMPLE**

Lord Rangji is an carnation in of lord Vishnu. This temple was built in 1823 by Seth Puran Mal Ganeriwai of Hyderabad. This temple is unique due to confluence of South Indian style (Dravid) Rajput and Mughal style of architecture.

## **NEW TEMPLE**

The gracious temple is very conspicuous, due to its south Indian style of architecture. It has a high rising Gopuram typical of southern India

Pushkar has more than 400 temples, the other important temples are Balaji la Mandir and Man Mandir

# JAIPUR

# jaipur



**The capital city and the natural gateway to the exotic Rajasthan...**

Jaipur is 260 km from Delhi and 240 km from Agra and forms the most chosen tourism golden triangle of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. It a bustling capital city and a business centre with all the trapping of modern metropolis but yet flavoured strongly with an age-old charm that never fails to surprise a traveller.

The old Jaipur painted in Pink can grip any visitor with admiration. Stunning backdrop of ancient forts Nahargarh, Amer, Jagarh and Moti Dungri are dramatic testimonials of the bygone era and a reminder of their lingering romance.

Jaipur is named after its founder the warrior and astronomer sovereign Sawai Jai Singh II (ruled 1688 to 1744). The decision to move out of his hilltop capital Amer was also compelled by reasons of growing population and paucity of water. Moreover in the early seventh century the power of the great Mughals was dwindling with its aging Monarch Aurangzeb and after several centuries of invasions the north was now quite and the wealth of the kingdom had become greater than before. Seizing upon this opportune time Jai Singh planned his new capital in the planes. Jaipur is a corroborative effort of Sawai Jai Singh's strong grounding in sciences and astrology and a Bengali architect Vidyadhar with a strong instinct for planning.

## City palace



Located in the heart of the walled city, The City Palace Complex gives you an idea about the farsightedness of the founder of Jaipur Sawai Jai Singh. He left behind a legacy of some of the most imposing and magnificent architecture, art and craft structure in the city.

Sawai Jai Singh built its many buildings but some of some of the structures were also built by later rulers and some of them are even dated in the in the twentieth century too. The palace is a blend of Mughal and Rajasthani architecture and the royal family still lives in a part of the palace.



Mubarak Mahal City Palace

On entering the complex and before the palace proper lies the Mubarak Mahal, the palace of welcome or reception. Sawai Madho Singh built the palace in the nineteenth century. It was used as a reception centre for the visiting personage. The building

now forms the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum and on display here are a wide array of royal costumes, some very exquisite and precious Pashmina (Kashmiri) Shawls, Benaras silk saris, Sanganeri prints and folk embroidery. An unusual display is that of voluminous clothes worn by Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh I (ruled 1750-68).

The Maharani's Palace, the palace of the Queen paradoxically puts a display of the Rajput weaponry. The inestimable collections of weapons date back to even 15th century and are in a remarkable state of preservation. Remarkable amongst them is scissor-action dagger. This deadly weapon when thrust in bodies the handles were release to spread the blades. The dagger was then withdrawn tearing limb from limb of the body of the hapless victim into certain fatality. Other exhibits include protective chain armours, pistols, jewelled and ivory handled swords, a belt sword, small and assorted cannons, guns, poison tipped blades and gun powder pouches. The frescos on the ceiling are amazing and well preserved.

### **Moti Dungri (Ganesh Temple)**

In the middle of Jaipur rises a small hill Moti Dungri meaning pearl hill, because it looks hill a drop of pearl. An exotic palace is perched which is a replica of Scottish castle once occupied by Maharaja Madho Singh's son. From There on remained as a private property of the ruling family.



In the recent past it served as a home for Rajmata Gaytri Devi and her estranged son Jagat Singh. The mere view of this castle is exotic enough. The highlight of this place is the famous and auspicious temple of Lord Ganesh, which is frequently visited by almost whole of Jaipur and people from outside.

### **Jaigarh Fort**



Jaigarh Fort

The Jaigarh fort is the most spectacular of the three-hilltop forts that overlook Jaipur. In Mughal times, the Jaipur region was a major weapon-producing centre for the Mughal and Rajput rulers, several of which are on display in the fort's museum. It is one of the few military structures of medieval India preserved almost intact.

It contains palaces, a granary, a well-planned cannon foundry, several temples, a tall tower and a giant mounted cannon-the Jai Ban (Jaivan) which is the largest cannon in the world. Jaigarh Fort is also known as the fort of victory. The display includes a collection of canons, many of which are exquisitely decorated and were used in the Mughal campaigns led by the Rajput King, Raja Man Singh.

Of the Jaipur's three forts, Jaigarh is perhaps the most motivating. It does not have those delicate structures or palaces like that of Amber but if you want a quick look at a hard-core fortress, this is it. Jaigarh means 'Victory Fort' and was built between the 15th and the 18th century, and stands 15 km from Jaipur, amidst rock-strewn, thorn-

scrub covered hills, its forbidding stone ramparts are visible from the Jaipur town. A steep road goes up to the main gate, the Dungar Darwaza, from where the view is stupendous.

### Nahargarh Fort



Nahargarh Fort

Nahargarh Fort is located on the sheer rugged ridge of Aravali Hills and it forms an impressive northern backdrop of Jaipur. It looks most classy when floodlit at night. The fort overlooks the city and presents a glittering view of the city lights. It was built in 1734 and extended in 1868. Nahargarh meaning abode of the tigers was built by Jai Singh to bolster the defence of Amber.

The legend also have it that it was named Nahargarh after Nahar Singh a prince whose spirit would destroy the construction and not allow its progress further. So after a tantrik prayer to the spirit it agreed to leave on condition that the fort is named after him. The Madhavendra Bhawan, built by Sawai Ram Singh II has uniquely a cluster of 12 identical suits for queens and at the head is a suit for the king himself. The rooms are linked by corridors and retain some delicate frescos as well as toilets and kitchen hearths. It was used by members of the royal family for excursion in summers and is now even a favoured picnic spot. Durg Cafeteria just above the entrance sells meals and refreshments, while Padao Restaurant on the west sells drinks around sunset.

### Amber

Amber (pronounced Amer) is situated about 11 kilometres from Jaipur and was the ancient citadel of the ruling Kachhawa clan of Amber, before the capital was shifted in the plains to present day Jaipur.

The Amber Fort set in picturesque and rugged hills is a fascinating blend of Hindu and Mughal architecture.



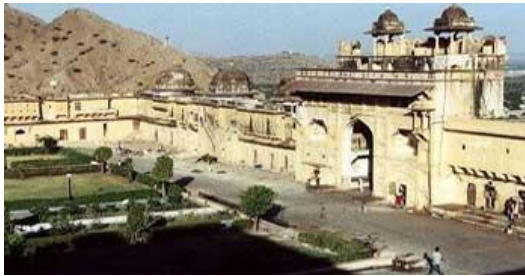
Constructed by Raja Man Singh I in 1592 and completed by Sawai Jai Singh I the fort is made in red sand stone and white marble. The rugged forbidding exterior belies an inner paradise with a beautiful fusion of art and architecture. Amber is the classic and romantic fort- palace with a magnificent aura. The interior wall of the palace depicts expressive painting scenes with carvings, precious stones and mirror settings. In the foreground is the Maota Lake providing a breathtaking look. Built mainly for the warring enemies as a safe place, the heavily structured walls could defend the residents within the ramparts of the fort.

All the means of survival & luxuries for the royal families and the people who were concerned with the functioning of this small kingdom of the Kachhawas were well provided. The Rajputs who had apparently won a small structure passed on by Meena tribes, later on renovated it into the grand Amber Fort. Holding a history so old as 7 centuries, this place vibrates with its legendary past, in the archaeological history.

Although many of the early structures have been literally ruined but at the same time, those dating from the 16th century on are remarkably preserved by sincere efforts.

The fort has 4 sections; each with the premises and one has to climb up through the imposing stairway or else the broad aisle, where one can ride on the elephant back for royal feel. The main gate **Surajpol** that leads to the **Jaleb chowk**, which is the main courtyard from where one can walk up the stairway, that leads to the palace. Jaleb Chowk was also the area where returning armies were welcome and they would display their war earnings to the population at large.

Before you enter the palace just towards the right is a sleep aisle and a narrow staircase reaching up to Kali Temple also called **Shila Devi Temple** famous for its mysterious history and the huge silver lions. It is a gorgeous temple featuring silver doors with raised relief. According to a legend, Maharaja Man Singh I had worshiped the Goddess for a victory over the rulers of Bengal. The Goddess appeared in the Maharaja's dream and ordered him to recover her statue lying under sea near Jessore (now in Bangladesh) and install it in a befitting Temple. True enough, after subjugating the enemies the Maharaja recovered the statue from the bed of the sea. The temple is called after Shila Devi, "shila" meaning stone slab. Like all temples this too has an image of Ganesha on the doorway, but carved from a single piece of coral.



Getting back from the temple the main stairways lead to the second courtyard of the fort. Here situated is the imposing **Diwan-I-Aam**, the hall of public audiences where the Maharaja received the populace and their petitions. This is a pavilion of double row of columns each capped by an elephant shape. There is a lattice gallery also.

Behind the exquisite and fabulous **Ganesh Pol**, "pol" meaning gate are located in the residential apartments of the Maharaja. The **Jai Mandir**, the Hall of Victory is famous for its inlaid panel and dazzling mirror ceiling. Much of it had deteriorated with neglect and is under restoration.

On the other side is **Sukh Niwas**, the residence of pleasure or pleasurable residence. The palace has an ivory inlaid sandalwood door. A channeled laid for flow of water is an inventive system of cooling. The water flowing from the channel wasn't wasted as it was allowed to flow in the garden. From there you can also take pleasure in viewing of the fort rampart and its reflection in the **Moata Lake**.

The **Zenana** or the palace of the women are in the forth courtyard. The rooms are though connected through a common corridor are cleverly designed to give each room privacy

## BHARATPUR



In 1733 AD, Raja Badan Singh 's adopted son, Suraj Mal had shown signs of promise, when he captured the fort of Bharatpur from Khemkaran, the rival chief, whom he killed and thus laid the foundation of Bharatpur City.

Maharaja Suraj Mal displayed immense courage and carved a niche for himself in the midst of political disorder. Gathering around him fiercely martial Jat peasants, he went from one success to another. He accompanied Emperor Muhammed Shah against Ali Muhammed Ruhela and in 1748 AD, at the battle of Bagru he led the Jaipur vanguard against the Marathas. He also defeated the commander-in-chief of the Mughal emperor. Despite being a very religious man he was secular



**Maharaja Suraj Mal**

The history of Bharatpur dates back to the epic age, when the Matsya Kingdom flourished here in the 5th century BC. The Matsyas were allies of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata war. According to tradition the name of Bharatpur is traced to Bharat, the brother of Lord Rama of Ayodhya whose other brother Laxman was given the high place of family deity of the ruling family of Bharatpur. His name also appears in the state seals and coat-of-arms.

Bharatpur, which is also called the Eastern gateway of Rajasthan, was founded by Maharaja Suraj Mal in 1733 AD. Raja Badan Singh's adopted son, Suraj Mal had shown signs of promise, when he captured the fort of Bharatpur from Khemkaran, the rival chief, whom he killed and thus laid the foundation of Bharatpur City. Maharaja Suraj Mal displayed immense courage and carved a niche for himself in the midst of political disorder. Gathering around him fiercely martial Jat peasants, he went from one success to another. He accompanied Emperor Mohammed Shah against Ali Mohammed Ruhela and in 1748 AD, at the battle of Bagru he led the Jaipur vanguard against the Marathas. He also defeated the commander-in-Chief of the Mughal emperor.

He built numerous forts and palaces across the kingdom including the Pleasure Palace complex at Deeg. Bharatpur, is today known the world-over for its Keoladeo Ghana National Park

## FATEHPUR SIKRI



37 kms from Agra is built a city predominantly in Red Sandstone and is called Fatehpur Sikri. This town was built by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar. He had planned this city as his capital but shortage of water compelled him to abandon the city. After this within 20 years, the capital of Mughals was shifted to Lahore.

Fatehpur Sikri was built during 1571 and 1585. Today this ghost city has a population of about 30,000. This deserted city has retained many of the

old structures, because of the efforts of the Archaeological department .

Fatehpur Sikri is one of the finest examples of Mughal architectural splendour at its height. Though the city is in ruins, it is a place to visit if one comes to Agra. But in real terms Fatehpur Sikri is a place where one should spend some time. The sunset over the ruins is sight to cherish.

Fatehpur Sikri is the best example of the culmination of Hindu and Muslim architecture. Fatehpur Sikri Mosque is said to be a copy of the mosque in Mecca and has designs, derived from the Persian & Hindu architecture.

### Prime Attractions of Fatehpur Sikri

#### § Diwan-I-Am

The journey to the royal palace begins with Diwan-I-Am or the Hall Of Public Audience. This hall was also used for celebrations and public prayers. It has cloisters on three sides of a rectangular courtyard. To the west is a pavilion with the Emperor's throne. Beautiful jali screen on either sides separated the ladies attending the court.

#### § Diwan-khana-I-khaas

To the right is an apparently looking two storeyed building, with corner kiosks, known as diwan-khana-I-khaas or Hall Of Private Audience. On entering it, one finds only a single vaulted chamber. In the centre stands a profusely carved column supporting a colossal-bracketed capital. Four narrow causeways project from the centre and run to each corner of the chamber. It is believed that Akbar's throne occupied the circular space over the capital and the corners were assigned to the four ministers.

#### § Turkish Sultana's House

To the left of the Pachisi Board is the Turkish Sultana's house. The house, as its location at the corner of Anup Talao shows, was a pavilion for repose, attached to the pool. The geometrical pattern on the ceiling is reminiscent of Central Asian carvings in wood.

#### § The Treasury

To the left of the Diwan-I-Khaas is the Treasury or Ankh Michauli, once believed to have been used for playing the game, comprising three rooms each protected by a narrow corridor which were manned by guards.

#### § Daulat khana-I-khas

Located in the corner to the left is the emperor's private chamber. It has two main rooms on the ground floor. One housed Akbar's library while the larger room was his

resting area. On the first floor is the Khwabgah or the bed-chamber. It was connected with the Turkish Sultana's house, the Panch Mahal, Mariam's House and the Jodha Bai's palace by corridors.

### § Palace of Jodha Bai



To the left of the Sunehra Makan is the largest and the most important building in the royal palace, named after Akbar's Rajput wife, Jodha Bai. This spacious palace was assured of privacy and security by high walls and a 9 metre guarded gate to the east. The architecture is a blend of styles with Hindu columns and Muslim cupolas.

### § Hawa Mahal And Nagina Masjid

To the right of Jodha Bai's palace is Hawa Mahal, the Palace of Winds. This small-screened wind tower faces the garden and is attached to the palace. The garden is laid out in the Char Bagh style with straight walls intersecting at right angles and divided by shallow channels.

### § Birbal's Palace

To the north west of the Jodha Bai's Palace is the 2 storeyed palace occupied by Akbar's two senior queens- ruqnayya begum and salima sultan begum. It has two storeys-four rooms and two porches with pyramidal roofs below and two rooms with cupolas and screened terraces above. The building combines hindu and muslim atyles of srchitecture.

### § Sunehra Makan

Opposite to the Diwan-I-Khas is the palace of Akbar's Rajput wife, Mariam-Uz-Zamani. This two-storeyed building is richly adorned by gold murals in Persian style. The beams have inscriptions of verses by Akbar's brother, Faizi.

### § Panch Mahal

To the right of Sunehra Makan is the elegant, airy 5 storeyed pavilion, the Panch Mahal. Each floor over here is smaller than the one below and it rises to a single domed kiosk on top supported by four columns providing a magnificent view of the city and its environs.

### § Dargah Of Sheikh Salim Chisti

To the North of the Mosque is the Dargah of Shaikh Salim Chishti. This Dargah was built in 1570. Here, childless women come for blessings of the saint. Even Akbar was blessed with three sons, when he came here. The lattice work in the Dargah is among the finest to be found any where in India.

### § The Jami Masjid

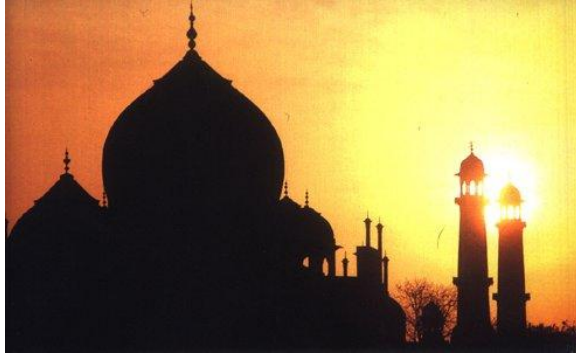
One of the largest mosques in India, Jami Masjid was built in 1571 AD. Inside, there is a vast congregational coutyard. To the right, at the corner, is the Jammal Khana Hall and next ot this is the tomb of the royal ladies. To the left of the Jami Masjid is the Stone Cutters' mosque, the oldest place of worship at Fateh Pur Sikri. It is entered through the eastern entrance known as the Buland Darwaza.

### § Buland Darwaza

This gate can be approached from the outside by a 13-metre flight of steps which adds to its grandeur. The gate erected in 1602 AD to commemorate Akbar's victory over Deccan is the highest and grandest gateway in India and ranks among the biggest in the world.

## AGRA

### Tajmahal - A Tribute to Beauty



Agra, once the capital of the Mughal Empire during the 16th and early 18th centuries, is one and a half hours by express train from New Delhi. Tourists from all over the world visit Agra not to see the ruins of the red sandstone fortress built by the Mughal emperors but to make a pilgrimage to [Taj Mahal](#), India's most famous architectural wonder, in a land where magnificent temples and edifices abound to remind visitors about the rich civilization of a country that is slowly but surely lifting itself into an industrialized society.

The postcard picture of *Taj Mahal* does not adequately convey the legend, the poetry and the romance that shroud what Rabindranath Tagore calls "*a teardrop on the cheek of time*". *Taj Mahal* means "Crown Palace" and is in fact the most well preserved and architecturally beautiful tomb in the world. It is best described by the English poet, Sir Edwin Arnold, as "*Not a piece of architecture, as other buildings are, but the proud passions of an emperor's love wrought in living stones.*" It is a celebration of woman built in marble and that's the way to appreciate it.

*Taj Mahal* stands on the bank of River Yamuna, which otherwise serves as a wide moat



defending the Great Red Fort of Agra, the centre of the Mughal emperors until they moved their capital to Delhi in 1637. It was built by the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan in 1631 in memory of his second wife, Mumtaz Mahal, a Muslim Persian princess. She died while accompanying her husband in Burhanpur in a campaign to crush a rebellion after giving birth to their 14th child. The death so crushed the emperor that all his hair and beard were said to have grown snow white in a few months.



When Mumtaz Mahal was still alive, she extracted four promises from the emperor: first, that he build the Taj; second, that he should marry again; third, that he be kind to

their children; and fourth, that he visit the tomb on her death anniversary. He kept the first and second promises. Construction began in 1631 and was completed in 22 years. Twenty thousand people were deployed to work on it. The material was brought in from all over India and central Asia and it took a fleet of 1000 elephants to transport it to the site. It was designed by the Iranian architect Ustad Isa and it is best appreciated when the architecture and its adornments are linked to the passion that inspired it. It is a *"symbol of eternal love"*.

The Taj rises on a high red sandstone base topped by a huge white marble terrace on which rests the famous dome flanked by four tapering minarets. Within the dome lies the jewel-inlaid cenotaph of the queen. So exquisite is the workmanship that the Taj has been described as *"having been designed by giants and finished by jewellers"*. The only asymmetrical object in the Taj is the casket of the emperor which was built beside the queen's as an afterthought. The emperor was deposed by his son and imprisoned in the Great Red Fort for eight years but was buried in the Taj. During his imprisonment, he had a view of the Taj.

As a tribute to a beautiful woman and as a monument for enduring love, the Taj reveals its subtleties when one visits it without being in a hurry. The rectangular base of Taj is in itself symbolic of the different sides from which to view a beautiful woman. The main gate is like a veil to a woman's face which should be lifted delicately, gently and without haste on the wedding night. In Indian tradition the veil is lifted gently to reveal the beauty of the bride. As one stands inside the main gate of Taj, his eyes are directed to an arch which frames the Taj.

The dome is made of white marble, but the tomb is set against the plain across the river and it is this background that works its magic of colours that, through their reflection, change the view of the Taj. The colours change at different hours of the day and during different seasons. Like a jewel, the Taj sparkles in moonlight when the semi-precious stones inlaid into the white marble on the main mausoleum catch the glow of the moon. The Taj is pinkish in the morning, milky white in the evening and golden when the moon shines. These changes, they say, depict the different moods of woman.

Different people have different views of the Taj but it would be enough to say that the Taj has a life of its own that leaps out of marble, provided you understand that it is a monument of love. As an architectural masterpiece, nothing could be added or subtracted from it.

## DELHI

New Delhi, the capital and the third largest city of India is a fusion of the ancient and the modern. Standing along the West End of Gangetic Plain, the capital city, Delhi, unwinds a picture rich with culture, architecture and human diversity, deep in history, monuments, museums, galleries, gardens and exotic shows. Comprising of two contrasting yet harmonious parts, the Old Delhi and New Delhi, the city is a travel hub of Northern India.

Narrating the city's Mughal past, Old Delhi, takes you through the labyrinthine streets passing through formidable mosques, monuments and forts. You will also discover lively and colourful bazaars that boast to cater all sorts of goods and items at mind-blowing prices amidst a barely controlled chaotic ambience. The imperial city of New Delhi displays the finely curved architecture of British Raj.

It generates a mesmerizing charm reflecting well-composed and spacious streets under the shade of beautifully lined avenues of trees and tall and imposing government buildings.

New Delhi has expanded and now encompasses residential and commercial development to the west and south, plus the satellite towns off Noida, Gurgaon and Faridabad.

Delhi has overtaken Mumbai & Kolkata in recent years to become the most vibrant creative art centre in India. The city has more than twenty five galleries. Conducted tours, seminars, film shows and study classes on art appreciation, history and conservation are frequently organized. Most of the performing art centres are around Mandi House, Bhagwan Das Road.

There is an amazing range of activity from cultural walks, talks, theatre productions and art exhibitions to films by Indian and foreign directors. One can find an option at the Habitat World at Lodhi Road as well as Siri Fort at Khel Gaon.

### LAL QUILA (RED FORT)



The red sandstone walls of the massive Red Fort (Lal Qila) rise 33-m above the clamour of Old Delhi as a reminder of the magnificent power and pomp of the Mughal emperors. The walls, built in 1638, were designed to keep out invaders, now they mainly keep out the noise and confusion of the city.

The main gate, Lahore Gate, is one of the emotional and symbolic focal points of the modern Indian nation and attracts a major crowd each Independence Day.

The vaulted arcade of Chatta Chowk, a bazaar selling tourist trinkets, leads into the huge fort compound. Inside is a veritable treasure trove of buildings, including the Drum House, the Hall of Public Audiences, the white marble Hall of Private Audiences, the Pearl Mosque, Royal Baths and Palace of Colour.

An evening sound and light show re-creates events connected with the fort.

## INDIA GATE



At the centre of New Delhi stands the 42 m high India Gate, an "Arc-de-Triomphe" like archway in the middle of a crossroad. Almost similar to its French counterpart, it commemorates the 70,000 Indian soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the British Army during World War I. The memorial bears the names of more than 13,516 British and Indian soldiers killed in the Northwestern Frontier in the Afghan war of 1919.

The foundation stone of India Gate was laid by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, in 1921 and it was designed by Edwin Lutyens. The monument was dedicated to the nation 10 years later by the then Viceroy, Lord Irwin.

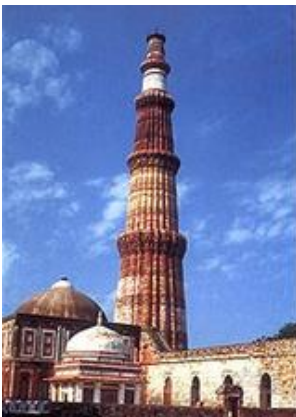
Another memorial, Amar Jawan Jyoti, was added much later, after India got its independence. The eternal flame burns day and night under the arch to remind the nation of soldiers who laid down their lives in the Indo-Pakistan War of December 1971.

The entire arch stands on a low base of red Bharatpur stone and rises in stages to a huge moulding. The cornice is inscribed with the Imperial suns while both sides of the arch have INDIA, flanked by the dates MCMXIV (1914 left) and MCMXIX (1919 right). The shallow domed bowl at the top was intended to be filled with burning oil on anniversaries but this is rarely done.

During nightfall, India Gate is dramatically floodlit while the fountains nearby make a lovely display with coloured lights. India Gate stands at one end of Rajpath, and the area surrounding it is generally referred to as 'India Gate'.

Surrounding the imposing structure is a large expanse of lush green lawns, which is a popular picnic spot. One can see hoards of people moving about the brightly lit area and on the lawns on summer evenings

## QUTAB MINAR



Qutab Minar is a soaring, 73 m-high tower of victory, built in 1193 by Qutab-ud-din Aibak immediately after the defeat of Delhi's last Hindu kingdom. The tower has five distinct storeys, each marked by a projecting balcony and tapers from a 15 m diameter at the base to just 2.5 m at the top. The first three storeys are made of red sandstone; the fourth and fifth storeys are of marble and sandstone. At the foot of the tower is the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, the first mosque to be built in India. An inscription over its eastern gate provocatively informs that it was built with material obtained from demolishing '27 Hindu temples'. A 7 m-high iron pillar stands in the courtyard of the mosque. It is said that if you can encircle it with your hands while standing with your back to it your wish will be fulfilled.

The origins of Qutab Minar are shrouded in controversy. Some believe it was erected as a tower of victory to signify the beginning of the Muslim rule in India. Others say it served as a minaret to the muezzins to call the faithful to prayer.

No one can, however, dispute that the tower is not only one of the finest monuments in India, but also in the world. Qutab-ud-din Aibak, the first Muslim ruler of Delhi, commenced the construction of the Qutab Minar in 1200 AD, but could only finish the basement. His successor, Iltutmush, added three more storeys, and in 1368, Firoz Shah Tughlak constructed the fifth and the last storey.

The development of architectural styles from Aibak to Tughlak is quite evident in the minar. The relief work and even the materials used for construction differ. The 238 feet Qutab Minar is 47 feet at the base and tapers to nine feet at the apex. The tower is ornamented by bands of inscriptions and by four projecting balconies supported by elaborately decorated brackets. Even in ruin, the Quwwat Ui Islam (Light of Islam) Mosque in the Qutab complex is one of the most magnificent in the world. Qutab-ud-din Aibak started its construction in 1193 and the mosque was completed in 1197.

Iltutmush in 1230 and Alla-ud-din Khilji in 1315 made additions to the building. The main mosque comprises of an inner and outer courtyard, of which an exquisite colonnade surrounds the inner decorated shafts. Most of these shafts are from the 27 Hindu temples, which were plundered to construct the mosque. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Muslim mosque has typical Hindu ornamentation. Close to the mosque is one of Delhi's most curious antiques, the Iron Pillar.

### JAMA MASJID



This great mosque of Old Delhi is the largest in India, with a courtyard capable of holding 25,000 devotees. It was begun in 1644 and ended up being the final architectural extravagance of Shah Jahan, the Mughal emperor who built the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort.

The highly decorative mosque has three great gates, four towers and two 40 m-high minarets constructed of strips of red sandstone and white marble.

Travellers can hire robes at the northern gate. This may be the only time you get to dress like a local without feeling like an outsider, so make the most of it.

### BIRLA MANDIR



Laxmi Narayan Temple, also known as Birla Mandir, is one of Delhi's major temples and a major tourist attraction. Built by the industrialist G.D. Birla in 1938, this beautiful temple is located in the west of Connaught Place.

The temple is dedicated to Laxmi (the goddess of prosperity) and Narayana (The preserver). The temple was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi on condition that people of all castes be allowed to enter the temple.

## THE DELICIOUS CUISINES

Delhi is a generous city that has assimilated the cuisines of Banias , Rajputs, Arabs, Afghans, Mughals, English & Punjabis. Places that offer authentic Muslim food are the areas around Jama Masjid, Bara Hindu Rao near Sadar Bazaar and Nizamuddin. Some restaurants in the exclusive 5 star hotels serve excellent Muslim food.

For Punabi Mughlai food the most popular places are restaurants in Pandara Road Market , Karol Bagh and Connaught Place. Karims in Shahjahanabad area is most famous for non-vegetarian foods.

In most places in Delhi the vegetarian food available is basically Punjabi. Special mention must be made of the Punjabi favourite Chhole Bhature or Chhole Kulche. One of the best places offering Chhole Bhature is Kwality in Connaught place.

Delhi is famous for its Chaats and snacks that is an important part of the Bania food culture. The word chaat refers to merely tasting but now extends to a dazzling cornucopia of spicy tongue tickling eateries. Sample the legendary street food in Delhi's Chandani Chowk, famous for spicy fruit chaat. The popular chaat from the stalls on Shahjahan Road, Bengali Market and Haldiram Bhujawallah on Mathura Road are favourite.

For those with the sweet tooth , Delhi is the place to be in. The oldest Mithai shop in Delhi is "Ghantewala" in Chandni Chowk. Other well known sweet shops are Haldiram Bhujawallah and Annapurna in Chandni Chowk, Kaleva in Gol market, Nathu's and Bengali Sweets in Bengali Market, Roshan - di Kulfi in Karol Bagh. Delhi is also known for various kinds of Halwa. Moong Dal (Yellow Lentils ) and Gaazar ( Carrot ) Halwa are popular. Best Jalebis are to be found in Chandni Chowk . Nowhere else in India will you find so many types of cuisines.

Dilli Haat is the place where you can find the food of most of the Indian states.

## WHERE TO SHOP

Delhi is a shopper's goldmine. You'll find Delhi's shops and bazaars overflowing with remarkable treasures at very affordable prices. Old Delhi is quintessentially oriental, while in New Delhi, in the very recent past, outlets of big international names in footwear, clothes, cosmetics, watches and jewellery have sprung up all over the city. In fact as far as shopping is concerned, Delhi could well be termed the world within a city. Some of the most famous bazaars and shopping complexes are:

City Centre (Connaught Place)

(Sunday Closed)

Recently renamed Rajiv Chowk, 'CP' was intended to be the shopping arcade of the 'new' capital of Lutyen's Delhi in the mid 1930's, and is located right in the heart of Delhi; it is her epicentre, designed as a set of concentric circles. CP is an architectural splendor with its colossal white old colonial style buildings.

Famous For: The most popular of the radial roads leading off from City Centre is Janpatha - a treasure trove for shoppers, especially bargain hunters. There are scores of Tibetan stalls and other shops selling all manner of craft items, handcraft, curios, besides a few book stalls and snack joints, ethnic wear, kohlapuri chappals, Rajasthani paintings and brassware. Another absolute treat for the shopper is the government run

Central Cottage Industries Emporium, where you are offered a wide and rare collection of Indian artifacts from different corners of the country. Another place to visit is the underground Palika Bazaar, an air-conditioned shopping centre with stalls of ready-to-wear, costume jewellery accessories, books and a lot of odds and ends.

Nearest Metro Station: Palika

Baba Kharak Singh Marg

It is the place to get a crash course on the handicrafts, handlooms, woolens, even shoes or sandals and arts of every state in India.

Famous For:

**CENTRAL COTTAGE INDUSTRIES EMPORIUM:** Situated near Jawahar Vihar, Janpath you will find a spectacular Indian handicrafts all under one roof. Spread over 8 levels covering a floor area of 36,000 sq. ft. Its range includes fabrics, household, linen, carpets, jewellery, handmade paper, furniture and art objects in wood, brass and copper.

Open 10 am to 7 pm. Closed Sunday.

**THE STATE EMPORIA:** It comprise a string of shops (eighteen in all) from almost every Indian state, on Baba Kharak Singh Marg, City Centre. Handicrafts and handlooms, etc. Peculiar to each state may be found. A great way to get to a whiff of the Indian states.

Assam (the skills and Mekhla Chadars, wicker furniture), Orissa or Utkalika (for the Ikats), Rajasthan (for the handicrafts, mirri work, camel leather goods), Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab (for Phulkari), Manipur, Haryana, Kashmir (woolens), Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat (crafts and clothes), Bihar and West Bengal (Saris). Each emporium is dedicated to one state's unique art and craft created by traditional, skilled artisans, which ensures the authenticity of the wares.

Open 10 am to 6.30 pm. Closed Sunday.

**KHADI GRAMODYOG BHAVAN:** Situated in Regal building, City Centre. It is run by Khadi Village Industries commission. Here you can buy Khadi cotton paper, incense sticks, pure honey, etc. A Special Discount period of 90 Days birth from Oct. the 2nd i.e. Mahatma Gandhi's birth Anniversary.

Open 10 am to 6 pm. Closed Sunday.

Nearest Metro Station: Palika

Karol Bagh (Monday closed)

One of the famous Retail Market of Delhi, having products for household and also for the whole family. It has approximately 1500-2000 shops in one long row. They are offering products at best possible prices

Famous For: Ajmal Khan Road market in Karol Bagh. They contain lots of food-joints, jewellery and radimate garments.

Nearest Metro Station: Karol Bagh (Rajendra Place)

Chandni Chowk (Sunday closed)

One of the main markets of Delhi, Chandni Chowk, was once lined with beautiful fountains. But today the place is very crowded and congested. Chandni Chowk is located opposite the Red Fort. The Area has got the Digamber Jain Temple, which houses the Birds hospital. On one end of Chandni Chowk is the Fatehpuri Mosque, which was erected by the wives of Shah Jahan. Opposite the old police station or the Kotwali is the Sunheri Masjid from where Nadir Shah ordered his troops to plunder and massacre Delhi.

Famous For: Unforgettable shopping experience.



*A good note to end on*



*Sadly, it's time to go home...*

