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- Follow temple trails rich in myths and legends
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Front Cover
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Deepak Suri

Rajasthan
The Incredible State of India!
RAJASTHAN MUSIC AND DANCE

- Ghoomar
- Gair
- Bhavai
- Chari
- Drum Dance
- Kathputli
- Sapera Dance
- Terah Taali
- Kacchi Ghodi

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan
Paryatan Bhawan
Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station,
M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

App: Rajasthan Tourism Official
tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

WILDLIFE IN RAJASTHAN

Spanning an area of about 3,42,000 sq km, located in north-west India, Rajasthan is among the largest of the country’s states and is remarkably rich in wildlife.

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan
Paryatan Bhawan
Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station,
M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

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RAJASTHAN
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**Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan**
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**App:** Rajasthan Tourism Official

[Links to official website]
Visit Rajasthan:
Celebrate the Colours of Life

Rajasthan is not just about forts and palaces but it also has, amazing food, silver jewels and more. Rajasthan is a destination that combines adventure and relaxation, and makes for an unforgettable holiday. It’s not just about forts and palaces; it goes beyond that with a little something for every kind of traveller. From tree houses to adventurous escapades, you will be amazed at all the experiences Rajasthan has to offer.
RAJASTHAN REIMAGINED

■ RANEE SAHANEY

Sumptuous palaces, magnificent fortresses, the world’s oldest rock, a boiling cauldron of a desert, a thriving palace culture, a glorious tribal heritage, the striped apex predator of the Indian jungle, a kaleidoscope of folk heritage and a multi-layered canvas of arts and crafts. Yes, Rajasthan certainly summons up all these grand visuals. But there are so many layers left to peel away to explore and marvel at those fresh discoveries to understand ever more deeply what is it that has us in thrall of this land.

From the carnival scenes of its multiple festivals to the exotic pageantry of its regal processions, from the unique culinary offerings of its geographic diversity to the grammar of its fabulous architecture and décor, there are gleaming gems and stories which still need to be distilled.

Capitalising on the scope of its history, heritage and cultural diversity, and richly empowered by the deep and energetic appeal of its ‘exotic otherness’ for inquisitive travellers from around the globe, Rajasthan has stepped into the new era with an edgy amalgamation of new-age pursuits and predilections of the past, even as it chooses to remain firmly rooted in its core values.

Mobilising the entire gamut of its resources from its historical and architectural marvels to the multi-textured tapestry of its local traditions and heritage and rituals and customs, Rajasthan entices you to plunder afresh the riches of its astonishing treasury of cultural experiences.
The prestige that a UNESCO World Heritage Site citation carries is never treated lightly by nations across the globe. Not only does this recognition underscore a site’s importance in the world’s history and as a beacon of cultural veracity for future generations, its role of conservation and preservation also underpins its significance as a repository of historical provenance and universal cultural value.

A UNESCO-acclamation of this nature falls under three different categories: Natural, Cultural and Mixed and for each there are certain criteria that need to be met.

Natural Heritage recognition is given for a superlative natural phenomena; the site should contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or environmental conservation.

Built heritage represents a society’s most important cultural assets, for it is emblematic of the multiple historical layers of our built environment made from materials such as brick, plaster, wood, metal and stone. Built heritage can be of importance to any one community, person, group, nation or group of nations. Heritage of this nature can include monuments, temples and churches, palaces and mansions, hotels and museums, markets and stepwells, railways and bridges and even historically significant archaeological sites.

Intangible heritage recognition rests on the unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.

Significantly, Rajasthan is host to sites that bear recognition of UNESCO-acclamation in all three categories.

Keoladeo Ghana National Park, formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, was declared a World Heritage Site in 1985. In 1981, it became one of the first wetlands in the country to be listed as a Ramsar Site and was established as a National Park in 1982, to follow a strict conservation agenda. This former duck-hunting reserve of the Maharajas is one of the major wintering areas for large numbers of aquatic birds from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, China and Siberia. Some 375 species of birds, including the rare Siberian crane, along with a diverse array of other life forms, have been recorded in this mosaic of grasslands, woodlands, woodland swamps and wetlands of just 2,873 ha.

In 2010, the Jantar Mantar in Jaipur was ranked among the seven sites in the world which have been added to UNESCO’s World Heritage list. Imbued with religious significance, it was used by ancient Indian astronomers to understand the workings of celestial phenomenon such as predicting eclipses, tracking the location of the stars as the earth orbits around the sun, following the positioning of constellations and determining the celestial altitudes and ephemeris.

Also, in 2010, UNESCO inscribed the Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as they are an expression of the Kalbelia community’s traditional way of life. Professional snake handlers by tradition, Kalbelias today
evoke their former occupation in music and dance that is evolving in new and creative ways.

In 2013, the Hill Forts of Rajasthan were identified as a UNESCO-acclaimed World Heritage Site; this includes the majestic citadels of Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Ranthambhore, Sawai Madhopur, Jhalawar, Amer (Jaipur), and Jaisalmer—all significant for Rajasthan’s military architecture. Located in different cities, as a serial cultural property, this recognition was the first of its kind ever by UNESCO. As a series, the six components together form a complete and coherent group in themselves to amply demonstrate the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value.

Ranking among the latest additions to the list of UNESCO-acclaimed World Heritage Sites in India, Jaipur city joined this exclusive set of built-up heritage structures on June 6, 2019. Brimming over with old-world nuances, this charming city, painted a salmon pink, offers a bewitching experience to visitors from around the globe.

In a recent move, UNESCO and the state government joined hands to promote community-based responsible tourism based on the rich Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of the state. UNESCO-acclaimed Intangible (Living) Heritage assets encompass traditions, crafts, folklore associated with a particular place, music, dance, rituals, cuisines and other symbolic cultural identities. This project, aimed at promoting the longstanding Rajasthani traditions and adding new cultural destinations is planned to run for about three-and-a-half years, and will be implemented in Jodhpur, Barmer, Jaisalmer and Bikaner.

By leveraging the intangible cultural heritage offerings of the state, like the songs of Langas, Manganiyars, Mirs and Bhopas, Kalbelia and Gair dances, dhurrie making and appliquéd work carried out in the villages, it is a win-win situation, both for the tourism sector in new product development and benefitting rural artists’ communities and safeguarding the art forms that have been around for centuries.
Food
Rajasthan
17 specials
It is an absolute marvel to witness the sheer ingenuity and artistry of Rajasthani cuisine, an enduring testament to the skill and grim determination of the people who have made their homes in this largely arid land. Rajasthan stands as a unique case study—where many ancient Indian civilisations flourished in the most resource-filled areas, these people created a powerful, complex, layered and regal culture among sandy dunes. The arid and often unforgiving land here made nothing easy—the paucity of large swaths of fertile soil meant fewer vegetables, and practically no leafy greens whatsoever; a definite challenge for a state that traditionally was, and continues to be, largely vegetarian.

An important fact to note is that different communities dominated different parts of Rajasthan, and while they used the same ingredients for the large part and even had many similar preparations, their different sensibilities created multiple branches of the exact same cuisine. The primary divisions are the Rajputs, who were a fiercely proud warrior caste famed for their code of honour and fearlessness in the face of battle; the Vaishnavs, who were followers of Vishnu and strongly devout in their faith; the Bishnois, a conservative spiritualist sect found mostly in the desert areas who believe in the conservation of all life; the Marwaris, an ethno-linguistic group who hail from the Marwar region and are prolific merchants; and the Jains, a relative minority who ascribe to the ancient tenets of Jainism. Only the Rajputs used to partake in meat and even then not frequently, usually preferring to keep a vegetarian and lacto-vegetarian diet.

Every other ethnic group and tribes such as Bhils, Bavris and Sansis in Rajasthan abstained from meat and partook of a rigid vegetarian diet that made use of local produce, both domestic and wild, and extensively relied on dairy products as both the base for curries and for cooking.

Water is one of the most premium commodities in any desert economy, hence the use of water for cooking was considered wasteful and irresponsible. Instead, milk, yoghurt and ghee were used as a medium of cooking. In the absence of a variety in vegetables, hardy grains like millet, wheat and gram became staples, along with lentils, legumes, beans and berries.

Since fuel like wood and coal was rare and expensive and often not available for days, food had to have a long shelf life and needed to be easily edible without requiring any heating or further preparation. These durable recipes were also preferred because of the necessity of travel for the menfolk, who were away from home for several days at a stretch, mostly for work or trade.
Interestingly, Rajasthani cuisine remains one of the most untouched fares in India, which means that there is relatively little influence from foreign trade, invaders and powers.

**Flavours, Ingredients and Techniques**

The Rajastanis cultivated hardy grains like millet, maize, jowar and ragi, as they used less water and lasted much longer in storage. The growth of wheat and vegetables was restricted to the more fertile areas. They learnt to use any and all resources for consumption, which is the basis for the mouthwatering delicacy ker sangri. Ker are wild berries which have a tangy and peppery finish, while sangri are wild beans that grow abundantly in the desert. They are cooked together in water or buttermilk along with an assortment of spices and are an integral part of Marwari cuisine.

Rajasthani cuisine is characterised by its extensive and impeccable use of spices, as they can be grown and cultivated easily. Condiments like tamarind, coriander, cumin, sesame, turmeric, ginger, garlic, cardamom, carom seeds, amchur (dried mango powder), cinnamon, nigella seeds, aniseed, cloves, asafoetida, dried fenugreek and, most importantly, red chillies, are used to create intricate recipes that burst with flavour, elevating otherwise humble ingredients to lofty dimensions.

These are generally powdered in a heavy iron mortar and pestle just before they are added to the food, so that they retain their coarse texture and natural flavour. They have mastered the art of drying condiments to preserve their flavour and longevity, and dried red chillies from Rajasthan are highly sought after across the country.

Further proof of Rajasthani ingenuity when it comes to adding flavour can be found in their incredible range of chutneys, from the tomato to the tamarind. They have also perfected the art of making papad, a thin, crisp disc-shaped savoury confection made from flour that can last for months. Snacks like the ubiquitous kachori, a truly delicious fried savoury or sweet pastry stuffed with various ingredients, most famously onion and mawa, are the stars of the street food culture here.

Unmissable in this repertoire is the vast range of Rajasthani desserts. Due to their prowess in the use of dairy, they have concocted scintillating sweets that utterly enchant the taste buds. These include the unique ghevar, a crunchy cake-like dish made from flour, soaked in ghee, milk and topped with sliced almonds, malpua, kheer, halwa and laddus.

A technique of cooking particular to Rajasthan and inspired by the war-like nature of their expeditions is the pit cooking method, wherein the food is prepared in pits dug out in the sand. Another interesting indigenous practice is that of dungar cooking, wherein the prepared food is placed in a vessel (usually a bronze or copper pot) and a small container with a hot piece of coal is kept in the centre of the dish inside the vessel. Hot ghee is then poured onto the coal and the dish is covered for 30 minutes, giving the dish an intoxicating smoky flavour and aroma.

**The Royal Heritage of Cuisine in Rajasthan**

The royal households of Rajasthan (called rajthikanas or
Rajasthan (rajgharanas) were famed for their lavish expenditure and their often ludicrously extravagant lifestyles. There was also a deep-rooted culture of competition where royal households vied with each other to see which was the most affluent and opulent. It was in the magnificent kitchens of these royal families that some of the richest and most flavorful dishes find their origins. Each royal gharana had a huge rasoda (kitchen) that usually had no economic restraints, and employed a minimum of 10 to 12 chefs, called rasoiyas.

Dry fruits were considered the epitome of delicacies and each king in Rajasthan had a particular allowance of dry fruits. This system was so complex and rigid that one of the best ways to judge the might, influence and wealth of a royal family was through their dry fruit ration!

Food was a show of status, and the unrelenting one-upmanship among the royal kitchens is the stuff of legends. It was during royal banquets that the true flair of the kitchen would see the limelight. The central attraction would usually be something exotic that would have been created specifically for that celebration. These were presented in elaborate vessels made from the rarest of precious materials.

The regular daily fare of the royal family, while rich in variety and flavour, was usually vegetarian and incorporated simple local ingredients prepared exquisitely.

Recipes were fiercely guarded by the chefs who would rather die than reveal their culinary secrets. This has led to a despairing loss of most of these incredible and unique recipes over time. Thankfully, there has been a strong resurgence of some of these forgotten recipes as the descendants of the royal families have started sharing these recipes with the proletariat.

There is so much history and cultural significance involved in Rajasthani food that it boggles the mind.
Some of the most vibrant and fondest memories of my growing-up years are those linked to festivals. Perhaps this is so for many Indians—our childhoods are captured in moments that refuse to grow sepia-tinted with years, preferring instead to don the shades of pinks, blues and greens of raucous Holi, or the golden hues of the lit lamps of Diwali, flickering even in the soft focus of a memory. This is all the more so if, like me, you have grown up in Rajasthan. For, in the arid landscape of the desert, the grand festivals were what imbued in us a sense of colour, adding to the parched terrain a vibrant beauty that Mother Nature herself did not bestow.

I remember that the preparations for festivals, big or small, were always elaborate. The house would be decorated with intricate mandanas, or flour patterns on the floor; the rooms would be cleaned till they sparkled; the women would undertake fasts and we would all troop down to the temple to listen to a tale or sing bhajans and to marvel at the sights and sounds of the mela at the village square. Those are glorious memories, one that I am always willing to reflect on, and it is so for most Rajasthanis.

Hardly a month passes by without a festival being celebrated in one part of the state or the other. As in the rest of the country, the festivals have religious and mythological, seasonal or historical significance. Perhaps what’s more unique to Rajasthan is the enormous number of traditional fairs that continue to be held today. These double as photo- opportunities for tourists to see the ‘real Rajasthan’, but also remain at heart an opportunity for villagers to get together, do business and relax in the company of their brethren—just as it was decades ago.

If the fair is a religious one, then prayers and processions form an integral part of the celebrations. There are also festivals associated with changing seasons—some to welcome the monsoon or spring, to seek the blessings of the rain gods for ensuring a plentiful harvest or to thank them if the yield is indeed good. It is worth mentioning here that the fairs are more than what they seem to be from the outside; apart from being an occasion for prayer or thanksgiving, these help in creating a sense of cohesion and solidarity among the community. Be that as it may, the joyous spirit of each and every festival remains the same, as is reflected in the colourful clothes of the people, in the bustling bazaars and in the enthusiasm with which cattle and grain are traded, or in the brisk haggling over handicrafts and clothes and household items. Here are some of the most popular fairs and festivals of the royal state of Rajasthan.

Makar Sankranti
In the first quarter of the year, Jaipur gears up to celebrate

Holika Dahan takes place on Dhulandi eve
the annual Kite Flying Festival of Makar Sankranti, which falls on January 14. This marks the sun’s entry into the Northern Hemisphere and also signals the end of winter. On this day, the sky is dotted with thousands of colourful paper kites as families gather on rooftops playing loud music and watching kite fights. People pray for a good harvest on this day and offerings of til and khichdi are made to the Sun god.

Beneshwar Fair
Celebrated at the end of January or the first week of February in Dungarpur, the Beneshwar Fair sees a huge gathering of tribal communities. Beneshwar means the ‘master of the delta’, the local name that has been given to a shivlinga at the Mahadeo Temple in Dungarpur. Tribal communities in the neighbouring states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh also hold Beneshwar sacred. On the occasion of the fair, thousands of devotees gather at the confluence of the Som and Mahi rivers, where the fair is held. They sing folk songs, sometimes around bonfires at night, and there are all the other ingredients of a mela on display as well: dances, acrobatics and some magic to boot.

Sheetla Mata Mela
In a small village called Chaksu, located close to Jaipur, crowds gather in March to honour the Goddess Sheetla Mata at her shrine. Food cooked the night before is offered to pacify the goddess, who is believed to have the power to prevent diseases. A small cattle fair is held at this time and a market is also set up for villagers to trade in utensils and tools. The different means of transport that the devotees use to reach the mela is a sight worth seeing: buses, jeeps, tractors, camel and bullock carts, cycles and scooters. In the open ground around the hilltop temple to the goddess, people keep themselves entertained by singing and lots of dancing.

Cattle Fairs
Rajasthan has several cattle and camel fairs in addition to its festivals. In some cases, cattle fairs are an integral part of the festivals themselves. We list a few of them below:

Pushkar Fair
Every year in the Hindu month of Kartik (usually November), Pushkar comes alive with traders, tourists, photographers, musicians, artists and devotees, who come here to celebrate the week-long extravaganza. While the fair means serious business for those in the camel and cattle trade, for tourists and locals, it’s an opportunity to relive their childhood nostalgia of enjoying the amusements of a desi fair. The event can be seen as a conglomeration of different fairs. There’s the world-famous cattle fair, there’s the religious part of it which involves taking a holy dip to wash away one’s sins, and then there’s the fun and frolic. From traditional folk dances, circuses, magic shows, and camelback rides to ferris wheels, lively processions, and shopping for ornate swords and Rajasthani juttis, the fair promises to be an experience that will stay with you forever.

Nagaur Fair
The Nagaur Fair, like the Pushkar Fair, is one of the largest animal fairs in Rajasthan. It is held January/February and is renowned for the trading of cows, bullocks, oxen, camel and horses. The animals are decorated colourfully and the owners dress up equally lavishly. One of the main attractions is a chilli bazaar—Nagaur is known for its red chillies.

Bikaner Camel Festival
The year starts on a lively note with the Camel Festival in Bikaner held in January, organised by the Tourism Department. There are parades, races and dances by camels during the festival, which is spread over two days. Folk art performances, including fire dances, are also organised during this time.
Kaila Devi Fair
The Kaila Devi Fair of Karauli, held in March-April, is dedicated to Goddess Chamunda. This fair lasts 12 days and attracts devotees from all over the state. For days, the roads leading to this small temple town are jammed with bus-loads of pilgrims. Devotees cover the distance on foot or by lying prostrate and then pulling themselves ahead. The temple courtyard resounds with songs as religious processions from nearby towns come together here. There is also shopping for the visitors at the fair.

Mahavirji Fair
Held in honour of the 24th Jain tirthankara Mahavir in March-April, this fair is where thousands of pilgrims from West Bengal, Assam, Bihar and South India congregate to offer their salutations. The venue is the Mahavirji Shrine at Chandangaon in Karauli district. A cobbler is believed to have discovered the lord’s image, now kept at the shrine, buried underground centuries ago. During the fair, the image is carried in a golden chariot drawn by two bullocks to the banks of the river Gambhiri. Pilgrims escort the chariot to the river and back, singing devotional songs. After the image is returned to the shrine, the festivity continues. Shops are set up during the fair, offering goods and knick-knacks to visitors.

Gangaur
This is a festival celebrated by women across Rajasthan in March-April, on the day after Holi, and is spread over 18 days. The name Gangaur is a combination of the names of Lord Shiva—Gan being one of his names—and his consort Parvati, or Gauri. Many elaborate rituals are performed as part of the festival. In Jaipur, the highlight of the festival is the colourful procession that is taken out from Tripolia Gate to Chaugan and then on to Talkatora. The images of Gauri and Ishar (Shiva) are carried in palanquins, with decorated camels, horses and smartly dressed attendants for company. In the final ritual, the clay or wood images of the gods are immersed in a holy tank or lake. The lake city of Udaipur holds the most culturally evocative festivities of Gangaur. It is known as the Mewar Festival in Udaipur. The celebrations are led across Lake Pichola by the royal barge from the City Palace to Gangaur Ghat where the ritual immersion of the images of Gauri and Ishar takes place.

Urs
Held in Ajmer, Urs falls on the first six days of Rajab (the seventh month of the Islamic calendar). Thousands of devotees of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, popularly known as Gharib Nawaz, gather here and pay homage to this saint, whose mortal remains are buried here. Smaller gatherings are organised in Nagaur, Tala and Galiyakot. The pilgrims make offerings called nazrana to the saint, consisting of roses, jasmines and perfumes. Qawwali performances take place during this time and are a must-see. Kheer is distributed to devo-
tees from two huge cauldrons or degs.

Gogaji
In a small village near Nohar in Hanumangarh district, a fair is held in August to honour a folk deity known as Gogaji Veer, popularly recognised as the God of Snakes. Revered by both Hindus and Muslims, the spot where Gogaji took samsadhi is known as Goga Medi. Every year, thousands of devotees gather here to pay homage. The fair lasts for three days and attracts visitors from neighbouring states as well. There is a belief among the devotees that Gogaji can cure their diseases and many visitors come here to offer thanks when their wishes are fulfilled.

Teej
This is a celebration that starts in the monsoon month of Shravan, as the desert region gets ready to welcome the first drops of rain that will bring a rush of green to the landscape. The third day, or Teej of Shravan, is celebrated in a big way in Rajasthan. The festival is dedicated to the union of Parvati and Shiva. Women dress in colours of green, reflecting the lush environs with the arrival of the rains. In rural areas, the festivities begin weeks before the main day of Teej. New clothes are purchased, traditional sweets made and feasts organised.

Chandrabhaga Fair
Held in November in Jhalrapatan, close to Jhalawar, this annual fair takes place on the banks of the river Chandrabhaga. On the full moon night of Kartik Purnima, people converge here to take a dip in the river and to offer prayers at the temple known as Chandrawati. A cattle fair is also held here, with cows, camels and bulls being sold, and traders from other states join in too.

Ramdeoji Fair
A folk deity revered in Runicha, a small village near Pokhran in Bhadra, Baba Ramdeoji or Ram Shah Pir was a 15th-century saint who hailed from the Tomar Rajput clan. Believed to have been an incarnation of Lord Krishna by the Hindus, Ramdeoji is worshipped for having performed miracles to help the poor. In a fair that lasts for 10 days in August and September, lakhs of devotees gather at Ramdeora to bathe in the Ramsar Tank, believed to have been constructed by the saint himself, and pay homage at his shrine-samadhi. In this religious fair, pilgrims spend most of their time singing devotional songs. The saint is said to have loved horses and to propitiate him today, devotees buy stuffed toy horses and offer these at the temple.

An attraction at the fair is the performance of terah taali by the members of the Kamad community. In this, two men relate the history of Ramdeoji to the accompaniment of the one-stringed iktara, and two women perform a dance. The performance can last through the night.

Matsya Festival, Alwar
Matsya festival is celebrated each year on 25-26 November to nurture the local art, culture and heritage of Alwar. Folk
performances, adventure and local sports, paddle boat race, heritage walk in the old city, trekking around Bala Quila, Bhapang music are the key highlights of this festival.

**Kolayat**
The full moon in the month of Kartik (October-November) has special religious significance and dozens of small religious fairs take place in villages all over the state during this time. One such is the *Kapil Muni Fair* at Kolayat near Bikaner, so called after the much-revered sage Kapil Muni, who is believed to have descended from Lord Brahma. He is said to have prayed at the lake here and while pilgrims visit Kolayat through the year, a dip during the full moon is considered especially sacred. It is thought that one day spent in Kolayat is equivalent to 10 years spent in other sacred places. A beautifully located temple dedicated to Kapil Muni and 52 shaded ghats add to the sanctity of the atmosphere. A cattle fair is also held at this time when prizes are given for the best breeders of camels, horses and cattle.

**Dussehra Fair, Kota**
Second only to Mysuru’s Dussehra in grandeur, The Dusshera Festival of Kota attracts lakhs of visitors every year. The city has been celebrating this grand fiesta for more than 125 years now, making it an integral part of its cultural heritage. What makes this event special are the colossal effigies of Ravan, his brother Kumbhakaran and his son Meghnad. Created by skilled artists, the ten-headed Ravan effigy is around 75 feet tall and continues to be the biggest draw of the event.

**Jaipur Literature Festival**
A flagship event in Jaipur’s annual events calendar, the globally renowned Jaipur Literature Festival is a fabulous ‘feast of ideas’ held in January/February in the state capital. For five days the Diggi Palace in Jaipur glows brighter with festive hues and thrums with sounds of joy, as the literati and the glitterati converge on the Pink City from around the world. Each day starts with soothing morning ragas, followed by talks and panels on curated topics. Those into retail therapy hit the vibrant festival bazaars, an initiative to support artisans, craftsmen and young entrepreneurs.

**Rajasthan International Folk Festival**
This festival in Jodhpur is a five-day roots music extravaganza, and offers the breathtaking backdrop of the grand Mehrangarh Fort to colourful folk traditions from across the world. The annual festival is looked forward to with great gusto by music lovers for its
enviable line-up of Indian and international musicians showcasing individual concerts and peppy collaborations.

In the past, Manganiyars, Langas, qawwals, percussionists, sarangi artists and the like have joined forces with folk groups from Ireland and Australia to come up with original compositions. Sets featuring rare musical instruments from lesser-known European countries, Africa and Latin America, and quirky fusions with cross-cultural influences are also a regularity. With Mewati folk and Armenian-Swiss jazz and reggae and Indian funk rock playing in the same festival, even those with the most offbeat musical tastes find their jam here.

**Shekhawati Festival, Nawalgarh**

This festival is held in February in the painted town of Nawalgarh. Visitors are taken in jeeps and on camel safaris and cultural programmes are held. They are also introduced to Shekhawati’s heritage—the organisers hope that this move will work both ways and encourage the owners to preserve their havelis.
Tourist Festivals

Jaisalmer Desert Festival
The Desert Festival at Jaisalmer is held in January-February and culminates on Magh Purnima (full moon day). Meant to showcase Rajasthan’s rich cultural heritage, the festival features folk dances and folk music performances set against the backdrop of the gorgeous sand dunes of Sam, near Jaisalmer. Camel races are also part of the festival. The entire city is decorated to receive visitors from all over the country. The golden fort here is illuminated and is a sight to behold.

Bundi Festival
Held in the Hindu calendar month of Kartik (October-November), the Bundi Festival is a major draw for tourists, with its popular ritual procession called the Shobha Yatra, an arts and crafts fair, turban contests, traditional sports, and folk dance and music performances. The lighting of diyas at the Chambal’s banks at Keshorai Patan by men and women dressed up in festive finery marks the vibrant festival.

Kumbhalgarh Festival
Come year-end and the mighty Kumbhalgarh Fort turns into a dazzling spectacle of celebratory sights and sounds. From traditional Rajasthani dancers and performers from all over India setting the stage on fire to the stirring melodies of classical singers of diverse schools—the cultural extravaganza is like no other. Tourists come visiting from all over the world to get a glimpse of Rajasthan’s history, heritage and grand cultural diversity.

Braj Mahaotsav and Kaman Festival
The state tourism department has recently curated the Braj Mahaotsav at Bharatpur. The lighting up of Deeg’s monsoon palace and its fountains bubbling with water reflecting the colours of Holi are a big hit with visitors. Also popular has been the Kaman Festival in Bharatpur which celebrates Lord Krishna’s birth.

Mewar Festival
The Gangaur Festival, held in Udaipur in March-April is called the Mewar Festival and celebrates the arrival of spring. Women carry images of gods to the Gangaur Ghat by the Lake Pichola. Soon after this, cultural performances are organised by the Rajasthan Tourism Department.

Marwar Festival
This festival is held annually in Jodhpur in September-October, on the occasion of Sharad Purnima. The music and dance of the Marwar region is the main theme of this festival. The folk dancers and singers gathered at the offer a window into the regions bygone days—of battles and of heroes who live on through their songs. The festival is held at various venues on the first day and on the Osian dunes on the second day.

Colourful scenes from the many festivals and fairs conducted all year around across Rajasthan
C catapulted into the league of the world’s most exciting train journeys along with Europe’s Orient Express and South Africa’s Blue Train, Rajasthan’s Palace on Wheels is a classic rail adventure that has, down the decades, found a niche for itself in the travel plans of countless travellers from home and abroad. The send-off with the warmest traditional Indian hospitality—complete with ushers in vibrant safas welcoming passengers with tika, garlands and shehanai, from India’s national capital Delhi—is just a taste of things to come.

The glamour and the glory of the rich atmospherics holds the promise of a right regal narrative of delicious encounters with the pleasures and treasures of Rajasthan, so richly bestowed with the spirit of romance, valour and chivalry from ancient times. UNESCO-acclaimed World Heritage Site Jaipur, the state capital, beckons with its profusion of palaces and havelis, ancient bazaars and rich museums. Ranthambhore National Park, India’s premier tiger-spotting hotspot, offers edgy narratives for your memory bank. Chittorgarh offers compelling legends such as those of a mighty warrior king who had a dream of bringing ancient India under his sway and a brave queen who outsmarted a ruthless invader bewitched by her legendary beauty. That splendid city of lakes and romantic water-palaces, Udaipur, is chock-full of old markets and museums with vintage artifacts to explore. The remote desert outposts of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur open up a world of forbidding forts, golden sand dunes and folk dance and music traditions dating back centuries. And then you are heading back to Delhi via Bharatpur with its fabulous UNESCO-acclaimed Keoladeo Ghana National Park, a birder’s paradise — and on to Agra the home of the magical and legendary Taj Mahal.

Virtually a royal palace, the Palace on Wheels invites you to soak up the rich nuances of the 14 saloons so richly appointed, along with the two restobars, spa bar and gym—and the services so special you’ll not be blamed for conjuring up visions of yourself as an actual maharaja/maharani.

When to go
Departure Every Wednesdays from New Delhi Safdarjung Railway Station (8 days tour)
Duration (September – April)

Accommodations
Total 21 Coaches
Rooms 14 Saloons (1 Super deluxe Saloon, 13 deluxe Saloons) (each Saloon has 3 types of accommodations)

Facilities
2 Restobars (Indian, Rajasthani, Mughlai, Chinese, Thai, Mexican, Continental meals), bar, spa, gym, laundry, Internet, insurance cover, satellite TV

Tariff ₹37,400-1,34,640; TE (per person rate for Indian Passport Holders), 550$-1,980$; TE (per person rate for foreigners)

Contact: PALACE ON WHEELS
Jaipur: Paryatan Bhawan, 3rd Floor, Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station, MI Road, Jaipur
Tel 0141-5114768-69, 2371141-42
rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Delhi: RTDC, 1st Floor, Bikaner House, Pandara Road, New Delhi
Tel 011-23381884, 23383837, 23386069
Cell 07412086058

ONLINE BOOKING INFORMATION
rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/PalaceOnwheels/PalaceOnWheels/ContactUs
Itinerary

The 7 Nights weekly tour departs from Delhi every Wednesday evening (from Sept to April); you have the option of booking a 4 Nights tour as well.

WEDNESDAY DAY 01: DELHI

Guests arriving at Safdarjung Railway Station at 4.30pm to board the Palace on Wheels are given the red carpet treatment as they are greeted warmly with a traditional Indian welcome with garlands and tikkas; after some fun-filled ‘selfie’ moments they then proceed to complete the check-in formalities. Guests are escorted to their saloon cabins by a personal attendant. At 6.30 pm Palace on Wheels begins its eight-day odyssey over a brilliant tapestry of scenic landscapes peppered with the riches of history and heritage. Your first night on board is memorable for the ceremony and service of a sumptuous dinner. The first stop is Jaipur, the state capital.

THURSDAY DAY 02: JAIPUR

Guests enjoy a delectable breakfast prior to the magic train regally gliding into the Station, of the legendary “Pink City”. After a grand welcome at Jaipur Railway Station guests are transported by coach to enjoy some of the top attractions of the medieval city. First off is the Albert Hall Museum which is packed with an amazing treasure trove of artifacts. Then you are off to explore a host of architectural marvels – such as the Hawa Mahal (Palace of Winds), the grand City Palace and the UNESCO-acclaimed Jantar Mantar.

A pleasant drive out of the city brings guests to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Hill Fort Palace of Amber – a fabulous fortified structure of red sandstone and marble much famed for its riveting ‘Sheesh Mahal’. The elephant ride up the steep incline to the fort affords splendid views of the fort surrounds. A leisurely lunch awaits you at a swanky hotel.

Back in the city shopping is very much on the cards and guests can delight in the profusion of cultural splendour richly evident in ancient bazaars and the crafting and street food traditions. Around 6 pm, tired but happy, one returns to the train to relax before the dinner on board. The odyssey continues to Sawai Madhopur from Jaipur’s Durgapura Railway Station.

FRIDAY DAY 03: SAWAI MADHOPUR - CHITTORGARH

After an early morning arrival at Sawai Madhopur guests will board vehicles for a safari to the Ranthambore National Park & Tiger Reserve, located in the heart of the Aravalli and Vindhya Range. Not only is the game park fabled for tiger spotting and its fabulous range of wildlife, it is also renowned for its botanical wealth and avifaunal delights. Back on board the train by 10 am one can swap stories about this magical experience. Lunch is served on board.

The grand train rolls on to the legendary city of Chittorgarh and its fabulous ruins. On disembarking at the railway station at 4 pm and being welcomed by caparisoned horses, guests will set out to explore the famous UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Hill Fort of Chittorgarh, which sprawls across a massive plateau. An atmospheric ruin, today the fort is richly linked to
Rajasthan’s legends of valour and the pride of the Rajput clan. A delightful sound and light programme showcases Chittorgarh’s historic moments. Dinner will be on board the train.

**SATURDAY DAY 04: UDAIPUR**

On arrival in the ‘City of Lakes’ which is also the old bastion of the erstwhile kingdom of Mewar, guests are escorted to the royal gardens at Saheliyon Ki Bari and then a tour of the city’s historic 17th century City Palace complex with its eleven attendant palaces, lavishly decorated with balconies, towers and cupolas. Later on, a boat ride transports you over the picturesque Pichola Lake with its resplendent Lake Palace. Lunch is a lavish affair at a lakeside retreat. You will return to the train by 3pm for your onward journey to Jaisalmer.

**SUNDAY DAY 05: JAIALMER**

Around am, the legendary train sweeps into the desert outpost of the erstwhile princely city of Jaisalmer. A cluster of vibrantly decorated camels give you a warm welcome at the station. Jaisalmer, established in the year 1156, is named after its founder Rawal Jaisal and means ‘the hill fort of Jaisal’. Your explorations of the city begin with time spent in the precincts of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Jaisalmer Fort, the fabled Sonar Kila (Golden Fort). You will adore the line-up of exquisite architectural marvels such as its stone carved havelis (mansions) and temples in the fort. The five-tiered Patwon ki Haveli is one of the largest mansions here and its liberal stone carving is evidence of the consummate skills of the local artisans of the day. Nearby stands a group of centuries-old Jain Temples, also stunningly carved. The tour also includes stopovers at the tranquil Gadsisar Lake and Gorbandh Palace After lunch on board, you will set out for an excursion to the Sam sand dunes in the Thar Desert for camel joy rides at sunset.

**MONDAY DAY 06: JODHPUR**

On arrival at Mandor Railway Station, guests will be welcomed to the city by the Mehrangarh Brass Band. You cannot but marvel at the great mass of 15th century Mehrangarh Fort with its famous Umaid Bhawan Palace rearing over the city skyline from its lofty perch atop a rocky hill; nearby stands the cluster of memorial cenotaphs of Jaswant Thada.

**MONDAY DAY 07: BHARATPUR/AGRA**

On arriving in Bharatpur at 6.30 am, you will be whisked off by cycle rickshaw for avifaunal viewings at the UNESCO-acCLAIMED World Heritage Site of Keoladeo Ghana National Park. The sanctuary is the haunt of over 300 species of resident and migratory birds. Breakfast will be served on board on your return from this thrilling jaunt.

Later you will disembark at Agra railway station. Your time spent at this Mughal bastion will be illuminated by visits to the grand UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the 16th century Agra Red Fort and the legendary 17th century Taj Mahal.

**TUESDAY DAY 08: DELHI**

Arrival at Safdarjung Railway Station. Tour ends

*By Ranee Sahaney*
The seething bazaars are full of travellers charmed by camel-skin jutis, hand block-printed kurtas and gota saris. The streets of Jaipur remain navigable even if the roads are full of the din and smoke of traffic jams, which the calming pink sandstone character of Rajasthan’s First City makes up for. Today, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, three centuries after it was built, Sawai Jai Singh II’s labour of love, realised by architect Vidyadhar
Bhattacharya, seems to have no trouble living up to its reputation as a well-planned capital.

And yet, the city hasn’t really required ultra-cosmopolitanism to expand and pull crowds. The monuments are the obvious draw, but since modern-day tourists cover more ground in less time, guides and operators are focusing on niche-yet-cultural experiences that can unravel the Pink City’s many shades—from swanky to solitary to the grassroots arts. Entrepreneurs, too, have begun to funnel the city’s essence into small-yet-perfect buys. If Rajputana was the electric guitar performance, this is the stripped down, acoustic encore.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

First-time visitors to Jaipur tend to stick to a 9-to-5 schedule, mostly because sightseeing is largely straightforward in the well-planned city. Might we suggest you start at 7am instead, at the Chandi ki Taksal flower market? A wholesale bazaar of local flowers—some in wild bunches others in dutiful bouquets—it’s an overwhelming mix of textures and fragrances. Lehariya, bandhani, mirror work and bagru prints vie with orchids, lotus and chrysanthemums for attention. Next, dig into breakfast near the Tourist Police station, and start walking towards Hawa Mahal. Your goal? Spotting Teekam Chand Pahari and his 160-year-old ‘memory box’ camera on the footpath. Pahari has been making black and white portraits of tourists and royalty since 1977 with his antique Carl Zeiss, a family heirloom and one of the last of its kind in the world.

Arrive at Hawa Mahal, with its familiar overhanging windows with perforated screens, curvilinear roofs, domes and finials. Sawai Pratap Singh built this rather unusual palace in 1799 for the royal women to watch processions and other activities on the streets below. However, try and savour the view from the rooftop cafes across the road.

- **Entry fee** Indians ₹50, foreigners ₹200 (including camera fee)
- **Timings** 9am-5.30pm Tel 0141-2618862

Less than a kilometre away is the main course of the Jaipur circuit, the much-vaunted City Palace Complex, which boasts several courtyards, gateways and gardens. Enter the sprawling enclosure from the Atish Pol and go on to Mubarak Mahal, which has an exquisitely decorated marble and sandstone exterior. Formerly the Mahakama Khas or the Royal Secretariat, it has now been turned into the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum. Marvel at the well-preserved inhabitants of the royal toshakhana here and the awe-inspiring collection of medieval arms at the Sileh Khana to the north.

Located on a raised platform in the inner courtyard is the Diwan-i-Khas, a simple structure where an impression of intricate design has been created by the clever use of pink and white colour on its walls. It was used during ceremonies and is a large, pillared hall with rows of elegant marble pillars and arches. The highlights here are the two silver water containers, the largest in the world, mentioned in the Guinness Book of World Records. Sawai Madho Singh II took along these containers, after filling them.
with Ganga water, on a trip abroad, to avoid having to use ‘foreign water’. Admire the mirrorwork décor and ornate tiling at the Chandra Mahal, a seven-storeyed citadel that affords sweeping views of the walled city from the top. To the north-east is the famous Govind Devji Temple, built so the king could view it from his apartments. A Museum-at-Night experience has been recently introduced at the City Palace, where a sound-and-light show about the history of Jaipur and its rulers, in Amitabh Bachchan’s voice, is projected on the walls of the Sarvato Bhadra Chowk and the Chandra Mahal.

- **City Palace Museum Entry fee**  
  Adults: Indians ₹200, foreigners ₹700; child: Indians ₹100, foreigners ₹400 (including entry to Jaigarh fort/camera fee)  
  **Timings**  
  9.30am-5pm  
  **Light and Sound Show**  
  Indians ₹250 foreigners ₹750  
  **Timings**  
  6.30pm-8.30pm Tel 0141-4088888

**Jantar Mantar**

In 2010, the Jantar Mantar in Jaipur was added to UNESCO’s World Heritage Site list. Built by Rajput Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in 1728, it is an astronomical observation site imbued with religious overtones as well. It is among the largest, it is the most significant, most comprehensive, and the best preserved of India’s historic observatories. The structure is an outstanding example of the coming together of observation of the universe, society and beliefs. The Maharaja also built astronomical observatories at Shahajahanbad (Delhi), Mathura, Ujjain and Varanasi. The one in Jaipur is the best preserved of the lot.

- **Entry fee Jantar Mantar Entry fee**  
  Indians ₹50, foreigners ₹200  
  **Timings**  
  9am-4.30pm  
  **Tel** 0141-2610494  
  **Sound and Light Show**  
  Indians ₹100, foreigners ₹300  
  **Timings**  
  9.30am-4pm Open daily  
  **Amar Jawan Jyoti**, the Rajasthan State Martyrs Memorial, situated at Janpath, near Vidhan Sabha Bhawan (Legislative Assembly). **Entry free**

**The Forts**

Amer Fort (Amber Fort), established in 1592 by Maharaja Man Singh, straddles the hillside overlooking the small Maota Lake. It is also possible to drive up from the rear portion of the fort. Of interest here are the stunning Diwan-i-Aam, built of sandstone, the magnificent Ganesh Pol, Sukh Niwas, Jai Mahal, Jas Mandir and Sheesh Mahal.

- **Entry fee** Indians ₹100, foreigners ₹500  
  **Timings** 8am-5.30pm  
  **Elephant Ride fee** ₹1,100/2 pp  
  (Only for 1 way, sub to availability)  
  **Tel** 0141-2530293  
  **Sound and Light Show**  
  Indians ₹250, foreigners ₹250  
  **Timings** Seasonal for both Hindi and English versions.

When in Amer, try and find Sagar Lake. It isn’t the Man Sagar, but a 17th-century reservoir beyond the Anokhi Museum. Most guides from the city will not have heard of it, but locals in Amer (and Google Maps) can point you in the right direction. The lake was once a crucial site, supplying water to forts and connected stepwells. Today, it’s a solitary picnic spot, where visitors stroll the fortified
boundary that’s dotted with chhatris (pavilions) and temples. We’ve told Sagar dries up now in the summer, but it could make for a curious walk across its bed.

Built by Maharaja Jai Singh II in 1726, Jaigarh Fort houses the Jaigarh Arms Museum; it is at walking distance from Amer Fort. Don’t miss the Jai Vana, a huge cannon, and the gorgeous view of the city from the top.

**Entry fee** Indians ₹70, foreigners ₹200 (inclusive of still/video camera fee without tripod) **Timings** 9.30am-5pm Tel 0141-4088888

Bowling along the Jaipur-Amer road you will espy the Maharani Ki Chhatri. This tranquil setting for the royal ladies is marked by some wonderfully carved cenotaphs.

Also known as Tiger Fort, **Nahargarh Fort** was built in 1734 by Jai Singh II as a defence post in a densely forested setting, to protect Jaipur at the time. Of late, it has seen some experiential updates, the most prominent being the Madhavendra Palace Sculpture Park. The first of its kind in India, the palace’s nine rooms—one for every queen—and courtyards are now dotted with contemporary installations from around the globe. There’s no recommended path, and visitors are meant to meander through the place and discover every piece amid the colourful frescoes. Most of the exhibits are rooted in assertive socio-political thought, and you can even hear some from a few metres away.

**Nahargarh Fort Entry Fee** Indians ₹50; Foreigners ₹ 200 **Timings** 10am-5.30pm

The **Jaipur Wax Museum** and a modern Sheesh Mahal—are other new features at the Nahargarh Fort.

**Jaipur Wax Museum Entry fee** Indians ₹500, foreigners ₹700 **Camera** Still photos and videography not allowed. **Timings** 10am-6pm **Cell** 09783231953

At the foothill of Nahargarh in a walled garden at Gaitore stands a cluster of memorials to the former Kachhawaha rulers of Jaipur. The place has some gracefully carved cenotaphs in white marble. Of interest here is Maharaja Jai Singh II’s cenotaph for its 20 marble pillars with elaborate carvings of religious and mythological episodes.

**Temple Trail**

**Galtaji** is an ancient Hindu pilgrimage site built into the Aravallis, famous for its natural springs and constant colony of rhesus macaques. But if you’d rather avoid the crowds, continue the trek up the complex’s hill to reach the white-and-stained-glass **Surya Mandir** at its summit. A 15-minute hike with an easy incline, reaching the top will reward you with a panorama of Jaipur that’s second to none. You can visit the Surya Mandir—built by Rao Kripa Ram, a royal envoy of Maharaja Jai Singh II—till 7pm every day. The Krishna-centric **Govind Devji Temple** and the **Birla Temple**, the latter constructed entirely of white marble, witness hordes of tourists every evening. The **Shila Devi Temple** (the kuldevi of Jaipur’s rulers) is situated next to the entrance of the Amer Fort, and is accessed via a silver door. The temple has fixed **Timings** for darshan, usually 6-8am and 4-8pm.

**Museums and Other Culture Hubs**

Jaipur is home to quite a collection of museums and centres for the encouragement and patronage of regional arts, including gems, jewellery, and textiles. Housed in a 19th-century building, the **Museum of Legacies** houses latticework artefacts, antique silver jewellery, traditional costumes from the state, and two giant puppets. Design junkies flock to gurgling springs of gemstones and heritage jewellery at the **Amrapali Museum**, with the founders’ covetable collection.
—chains, pendants, amulets, head and hair ornaments, earpieces, bracelets, bangles, and toe rings from the far reaches of the subcontinent—stands displayed.

**Museum of Legacies** Entry Free
Timings 12noon – 7pm, daily Tel 0141-2327020

**Amrapali Museum** Entry fee ₹600 (including audio guide fee)
Timings 11am-6pm, open daily Tel 0141-2822700

Camera Not allowed

A five-minute drive away is the equally well-supplied **Museum of Gem and Jewellery** that has a lavish showcase of ancient tools, precious stones, fossils and even dinosaur eggs, in addition to interesting kundan, meenakari and silver jewellery. The stately **Albert Hall Museum**, designed by Sir Swinton Jacob features the iconic Indo-Saracenic style. The exhibits here include metal ware, jewellery, pottery, textiles, and other antiquities. Do look out for the Egyptian mummy and rare coins from the Gupta, Kushan, Delhi Sultanate, Mughal and British eras.

**Entry fee**
- Indian ₹50, foreigners ₹300

**Timings**
- 9am-5pm

**Cell** 09414050688

**Sanjay Sharma Museum**

**Entry Fee**
- Indians ₹100, foreigners ₹400

**Timings**
- 10am-5pm

**Dolls Museum** Location Near Police Memorial, JLN Marg, Adarsh Nagar

**Entry Fee**
- Indians ₹50, Foreigners ₹50

**Timings**
- 9.00am-5.00pm

**Recreation centres**

For the culture buff, Jaipur’s **Jawahar Kala Kendra** is worth a visit as this is where a profusion of elements related to the arts and crafts comes together. The multi-arts centre was established by the state government with an aim to provide space to the cultural and spiritual values of India and display its rich craft heritage, as also to preserve and promote Rajasthani arts and crafts. It houses an open-air amphitheatre, two permanent art galleries, three galleries for hosting exhibition and the **Alankar Museum** a showcase of artefacts and an exquisite collection of wooden, ceramic and decorative items. The prime attractions in this museum are the statues and sculptures of Rajasthan’s iconic personalities. Designed by Charles Correa, it is a contemporary building, yet rooted in the Navgraha mandala—and echoes the concept that created the original plan for Jaipur city and the man behind it: the scholar, mathematician and astronomer Maharaja Jai Singh II.

**Entry Free**
Timings as per show

Set up in the 1960s the **Birla Planetarium** regularly holds sky-shows to dispel myths and propagate the basic concepts of astronomy and also train the amateurs to appreciate the grandeur of the night sky. Following the sky-shows it arranges interactive sessions with school groups. It also coordinates the activities of the local amateur astronomers.

**Location** Statue Circle

**Entry fee** ₹60
Tel 0141-2385367, 2385094 W bmblrplanet.org

**Show Timings**
- English 6pm Hindi 11am; 1pm; 3pm; 5pm & 7pm
Closed on Mondays
Gardens & Parks
Sisodia Rani Garden, a magnificent palace garden was built by Maharaj Sawai Jai Singh II in 1710 for his queen. On the way to Amer near Jal Mahal, Kanak Vrindavan, a newly restored temple site has beautiful gardens and is a popular picnic place. While heading from Jaipur to Agra, you will come upon the Vidyadhar ka Bagh, built by Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, the Chief Architect of Jaipur city. This beautiful terraced garden has several galleries and pavilions decorated with exquisite murals depicting Lord Krishna.

- Sisodia Rani Garden, Entry Indians ₹15; Foreigners ₹20 Timings 8.00am-7.30pm Tel 0141-2618862
- Kanak Vrindavan Gardens Entry Indians ₹15, foreigners ₹15 Timings 9am-7pm
- Vidyadhar ka Bagh Entry fee Indians ₹50, Foreigners ₹200 Timings 9am-5pm Tel 0141-2618862

Patrika Gate
This relatively new addition to Jaipur’s architectural and artistic heritage has become quite the draw for Instagrammers and the like. The massive Patrika Gate, in Jaipur’s iconic shade of pink and adorned with intricately carved lattice windows, stands as the entrance of Jawahar Circle, the largest circular park in Asia. Inspired by the eight gates of Jaipur, it’s a big hit with tourists for photo-ops. Each pillar of the gate is illustrated with tastefully painted murals that depict iconic vignettes of Rajasthan be it temples, forts, palaces or portraits of its rulers or its famous blue pottery and legendary jewellery.

Textile Hubs
Sanganer (30mins) and Bagru (45mins) are two villages on Jaipur’s outskirts whose block printing legacy—now GI-tagged—is still going strong. Visit a few workshops in Sanganer and watch the Chhipa maestros mixing pigments and imprinting pinned swathes of fabric at assembly-line speed.

Sanganer’s story also features at the Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing. Set in the shadow of the Amer Fort, the museum building was once known as Chanwar Palkiwalon ki Haveli, its crumbling skeleton rebuilt as a hub for the conservation of regional hand block printing. The permanent galleries showcase processes, patterns, dyes and complex blocks from across India, alongside use in apparel, both modern and vintage. But most entrancing are the demonstration areas (printing plus carving), where indigenous artisans let you have a go.

- Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing Entry fee ₹80 (including camera) Timings 10.30am-5pm (Tues-Sat); 11am-4.30pm (Sun); Closed 15th May-15th July; Tel 0141-2530226, 2531267 un anokhi.com
  ![The Anokhi Museum is a must-visit site in Jaipur](image)

No block carvings or printing demos between 1pm-2.30pm on Fridays

Pink City by Night
The RTDC ‘Pink City by Night’ tour in Jaipur is set to tap the night tourism potential of the city. Parts of the city are being illuminated and the bus tour includes popular hubs such as Raj Mandir Cinema Hall, Statue Circle, Amar Jawan Jyoti, Vidhan Sabha Bhawan, Birla Mandir, Albert Hall, Hawa Mahal, Jal Mahal, Kanak Vrindavan, Amber Fort, and Nahargarh Fort. Highlights of the tour include the floodlit Amer Fort and the Sound and Light Show; Night viewing of artifacts at the Albert Hall. The City Palace which features a museum and the Sculpture Lumiere Show created by the famous French Lumiere Sculpture artist Patrick Rimoux.

The Vidyadhar ka Bagh is also open to night-viewing now. The tour will start from Hotel Gangaur at 6:30 pm and will end at 10:30 pm with a dinner at Padao Restaurant of Nahargarh Fort. The tour can be booked at the official site of RTDC, rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in
Heritage
The city has well-run heritage hotels and havelis, the latter being more affordable. The renovated Rambagh Palace (Tel: 0141-2385700), on Bhawani Singh Road, has a popular pub, beautiful lawns and plenty of old-world charm. Jai Mahal Palace (Tel: 6601111), near Civil Lines, is tucked away from the crowded areas.

Other heritage options include: Narain Niwas (Tel: 2563448), at Narain Singh Road; Alsisar Haveli (Tel: 2368290), just off Chandpol Bazaar; Mandawa Haveli (Tel: 2374130) opposite Alsisar Haveli; Shahpura House (Tel: 4089100) at Bani Park; and Hari Mahal Palace (Tel: 2221399;) at Civil Lines. These are all palatial havelis that have been converted into heritage hotels.

The Diggi Palace (Tel: 2373091, 2366120) on SMS Hospital Road is a pretty haveli that has been turned into a hotel. Set in a green lawn, it has fresco-painted rooms.

Others
Hotel Gangaur (Tel: 2371641/ 23 rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in) located near All India Radio Station has 63 rooms, a restaurant, a bar and ice-cream parlour. Hotel Jaipur RSHCL (Tel: 2204491 Cell: 09414457332) near Jai Singh Circle, Bani park has 97 rooms and a restaurant. Hotel Khasa Kothi RSHCL (Tel: 2375151); a heritage property is located on MI Road and offers decent rooms and a restaurant Hotel Swagatam (Tel: 2206701/ 220 Cell: 07412086065) opposite the Railway Station has a sizeable number of rooms, a restaurant and a bar. Located opposite Moti Mahal Cinema on Collectorate Road Hotel Teej (Tel: 2205482 Cell: 07412086063) has good rooms, a restaurant, bar and Internet.

AROUND JAIPUR
Jhalana Leopard Safari Park (10km)
Gaining great popularity now is a new wildlife hub, conveniently close to Jaipur. This is the Jhalana Leopard Safari Park near Nahargarh. Spread over an area of 23sq km Jhalana is, in fact, one of the best places for frequent sightings of leopards apart from Jawai Bandh in Pali district.

Located on the southern outskirts of Jaipur city, It is home to an excellent array of flora and fauna, allowing for very rewarding safaris. Apart from the coveted viewings of leopards you might get sightings of the elusive panther. Other denizens of Jhalana include striped hyenas, desert fox, golden jackal, chital, Indian palm civets, nilgai and more A birding paradise par excellence, Jhalana offers sightings of the Indian Pitta, Dusky Eagle, Spotted Owlet, Indian roller, shikra, and hawks.

Jhalana once served as the royal wilderness preserve till 1860. Blessed with a rich biodiversity, today, it offers wildlife lovers a thrilling safari tour while allowing them to witness wildlife in its natural habitat.

Another major attraction here is the picture-perfect Shikar Oudhi, which was built in 1835 by Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh.

Jhalana Leopard Reserve is said to be the first leopard reserve in India. It was identified as a Leopard Reserve by the Rajasthan Forest Department in 2017. Jhalana Leopard Safari has developed into a recognized non-profit wildlife park dedicated to conservation, education, and animals in their natural habitat.

The reserve is home to over 500 animals representing their wild counterparts, making the park a unique crossroad of humans and nature in the picturesque setting of the foothills of the Aravalli Range. Safaris are arranged by the forest department in two shifts.
Nahargarh Biological Park

(morning and evening). Advance bookings may be made at www.sso.rajasthan.gov.in

- Entry fee Indians ₹402, foreigners ₹702
- Gypsy Fee for Shikar Oudhi ₹500

Camera video ₹730

Nahargarh Biological Park (20km)

An absolute delight for birdwatchers and lovers of wildlife, this zoological park is a part of the Nahargarh sanctuary and lies on the Jaipur-Delhi highway, 20 km from Jaipur city. Spread over 720 ha the biological park is popular amongst researchers for its abundant flora and fauna.

Educational trips to learn more about its biodiversity are also one of the popular activities at the park. It is home to about 285 species of avifauna; the most popular sighting is the elusive white-naped tit. An excellent spot for birdwatching here is the Ram Sagar. The Park is home to faunal species such as tigers, lions, bears, deer, crocodiles etc.

- Entry fee Indians ₹52, foreigners ₹302
- Camera Still: Indians ₹200, foreigners ₹400; video: Indians ₹500, foreigners ₹1,000
- Lion safari ₹200

Timings 9am-5pm, Tuesdays closed

Cell 09462804578

Nahargarh Biological Park

Art AND CRAFTS

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan
Paryatan Bhawan
Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station,
M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

App: Rajasthan Tourism Official

tourism.rajasthan.gov.in
spends several days here and gets to see hundreds of flamingoes in that duration, the odd and unlikely inhabitants of this muted landscape still come as a surprise.

The Sambhar Salt Lake is not so much a lake as a vast depression. A body of sand, saline and isolated pockets of water that straddles three districts (Nagaur, Jaipur and Ajmer) of Rajasthan, it spreads over an area of 190 sq km. For most of the year the lake remains dry. After the monsoons, a thin film of water covers the western reservoir, attracting thousands of local migrants like the greater and lesser flamingoes, painted storks and spot-billed pelicans. Huge colonies of birds congregate in the centre of the reservoir, shimmering in the haze that plays on the waters. By October the water recedes to a few small pools (the rest has either evaporated or been diverted to the salt pans in the eastern reservoir), leaving behind treacherously wet sand that is ideal terrain for waders such as pied avocets, Kentish plovers and black-winged stilts. It’s also when the flamingoes breed, building their circular, 1-foot-high nests in areas near Ratan Talao. During the day, birds can be found feeding in the salt pans and freshwater ponds near the Jhapok Dam and pools near Sambhar Town.

Come November, migratory birds start flying in. November to mid-March is also the best time to come to Sambhar — the cool sunny days allow for many hours of wandering.

By this time, substantial areas of the lake would have dried out, making it easier to walk or drive on its bed, and get closer to the birds. It’s also less dusty, and the pockets of babul trees that emerge where the compacted mud of the lake bed gives way to looser desert sand are still green.

It starts getting hot in Sambhar towards the end of March. Dust-laden winds start blowing across the desert, the lake dries up and most of the birds leave. For the next three-and-a-half months, the lake retreats into itself — without its colourful inhabitants, the

Travellers get a lovely view of lesser flamingoes when the lake is full

SAMBHAR SALT LAKE

FLAMINGO DANCE

District Jaipur, Nagaur and Ajmer
Division Jaipur
Location Spread over an area of 190 sq km of the Sambhar Basin, with the Aravalli Hills skirting its north-western edge, the Sambhar Salt Lake lies at the junction of Jaipur, Ajmer and Nagaur districts
Distances 64km SE of Kuchaman, 104km W of Jaipur, 360km SW of Delhi
Journey time By road 1.5hrs from Kuchaman, 2hrs from Jaipur, 6.5hrs from Delhi
Route from Jaipur NH48 to Dudu via Bagru; state highway to Sambhar Salt Lake via Naraina

AKSHAI JAIN

The fading light frames the craggy Aravali Hills that skirt the northwestern edge of the Sambhar Salt Lake. Small towns and villages that lie scattered along the distant shores of the lake flicker hesitantly to life. Strains of music drift by on the breeze. A vast flock of flamingoes flies by, the pink of their feathers catching the last rays of the sun. Their petulant honking is swallowed by the silence, and their lanky awkward shapes disappear over an embankment. For the visitor, who
landscape turns a uniform, unmitigated shade of brown, while the still waters in the salt pans evaporate, leaving behind layer upon layer of some of the finest ‘Sambhar’ salt on the scorched earth.

### ABOUT SAMBHAR

The ephemeral Sambhar Salt Lake is the inland salt lake in India. It’s a shallow wetland with depths varying from 1.6-6.6ft. Migratory birds such as pochards, waders and flamingoes are found here in large numbers. The lake has been designated a Ramsar Site in 1990 and was also identified as one of the sites for conservation action under the Indian Wetland Conservation Programme. It is one of the two Ramsar sites in Rajasthan – the other one is the Keoladeo National Bird Sanctuary at Bharatpur. Sambhar Salt Lake is owned by the state, but a large part of it is leased to Sambhar Salts Limited. Salt manufacturing units have reportedly adversely affected the lake’s ecosystem.

### THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Sambhar Salt Lake is one of India’s leading Ramsar Wetland Sites. Sambhar offers visitors excellent birding experiences. The lake is best visited between October and February — the time when most migratory birds can be found congregating here. During the monsoons it is not possible to drive across the lake, so it can be difficult, getting close to the birds. The best way to see the lake is to drive around it. So you can hire a jeep from Sambhar Town for a day.

**Birdwatching**

If you want to do some serious birding, you should give yourself at least three to four days when in Sambhar. Given the size of the lake, and the fact that pockets of water can be extremely localised and far apart, so a good pair of binoculars can be very helpful. Try to get a detailed map of the lake from Sambhar Salts Limited if you are going to be driving around on your own. A local driver may prove to be more familiar with the terrain so it might be worth your while to hire one from the town. Once you’re done birding you might want to take a ride on the train run by Sambhar Salts Limited.

Once you’re done birding you might want to take a ride on the train run by Sambhar Salts Limited. It can take you either to the new kyars or the Devyani kyars. A visit to the Shakhambari Mata Mandir on the southern banks of the lake is also worth it. From atop the confines of the chattri near the temple, you get a stunning view of salt flats. The temple is said to go back 2,500 years, and is one of the three shaktipeeths dedicated to Goddess Shakambhari. The temple is host to a grand mela during the Bhado Sudi Ashtami (occurring between August and September).

- **Entry Fee** Free
- **Timings** 5.30am-9pm

**OTHER WATER BODIES**

Several freshwater bodies exist in the surrounds of the Sambhar Salt Lake; Devyani Kund, called ‘Little Pushkar’ is believed to be the site of the wedding of Devayani (daughter of sage Shukracharya — guru of the demons) with the King Yayati. A number of shrines dedicated to various deities crowd the shoreline. Do visit the Devayani Temple in the town, in a lane characterised by many shrines.
The dramatic expanse of the Sambhar Salt Lake on a supermoon night

The Sharmistha Sarovar here is dedicated to a character from the Mahabharata. The pretty reservoir is a memorial to Sharmistha, friend of Devayani and daughter of demon-king Vrishparva. If visiting around the time of the Nag Panchami Mela, do immerse yourself in the colourful festivities.

Heritage walks
Sambhar is an engaging historical settlement, and wind one’s way through the temples, kunds and bazaars of the town, enjoying its stimulating culture. Start at the Sun Temple in Chhota Bazaar and head into the Joshiyon ki Gali via Charbhuja Temple. There are also the sights and sounds of Bada Bazaar, Gola Bazaar and Nikasa Mohalla; join the throngs of devotees at the Dargah and Jain Mandir. Stop by one of the shops selling the famous dessert —feeni, and do pick up some traditional jewellery.

Of interest at the British-era Circuit House is a lift that operates via a pulley system—which was used for hauling food and other items to the second storey.

Filming hotspots
The evocative, often otherworldly stretch of Sambhar is frequently a magnet for film makers. It was here, too, that parts of the period romance Jodhdaa Akbar, and the Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Ram-Leela, were shot.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT
The Circuit House, now Sambhar Heritage Resort (Tel: 0145-228218), run by Sambhar Salts Limited is comfortable, and has lovely views of the lake. Meals are provided on request. Krishna Guest House (Cell: 09214967123) on Sambhar Road is another option. Sambhar Lake Palace (Cell: 0982967082, 07728040082; thesambharlakelake.palace.in) near the Sakambari Temple Road, Kochya Ki Dhani offers 2 air-cooled rooms and a 24-hr restaurant that’s quite popular. They also offer camping facilities by the lake.

The family-run Savista Retreat (Cell 06377964564, 09829214453) in Sanjharia Village, Ajmer Road about 45kms/ 1.5 hrs away is a lovely eco-retreat which also offers activities such as classes in cooking, pottery and traditional Rajasthani block printing.

For more details, see Sambhar Salt Lake Accommodation Listings on page 334.

AROUND SAMBHAR SALT LAKE
Nalisar Archaeological Site (4km)
In the 1930s a huge collection of stoneware and artefacts was recovered from the Nalisar archaeological site, close to Sambhar. The excavated coins and seals date back to the Gupta and Kushana periods. Buddhist influences can be seen in the sculptures found here; these are all on view at Jaipur’s Albert Hall Museum.

Dadu Dwara Temples (70km)
One of the foremost Bhakti saints of Rajasthan is Dadu Dayal, and one can pay homage to this revered personage at the principal seat of the sect, in the town of Naraina. The serene site lies on the Jaipur-Sambhar route and the grand structure dedicated to the mystic promises wholesome moments of solitude and bliss within rustic environs.

GETTING THERE
Air Nearest airport: Jaipur (118km/2hrs). Connected by bus and train. Taxi fare to Sambhar is ₹1,200-1,500 / day trip.
Rail Nearest railhead: Sambhar Salt Lake Station. Although there are many trains that connect Sambhar City to Jaipur, you can take the one that leaves Jaipur around 5am and reaches Sambhar around 6.28am.
Road From Jaipur take Ajmer-Jaipur NH48 and then head further 28km north to Sambhar. Sambhar is just 8km from Phulera on SH57. BUS RSRTC buses ply regularly to Sambhar.
with its sculptures, imposing latticework jaalis and terracotta utensils, while the Bhandarej Baori, which dates back to the 11th century, stands as a fine example of the region’s rich architectural heritage. Dausa also surprises seekers with its spiritual landmarks. While the Protestant church at Bandikui takes you back to the days of the British Raj, the Mehendipur Balaji Temple of Lord Hanuman draws people from all over the country for its powers to cure mental illnesses.

To fulfill your quest for both spirituality and historical musings, you may also visit the temples at Jhajirampura.

Club your visit to Dausa and Jaipur with a day-trip to Abhaneri, 35km away, and discover its architectural marvels.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Chand Baori**

Over a thousand years old, the stunning Chand Baori is sequestered in the little-known ancient village of Abhaneri in Rajasthan’s Dausa district, 90km from Jaipur. Chand Baori, one of the world’s largest step wells, is probably the most stunning architecturally.

Believed to be the brainchild of 9th-century Pratihara king Chanda, and from whom it rightly takes its name, this amazing water-harvesting structure is 19.5m deep and is dedicated to Harshat Mata, Goddess of Joy and Happiness. Walled in a vast rectangular courtyard, inset with a wraparound corridor, the 13-storeyed inverted pyramid-shaped baori (wide at the top, and narrows sharply as it approaches the surface of the water) is accessible on three sides by dozens of steps.

**When to go**

October to March is the best time to visit Dausa.
double flights of steps (totalling 3,500) on 10 landings. The fourth side of the structure hosts a three-storeyed pavilion embellished with jharokhas, carved pillars, galleries, and the two projecting balconies featuring idols of the Hindu deities Mahishasurmardini and Ganesha.

What continues to astonish architects to this day is the baori's precise symmetry and geometric design. Visitors today are not permitted to enter the stepwell, which is cordoned off by a railing to prevent accidents. But if you like, be here during the Sharad Navratras for the annual two-day Abhaneri cultural festival (before Dusshera) held in the precincts of the stepwell, and you can enjoy traditional street plays, folk songs and Kachhi Ghori, Kalbeliya, Ghoomar, and Bhawai dance performances.

Harshat Mata Temple
Just across from the stepwell is the Harshat Mata shrine, dedicated to the Goddess Parvati. Constructed in the 7th-century Mahameru style, it bears a surprisingly strong resemblance to the intricate carvings and ornate arcades seen at the temples of Khajuraho.

Right opposite the temple, is a small bazaar lined with shops selling traditional handicrafts and apparel. Bargaining always works. Take NH21 from Jaipur via Bassi. Taxis usually cost ₹10-12 per km.

Lotwara Garh
This handsome citadel lures you with its grandeur. Built by Thakur Ganga Singh in the 17th century, the fort lies just 11km away from Abhaneri.

Lotwara is famous for its large population of peacocks who will be your constant companions. From Lotwara Garh, you can also visit the spooky town of Bhangarh (60km) in Alwar District.

Plan to enjoy a lovely heritage experience with a sojourn at the Lotwara Heritage Homestay, a palace converted into an exceptionally relaxing, uncrowded stay option.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT
A 2-star property, Hotel Madhuvan (Cell: 09414036261), located near Central Bus Stand, Somnath Nagar in Dausa, offers rooms with attached baths, round-the-clock room service, a restaurant and a garden. Hotel Aanchal (Cell: 08949224488) is located near the Collectorate Circle, Khan Bhankari Main Road, and offers guest rooms featuring attached baths with free toiletries and a shower, a seating area, a garden and free Wi-Fi.

The Lotwara Fort Hotel (Cell: 09929648512, 09460765756) located on the bank of river Banganga, is located on the bank of river Banganga and presently serves as the residence of his descendant Thakur Giriraj Singh and his family. With beautifully appointed guestrooms around a courtyard, it is a fine example of traditional Rajputana architecture with an invincible boundary wall, a porch, a kachahri or court, and chhatris.

Engage a taxi from Dausa via Manpur to reach Lotwara.
Jai Singh II (1700-1744), the founder of Jaipur. The fortified town is approached through four gates — the Bhandan Darwaja, Khedli Darwaja, Meena Darwaja and Bawri Darwaja. Ancient lore has it that it was known as Dev-Nagari, because of its plethora of temples. In the November of 2011 a grand ashavmedha yagna was organised of 1008 kundiyat yagna which was attended by personages of eminence and sadhus from all over India. Back in the day Bhandarej was famous for its terracotta vessels, lattice work and unique sculptures, richly evidenced by finds during the excavations.

**Things to see and do**

Go on day-long horse safaris or half-day camel safaris, with lunch thrown in. On your jaunts, you’ll ride past silent ret-ka-tilas (sand forts) in the open desert area that touches the highway. Explore the five-tiered Bara Baori with its arched windows, traditional paintings, sculpted carvings and courtyards, the 18th century, 3-storied Bhandarej Baoli and the archeological remains in the town. Enjoy a walk around the village to see traditional crafts carried out at the potters’, ironmongers’ and shoemakers’ colonies. Bhadrawati Palace, now a heritage hotel also arranges visits to the Abhaneri and Bhangarh.

**Kalakho** (8km) is lovely in the rains. Straddling golden fields, boasting of lakes bursting at the seams with the monsoon’s bounty, it is a picture of serene beauty. This woodsy part of the Aravallis is great for birding. The hills offer panoramic views as far as the horizon.

**Where to stay and eat**

Dhula Rao’s descendant, Rawal Raghubir Singh of Dhula, has converted the elegant sandstone Bhadrawati Palace (Tel: 01427-283351; Cell: 09414065999) into a heritage hotel.

In Kalakho-Ambari village, deep in the interiors of the Aravallis Dera Lakeview Retreat (Cell: 09571504000) offers accommodation in 16 AC deras (Portahuts), each with private facilities. There is a lot to discover around Kalakho and a number of activities are on offer, ranging from safaris to camel cart rides. The Umaid Lake Palace (Cell: 09799936888) is set next to a lake, albeit closer to NH11.

**The Information**

When to go October to March is the best time to visit Bhandarej

Getting There Driving down from Delhi or Jaipur is the best option, leaving one the option of squeezing in as many excursions as desired. It’s good going till Sikandra.
by the prosperous Marwari owners, the township’s merchant princes, among them the Birlas, Oswals, Mittals, Ruias, Lohias, Birlas, Goenkas and Singhaniyas, who moved on to Calcutta and Bombay and Surat to make their fortunes, with the change in trading conditions with the advent of the railways introduced by the British rulers. Most of the havelis were left in the care of an old retainer and some just wasted away.

This assorted collation of artistic profusion showcases the wondrous marriage of business and art, as the wealthier the businessman, the more ambitious was his vision of divvying up his haveli with elaborate frescoes on ceilings and walls, both inside and outside, to enhance his status in the eyes of his peers in society. For visitors, the largest open-air gallery in Rajasthan is a banquet of painterly delights given the sheer quality of the works here and the range of subjects—mythological tales and scenes from contemporary life, the reigning themes, offering the viewer interesting vignettes of a bygone era.
Driving is the most convenient way to explore the Shekhawati region. If you don’t have your own car, hire a taxi from Jaipur and create your own itinerary. The charges depend on the number of overnight stays and the type of vehicle you choose. Rates shoot up during the high season.

Jhunjhunu, the most important town in Shekhawati lies just 26 km NE of Mandawa, the most convenient base to explore the havelis in the townships in Jhunjhunu district. Head for the Nehru Bazaar in Jhunjhunu town to explore Khetri Mahal and the many other havelis near it. The Khetri Mahal is a run-down palace dating to 1770, and offers good views of the town. The Modi Havelis nearby have some exquisite murals, though some have been lost to modern paint, while the Kaniram Narsinghdas Tibrewala Haveli has two painted trains. The Mohanlal Ishwardas Modi Haveli also boasts of a train mural, among several others.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

See Around Jhunjhunu

AROUND JHUNJHUNU

Mandawa (26km SW of Jhunjhunu) Mandawa came into being in 1756, when Nawal Singh built the fort that has now been turned into the hotel called Castle Mandawa. It only became a full-fledged town after Nawal Singh’s two grandsons decided to make it their home at the close of the 18th century. Mandawa attracted many merchants to set up shop. Of interest here are the murals of Gulab Rai Ladia Haveli, which are quite exceptional, especially in the variety of their themes. It is quite a mixed basket—scenes from the life of the owner with the fort in the background; a curly-headed Greek ‘portrait’; mirror images of a tiger and a horse; a bird tending her eggs.

The Bansidhar Nevatia Haveli shows the Wright brothers’ maiden flight and a European making a telephone call—presumably reproduced from magazines. A rather nationalistic tug-of-war between a strongman called Prof Ramamurti and a motorcar driven by an Englishman is also portrayed in a painting. The baithak or sitting room of the Sneh Ram Ladia Haveli has a rather amateurish though amusing group portrait of rulers of various princely states. On the other hand, consider the almost photographic portraits of the merchants who owned the haveli.

Poor imitations of European artworks can be seen at Murmuria Haveli. Check out the artist’s amusing attempt to set Indian themes against a European background—Krishna shepherding cows in a typically English countryside, for instance. The Double Goenka Haveli has amusing erotica painted on the outer left wall. Access to this wall can be had through a narrow passage from inside the haveli.

Where to Stay and Eat

Castle Mandawa (Tel: 01592-223124/ 480) is the most famous hotel in these parts. This heritage hotel is popular with Europeans, mostly the French and the Spanish, who arrive here in droves. Horse rides/ jeep safaris and camel safaris are available at the castle on request. Though the gift shop in the hotel is good for souvenirs, locally made lac bangles, bandhej (tie-and-dye)
textiles, soft leather jootis (both plain and embroidered) and pottery items can be easily picked up in the shops behind the castle area.

The Desert Resort (Tel 297770), associated with Castle Mandawa, has a pool. Hotel Mandawa Haveli (Tel: 223088), located near the Sonthaliya Gate in Mandawa, offers comfort at down-to-earth prices. Hotel Shekhawati (Tel: 223036) on the Mukundgarh Road from Subhash Chowk has even lower prices, offering 25 rooms to the budget traveller.

Bagar (41km NE of Mandawa)
Piramal Haveli was built in 1928 by Seth Piramal Chaturbhuj Makaria, who made a fortune in Bombay trading cotton, silver and opium; it boasts of colonial frescoes, including some of flying angels and gods in motorcars.

Where to Stay and Eat
The Piramal Haveli (Tel: 01592-221220), run by Neemrana Hotels, is another heritage property. It used to be the haveli of Seth Piramal Chaturbhuj Makaria, who made his fortune in trading in Mumbai.

Hotel Mandawa Haveli (Tel: 223088), located near the Sonthaliya Gate in Mandawa, offers comfort at down-to-earth prices. Hotel Shekhawati (Tel: 223036) on the Mukundgarh Road from Subhash Chowk has even lower prices, offering 25 rooms to the budget traveller.

Mukundgarh (14km SE of Mandawa)
You’ll find good frescoes at the Gopinath and Venugopal temples in Mukundgarh, and at Ganeriwal Haveli.

Dundlod (21km SE of Mandawa)
Just 20km from Mandawa, Dundlod is a small and relatively tidy town, which was founded in 1750 by Keshri Singh, who was also the founder of Bissau. The Dera Dundlod Fort, founded in 1750, has been converted into a hotel. Of interest here is a very opulent hall, called the Diwan-i-Khana, which features murals of maharajas riding horses of renown. At the cluster of Goenka havelis, you can see two white men with a giraffe and a rhino and a man grooming himself. The Jagathia Haveli’s outer wall has one of the most detailed scenes of a railway station.

Where to Stay and Eat
Dera Dundlod Fort (Tel: 01594-252199) in Dundlod looks more like a big mansion with pretensions to fort-hood. The Diwan-i-Khana of this heritage hotel is worth a dekko, though, as its aristocratic character has been well preserved. Ask for the 5-day horse safari covering the Shekhawati region, including a stay at heritage hotels and meals.

Bissau (25km NW of Mandawa)
The three important havelis of Jasraj Sigthia, Govindram Sigthia, and Ramlalji Jai Narayan Tiberwala Haveli are in the same dusty lane.

The Bissau of Shekhawati—like most small towns in the post-colonial world — seems trapped in a triple time warp. The 250-year-old Keshargarh Fort here was built in 1746 by Keshri Singh, one of the five sons of the legendary Sardul Singh, who ended three centuries of Muslim ascendancy over large parts of Shekhawati. It proclaims its medieval origins with impressive bastions; the stylised caricatures of Europeans on haveli walls betray its brush with colonialism; the bazaar, with shops selling Coke and electronic goods, advertises its chaotic leap into modernity.

One can amble through the bazaar and drink in the town’s distinctly provincial ambience—low-key, unhurried and fatalistic. Ironically, until the latter half of the 19th century, Bissau—along with the other towns of Shekhawati —was a flourishing and prosperous town. It was on the corridor which caravans and trading traffic took between Delhi and the various ports of Gujarat. It was also an important link on the Southern Silk Route, which connected West Asia with
China. The Thakurs and the business community enjoyed a symbiotic relationship—the Thakurs protected the trade from brigands, in lieu of which the merchants paid a ‘security fee’. Little wonder, then, that the entrepreneurs of this region (often wrongly clubbed with the Marwaris from Marwar, the erstwhile Jodhpur Estate) amassed great fortunes until the rise of the British Empire and the dominance of its imported goods destroyed this trade.

Gradually, most of the merchant families—the Goenkas, Poddars, Singhanias, Ruias and Birlas—migrated to the port towns of Kolkata and Mumbai, slowly establishing a stranglehold over commerce between India and Britain. The tradition in those days was that whoever made it good would come back and build four things: a haveli, a baoli, a mandir and a dharamshala. With their multiplying wealth, they went on erecting colleges, cenotaphs, grander and grander havelis and—finally, when nothing else could be thought of—ordered that the havelis be painted. This competitive grandeur was also a way of spoiling the families they had to leave back at home for long periods.

But with the dissolution of the princely states after India received Independence, the intricate social network that radiated from royalty and had held people to this region withered away, consigning the once artistically radiant region of Shekhawati to the very dustbins of history.

Turning into one of the narrow lanes leading deep into the bowels of the town, you will discover where most of the havelis sit. At Motiram Jasraj Sigthia Haveli, bend over in half, through a small opening in a high wooden gate with exquisitely carved motifs in brass. Indeed, these feature in all the havelis. The façade is an impressive riot of rich colours, with blue dominating the lot. Not a single inch of the wall has been left unpainted. Indian gods and goddesses dominate the canvas, but some royals can also be seen, rubbing shoulders with divinity. One of the royals looks like Lord Shiva, despite the distinguishing beard and turban. A woman is massaging the king’s legs. Krishna is riding an elephant with gopis inside it.

There are more paintings inside the haveli. On the first floor, a man is shown wearing his turban before a mirror. In a room on the first floor, now used as a children’s classroom, one can see stylised and well-made portraits of women.

**Nawalgarh** (28km SE of Mandawa)

Just 40 km from Jhunjhunu and 28 km from Castle Mandawa lies Nawalgarh, one of the biggest and busiest towns of Jhunjhunu District and the Shekhawati region. Founded in 1737 by Nawal Singh, a son of Shardul Singh, Nawalgarh was able to attract a number of rich Marwari merchants who built many richly painted havelis here. Most of these are in a state of disrepair now, the
exception being the Poddar Haveli, which has been turned into a museum. Although the haveli is not very old—it was built around the 1920s—the murals have been carefully restored to their original glory. As for the other murals, it seems the Nawalgarh artists had much greater freedom in choosing their themes. For instance, there are pirated editions of Ravi Varma’s works and imaginative illustrations of a whole range of early-20th century technologies such as the air balloon, the Wright brothers’ attempt at flight, motorcars, modern railways and sewing machines.

But in terms of artistic brilliance, the painted ceiling of a small room in the fort called Bala Quila stands out. The room, studded profusely with mirrors, is circular, about 8ft in diameter and almost as high. The murals, lustrous and colourful, depict an artist’s impression of the cities and armies of Jaipur and Nawalgarh in the 1850s.

Aath Haveli is where you can see a long train with one passenger in every compartment, a woman feeding a child and at the same time doing her make-up.

Morarka Haveli is right across the back street from Aath Haveli, and has one of the most elegantly and finely sketched paintings. Two prominent frames show the celebration of traditional festivals like Teej and Gangaur. Saraogi Haveli has amusing reproductions of Ravi Varma’s paintings. Check out the front wall at Sheksaria Haveli, whose murals have been all but whitewashed. Portraits of gods have, of course, been spared. Chaucharia Haveli has women angels alongside Europeans going up in air balloons.

Where to Stay and Eat

Of the two good options here, Hotel Roop Niwas Kothi (Cell: 09929598629) is a sprawling mansion inspired by Italian originals. This heritage hotel has well-kept gardens, verandahs and courtyards which are ideal for those looking for a quiet refuge from the town’s hustle and bustle. It also arranges horse safaris.

Chirawa (29 km)

A bustling trading town, it is famous for its huge havelis. The town was the base of the Dalmias, one of the top Marwari clans. Of particular interest are the Ram Bhagat Damia Haveli and the Manohar Lal and Jamnadas havelis. The two painted wells and the Dwarkadeesh Temple are also worth exploring here.

Alsisar (50km NE of Mandawa)

The area surrounding the town is an arid semi desert and the expanses of the town itself peppered with havelis and cenotaphs. The Haveli Jhabarmal Jhunjhunwala has lovely murals on both the interior and exterior walls. The north room features a painting of Lord Rama’s wedding procession and episodes from folk tales like Heer-Ranjha, Dhola-Maru and Laila-Majnu. It was built in 1877. Haveli Madanlal Bahadurmalka, features paintings of the Buddha, a snake charmer and jugglers.

Where to Stay and Eat

The Alsisar Mahal (Tel: 01595-245271-2) offers heritage-style living, providing true Rajasthani hospitality. One can also enjoy a village walk and royal hospitality with an evening at Dungeon Bar or a leisurely afternoon in World War II Lounge. A jeep safari offers beautiful vignettes of desert life.

Khetri (65 km)

Its most important merchant princes were the Chaudharys and the Shahs. Of interest at the Bhopalgarh fort here is the Bakhtawar Mahal with its mirror-encrusted sheesh mahal and the mural-rich rang mahal; the Gopal Temple and the Raghunath Temple also feature good murals.
FOUNDED in the late 17th century, Sikar, the largest district of Shekhawati, is home to some utterly magnificent havelis. The 19th century saw an extraordinary migration of rich merchants from the neighbouring states to the Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts and they used their great wealth to create these havelis. Artists from Jaipur and Udaipur moved in to adorn the walls of the structures with exquisite details - of the world around them, and of the many moods of their favourite deities. Modelled to resemble Jaipur in terms of its city plan, Sikar was once the richest thikana or feudal state under Jaipur. An array of impressive havelis, beautifully frescoed temples, grand buildings and a massive fort dot the city, making it a sheer delight for the intrepid traveller.

Sikar was ruled by the Shekhawats, who were the descendants of Tirmalji, the brother of Bhojraj, who was the great great grandfather of the illustrious Maharaja Sardul Singh. While some historians believe that Sikar was founded in 1687, most are of the opinion that it was in 1724 when Sheo Singh laid its foundation. He is credited with building the palace, the fort, and the first town walls. With the support of Sardul Singh, Sheo Singh evicted the Kaimkhani Nawab of Fatehpur and expanded the boundaries of the thikana. Later, Devi Singh added to it by building the impressive Deogarh Fort, some 8km south-east of Sikar. Devi Singh’s heir Lakshman Singh founded Lakshmangarh. By the early 19th century, Sikar flourished as the wealthiest baron under the Jaipur state, with the Biyanis being the main merchant family. The havelis built by them stand as a testament to the venerable past of Sikar.

Archaeological evidence however suggests that Sikar is a far more ancient site. For instance, a well near the Fatehpur Gate in the district features a stele bearing the date 1278. Places like Ganeshwar and Baleshwar are believed to have been a part of the pre-Harappan period, which makes them must-visit attractions for all history and archaeology enthusiasts.
Jivan Ram Biyani Haveli
Sikar is home to a number of gorgeous havelis built by the Biyanis, but the oldest and most beautiful of them all is the Jivan Ram Biyani Haveli. Of its many murals, the one featuring a British officer smoking a hookah is the most attractive.

Chhotalal Sodhani Haveli
Constructed in 1884, this haveli will impress you with its religious panels based on scenes from the Mahabharata.

The Mahal
Built by Rao Raja Ram Pratap Singh, the Makrana Mahal, also known as Pratap Mahal features the Chini Mahal, famed for its outstanding murals and blue porcelain tiles. The Sheesh Mahal here features a painting of Rao Raja Madho Singh along with a vignette of the town. The Badal Mahal features a picture of Madho Singh watching a dance at his court.

Raghunath Temple
Built by Rao Devi Singh, this temple dates back to 1840 and is known for its murals depicting folk tales. The upper storey of the temple is bedecked with paintings which depict battle scenes. The piece de resistance here is the full-face portrait of Lieut Boileau, who visited Sikar with Col Lockett in 1831.

Government Museum
The museum houses 10th century sculptures brought from the Harshnath Temple. The museum is home to as many as 287 stone sculptures. Also on display here are inscriptions, weapons, metallic images, coins, paintings and traditional artefacts.

Jeebmata (30km)
This religious village is known for its ancient temple dedicated to Jeebmata or the goddess of power. Devotees throng the temple during the chaalra and ashvin navaratri, when a grand fair is held here.

Getting There
Air
Nearest Airport Jaipur International (130km/2hrs) operates daily flights to Delhi, Mumbai and major Indian cities. Taxis to Sikar cost ₹2,700-3,000.

Rail
Sikar railhead (20km) is served by SIKR DEE Intercity Express, a new train which runs between Sikar Junction and Delhi Sarai Rohilla Railway Station.

Road
Sikar is well connected by roads with Delhi, Chandigarh, Surat and all the major cities of Rajasthan. NH-52 passes through center of city and connects Sikar to Jaipur and Bikaner. The Kotputali-Kuchaman Mega highway also passes through Sikar.

Bus
Volvo service is available from Jaipur to Sikar (2.5hrs).
Lakshmangarh Fort (30km)
Perched atop a hill, this impressive fort was built in 1862 by Rao Raja Lakshman Singh. The foundation of Lakshmangarh was based on Jaipur's town planning model. Today, the fort is a private property owned by the Jhunjhunwala family. While the family has not modified the exterior of the fort, its interior is now an interesting mix of old world charm and modern amenities.

Ramgarh (78km)
About 6 km south-west of Mahansar, Ramgarh was one of the wealthiest towns of Shekhawati in its prime. Indeed, it is still referred to as Sethon-ka-Ramgarh (Ramgarh of the Merchants) to distinguish it from its namesakes. Founded in 1791 by the Poddars, who were fleeing Churu after the thakur there had levied heavy taxes on their wool business, Ramgarh boasts the largest number of murals in the whole of Shekhawati.

The cheery Vedaaranya Heritage And Healing Festival (VHAH) is organised by the Shruti Foundation; hosted by Vedaaranya Haveli to encourage the heritage and culture of Shekhawati it arranges heritage walks etc. For more info, log on to www.shrutifoundation.org/festivals

Fatehpur (50 km)
About 15 km south of Ramgarh, Fatehpur is one of the oldest towns in Shekhawati. Established in 1451 by Fateh Khan of the Muslim clan Kayamkhanis, the town has a rich history. Fatehpur boasts some impressive feats of engineering in its baolis, wells and joharas. The town was also home to well-known Marwari families like the Singhanias, Poddars and Saraogis, and their opulently decorated havelis here.

Khatu Shyamji Temple (55km)
One of Rajasthan’s most revered pilgrimage destinations, the village of Khatu, home to the Khatu Shyamji shrine attracts devotees for its Krishna temple. Krishna is worshipped as Khatu Shyam. The 3-day Khatu Shyamji Fair is also held in February/March. Shyama Kund and Shyam Bagichi are also worth exploring.

Ringus (50km)
Located on the Jaipur-Sikar road Ringus is home to the ancient Bhairuji Temple which is dedicated to a folk deity. Many families in these areas have settled out of Rajasthan for business or other reasons, they also come here to complete rituals. During the Khatu Shyamji’s mela, many devotees start their padyatra from the Bhairuji Temple (18.5km).

Sri Shakambhari Mata Temple (56km)
In Sikrai village, the sanctum of the Sri Shakambhari Mata Temple features idols of Brahmami and Rudrani. Both 8-armed goddesses are riding lions while killing Mahishasura. The only difference between the two is of the stone - Brahmami is made of marble while Rudrani is made of locally available medstone.

Ganeshwar (90 km)
Sikar’s Neem ka Thana Tehsil is home to Gangeshwar village, an important pilgrimage and a much-flocked picnic spot. The major highlight here is the hot sulphur spring, which is said to have curative properties for skin ailments. What makes Ganeshwar such an important site is the fact that excavations carried out here revealed the remains of a 4,000 year old civilisation. History buffs must visit this hidden gem during their trip to the Shekhawati region.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT
Erose Hotel (Tel: 01572-271837; Cell: 09667465009, 09828058175) at Station Road, is known for its multi-cuisine restaurant Mehfil Sikar. You could also try Hotel Vinayak Resort (Tel: 01573-232635-37; Cell: 09828718437) at NH52. It has a restaurant, a swimming pool, a dancing hall and a kid’s play area, along with a fast food counter.

An age-old haveli in Ramgarh
ALWAR

A SECRET OUT IN THE OPEN

District Alwar Division Jaipur
Location In north-eastern Rajasthan, Alwar is set amid the Aravali Hills, not far from south of Delhi
Distances 148km NE of Jaipur, 156km SW of Delhi
Journey time By road 3hrs from Jaipur, 3.5hrs from Delhi
Route from Jaipur NH48 to Shahpura via Amber; state highway to Alwar via Bairat, Thanagazi and Sariska Route from Delhi NH48 to Dharuhera-Bhiwadi via Manesar; state highway to Alwar via Tijara

ABHILASH GAUR

Most Rajasthan Roadways’ buses racing down to Alwar have ‘Matsyanagar Aagar’ depot painted on their rear panels. But the last time Alwar was referred to by that name was immediately after Independence, when the kingdoms of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli were merged to form the short-lived ‘United Kingdom of Matsya’. But the name itself is older than recorded history, its antecedents hailing from mythology. The Matsya kingdom, for instance, figures in the Mahabharata.

Historians are divided on the origin of the modern name, ‘Alwar’. Some say it is a corruption of Salwapur, Salwa being the name of a tribe that lived here. Others say it is a corruption of Aravalpur, Aravalis being the hill range running through the district. Still others see it as a corruption of Alpur, the name of the city founded by Maharaja Alaghraj in 1049.

Legends apart, the oldest extant thing in the city today is the Bala Quila, Alwar built by the Nikumbha Rajputs in the 10th century. The fort spreads over the surrounding hills, which, along with the nearby lakes, are Alwar’s most alluring assets. If you come in the rains, they are bright green; if you come in the dry season, they are ruddy and rocky.

All that rock has been put to good use in and around Alwar. Forts, tombs and palaces abound. It is said that as Alwar was the youngest kingdom in Rajputana—it came into existence in 1775—its rulers never tired of pomp and pageantry to make their mark amid the older kingdoms. This should explain why they built 52 forts and innumerable palaces in the 175-odd years that they ruled.

Modern Alwar is a repository of much of that heritage. Wandering around the town’s old streets, one realises how much there is to cherish in Alwar, and how little the outside world knows about it.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

You can do all the sightseeing in Alwar in a day, but don’t take this to mean that there is little of note in the town. The city is dotted with heritage buildings.

A Tomb and a Palace that Wasn’t

A five-storey medieval tomb, Fateh Jung ka Gumbad outclasses all its contemporaries in Delhi, barring the tomb of Humayun. It is the easternmost of Alwar’s monuments, lying just across the railway line by a pedestrian over-bridge. The tomb stands in a walled garden. After Fateh Jung ka Gumbad, cross the railway line back into the city, and take a rickshaw to Moti Doongri, the grand palace that couldn’t be.

Built in 1882, Moti Doongri was the main residence of the Alwar royals till 1928, when Maharaja Jai Singh decided to raze the palace and build...
a more magnificent one in its place. However, the ship carrying materials from Europe for the new palace sank, and the grand project ended. Climbing up the wide ramp to the top of the old rock rewards one with an unhindered view of the city.

A short walk away from Moti Doongri, towards the railway line, stands RR College, once known as the Vinay Vilas Palace. The building is worth a look from up close, and from here, you can head to Company Bagh or Purjan Vihar as it is called. This is a beautiful garden with a large, domed summer house, called Shimla, set in a trough amidst the rich verdure. Maharaja Sheodan Singh laid out the garden in 1868, and Maharaja Mangal Singh built Shimla in 1885. Locals take great pride in Shimla, which has walkways and fountains.

The Moosi Maharani ki Chhatri complex

Company Bagh Entry Free Timings All day Summer House timings 8am-10pm

From Company Bagh, head up the Church Road, past the stone-built St Andrew’s Church, which is usually locked. By evening, Church Road is a busy market, but in the morning, you can stop and admire the old havelis here. At the end of the road lies Hope Circus, a traffic island with shops on the street level and a temple above. Four streets radiate outwards from the circle. The one lane from Church Road leads to the Clock Tower and has the Kalakand Market strung along it. The fourth street from Church Road leads to the Tripolia Gateway and on to the City Palace complex. From outside, Tripolia looks like an unremarkable gateway, but small shrines have been built into its corners. On either side of the gate, while going towards City Palace, are old markets, called Sarafa Bazaar and Bajaja Bazaar. Both are famous for the gold ornaments sold at the shops. You will also find beautiful havelis along the way.

City Palace

The City Palace complex is accessed through a gateway with projecting balconies on either side. Beyond the gate lies an open ground with Mahal chowk and Janana Mahal on the right side. The City Palace, Sagar, a tank, and Moosi Rani ki Chhatri are located just behind this part.

Morning is the best time to visit City Palace as the sun shines directly on its façade. The building has been completely taken over by state government offices, the Alwar Collectorate and the police superintendent’s office. Still, apart from admiring the architecture and ornamentation of this late-18th-century palace built in 1793 by Raja Bakhtawar Singh, visitors can climb up to the museum at the top. It has three sections: the first hall has royal robes and clay toys, an interesting exhibit here being the bicycle belonging to Maharaja Jai Singh with three hub gears and brakes built into its pedals. The second hall is a storehouse of paintings, including large canvases of notable historical personalities. The third has a display of weapons; and placed without obvious distinction among other weapons are the swords of the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir.

Marvelling at the exquisite murals and fine mirrorwork on the walls and the ceilings of City Palace takes much of the visitor’s time. Behind the palace lies the large tank called Sagar, which has two-tiered, domed pavilions set around it. Steps go down to the water, which was used for ritual bathing in the old days. Feeding pigeons is a tradition here. Across the water is a string of temples, and on the right, the beautiful marble and Karauli sandstone cenotaph of Raja Bakhtawar Singh. But it is named after his consort, Rani Moosi. One can also visit a small temple located at one end of the water body and maybe even spot a sambar here!

Govt. Museum Entry Indians ₹20, children ₹10, foreigners ₹100 Timings 9.45am-5.15pm, Mondays closed.
Vijai Mandir Lake Palace
This beautiful palace, built in the year 1918, was the royal residence of Maharaja Jai Singh. It is a sprawling building with a beautiful Ram temple inside. The palace boasts over a hundred rooms and a lush ground in its premises. The structure cannot be seen from the front but you can get a good view from the shore of the lake behind it. The road past the lake leads to Bala Quila.

Bala Quila
The City Palace complex forms the eastern extremity of Alwar, and beyond it run the Aravalis, with Bala Quila standing guard atop them. The fort’s walls spread out over the hills like tentacles, piercing the green cover in wild sweeps. Rising 304m above the city, the Bala Quila features 15 large and 51 small towers with their 446 outlets for musketry, which would have hailed fire and brimstone on many an enemy. The Mughal emperor Jahangir was once exiled (Salim Mahal) and his forefathers Akbar and Babur are believed to have stayed here overnight.

The name Bala Quila (translating to ‘Young Fort’) is ironic, as it is the oldest extant structure in town, dated to 928 CE, when the Nikumbha Rajputs were in power. The 10-km drive up to the fort is rewarding in its own right. The road is good, the tree covers dense all along, and the majestic old wall, with steps built along it, surfaces periodically.

Entrance is through Jai Pol. Visitors need to sign in the register kept with the guard before they can walk around.

- **Timings** 9am-5pm, all days

Biodiversity Park
Close to the Bala Quila forest entry gate lies this beautiful expanse of biodiversity which features a herbal garden, butterfly zone, peacock zone and yoga zone. The new attraction also has springs, fountains, a tree house and even a selfie zone.

- **Entry** Sunrise to sunset

Bala Quila Buffer Zone Safari
Visitors can now enjoy a guided safari of the Bala Quila forest which showcases the amazing floral and faunal diversity of the Aravali mountain range. Also scattered in this rich verdure are many heritage structures from yesteryear, including the Suraj Kund, Matiya Kund and Salim Sagar. Tickets can be easily obtained at the Bala Quila Forest entry gate.

- **Safari Timings** 6am-6pm

WHERE TO STAY

Heritage
The most famous of the heritage properties that is also a coveted destination wedding venue here is 12km away, The Hill Fort Kesroli (Cell:09587885005) is a 14th-century fort with 36 rooms. The hotel also arranges camel rides. The fort is said to be the “oldest heritage site in India where you can stay”, standing on a high rock with ramparts rising to about 214ft. It was built by the Yaduvanshi Rajputs and later acquired by the Khanzada rulers. About 7km from Alwar is Hotel Burja Haveli (Tel: 0144-2888390; Cell: 09928441428), one of the most sought-after heritage hotels around the city. Situated in Burja village, on the Alwar-Rajgarh Road, this lovely 240-year-old haveli is equipped with cozy rooms, pool, and a restaurant that serves Rajasthani, Indian, Continental and Chinese cuisines.

Others
Hotel Aravali Heights (Cell: 08209952589) is by far the best bet in Alwar. It has a multi-cuisine, restaurant, a bar and a swimming pool; offers safe, clean accommodation just opposite the railway station.

GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Sanganer Airport, Jaipur (150km/3.5-4hrs). Taxis to Alwar cost ₹9/km

Rail Alwar Station is well-connected to Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai, Ahmedabad by the Jaipur-Delhi Sarai Rohilla, Mumbai-Delhi Garib Rath, Ahmedabad-Katra Express trains.

Road Alwar is well-connected to the capital by the Bhawadi-Alwar toll road. Turn left off NH48 at Dharuhera and drive down straight to Bhawadi, the origin of the toll road. Though not an expressway, the two-lane road is well-maintained and bypasses towns like Tijara.
Hotel Grand Ashoka (Cell: 07229959000), Rajgarh-Bhiwadi Bypass Road, Ambedkar Nagar, is a new property with 30 rooms. RTDC’s Hotel Meenal (Tel: 2347352), close to the Circuit House, lies on the outskirts of town.

For more hotels and details, see Alwar Accommodation Listings on page 345.

AROUND ALWAR

Siliserh Lake (13km)
The most famous and, no doubt, most beautiful of the lakes around Alwar was formed in 1845, during the reign of Maharao Raja Viney Singh, who dammed a tributary of the river Ruparel. The lake spreads over a whopping 10.5 sq km during the monsoon, and is a marvellous sight with green hills around it and white clouds above.

The Hotel Lake Palace (Cell: 09413351237) here is a government-run property built on a hillside overlooking the lake. For sheer location, this hotel is unparalleled. You can also go boating on the lake.

Garbhaji Waterfall (10 km)
Set amidst the richly forested surroundings of Alwar, about 10 km from Siliserh, Garbhaji Falls drops from a high cliff. Access is by a steep flight of stairs. A popular picnic spot, it also attracts trekkers and hiking buffs.

Tijara Jain Temples (48km)
The ancient Tijara Jain Temples have long been drawing many a history buff and spiritual seeker. It was during an excavation in 1956, that Tijara found its hidden heritage, when a statue of the eighth Jain Tirthankar Chandraprabhu Bhagwan was found. Soon, a temple was established and named after the deity.

Bharthari Gumbad Tijara (55km)
An architectural wonder for featuring the largest dome in the state this 2-storied structure lies close to the Delhi-Alwar highway. The 240 foot high dome is held aloft by eight massive pillars.

Neemrana Baori (66km)
Situated close to the popular Fort Neemrana on the Delhi-Jaipur highway, Neemrana Baori is a beautiful spot to explore. To access the waterline one has to walk down the seven floors by a stairway of 170 to 200 steps. Locally known as Rani-ki Baori, its antecedents are shrouded in mystery. You need to step carefully as some of the areas are a bit fragile.

Bhangarh-one of India’s most haunted destinations

BHANGARH

SPOOKY TOWN

District Alwar Division Jaipur
Location Bhangarh lies on the border of the Sariska Reserve in the Aravali range in Alwar
Distances 80km from Jaipur, 86km from Alwar
Journey time By Road 2hrs from Jaipur, 2hrs from Alwar
Route from Alwar Take the Thanagazi route from Alwar, from Thanagazi, take the left turn which will take you to Bhangarh via Bamanwas and Ajabgarh Alternate route Alwar-Rajgarh-Tehla-Bhangarh
The lazy sprawl of this abandoned township, imbued with tales of lovelorn tantrics and angry sages has you in thrall. The beauty of one of India's most haunted places is that it continues to thrive on these terror-filled tales long after these events unfolded and the dust of its lead protagonists scattered by the winds that stalk its ruins. To add grist to the mill ASI has officially prohibited people from visiting Bhangarh between the hours of sunrise and sunset.

Bhangarh is one of India’s most intriguing towns, and an alluring destination for ghost-hunters, who arrive with fear in their hearts and an anticipatory gleam in the eyes. For those who love a good ghost yarn the ruins of Bhangarh, sequestered in the outskirts of Sariska Tiger Reserve at the foot of a mountain, is just the place to be. And, if the ghosts side-step you, you may just chance upon the elusive tiger...or that even more ghostly predator of the Indian jungle, the stealthy leopard.

Rajasthan has its fair share of spooky places, but Bhangarh gives them all a run for their money. For one, it’s quite accessible from the Delhi NCR and its haunting atmospherics as dramatic as you would wish. To add that extra spice to its supernatural ambience, visitors are warned by savvy locals and the ASI from going there after sunset...

Abandoned since the 18th century, Bhangarh actually springs a nice surprise at your first meeting, which is a rather friendly one. In the clear light of day, under the dappled sunlight, the serene ruins of the fortified town with its tank and mandirs, havelis, shops and palace remnants, contained by multiple gates, invite you to explore at will.

Bhangarh was constructed by Amber’s Kachchwaha ruler Raja Bhagwat Singh, for his son Madho Singh in 1537. Madho Singh’s brother Man Singh was the fabled general of Emperor Akbar. Madho Singh, who was himself a Diwan at Akbar’s court, was succeeded by his son Chhattar Singh.

And with Chhattar Singh on the gaddi, Bhangarh’s epic terror tale took birth. The drive to Bhangarh Fort might give you a taste of things to come as you travel through poorly inhabited villages and roads lined with ruins of what were once opulent havelis. Massive locks in a highly rusted state keep the intricately carved gates of these havelis well and truly locked. The portly gateway, immense with dignity, leads you to the fort at whose entrance you encounter what appears to be a gaggle of shops, their crumbling remains lining both sides of the trail leading to the Someshwar Temple whose walls are still intact. Take a wander at leisure to explore the crumbling Nartaki Ki Haveli and Purohit Haveli, the Tantrik ki Chhatti, and a small mosque.

The palace, located at the extreme end of the fortification, lies in an advanced state of ruin with only four stories out of the original seven available for your exploration. Now only bats and spirits inhabit these once opulent spaces. The only place safe from these nocturnal visitors after dark is the scattering of temples dedicated to Someshwar (Shiva), Hanuman, Ganesh, Vishal Devta, Mangla Devi and Keshav Rai.

The brooding fort ruminates in cloistered silences at the edge of the Sariska jungles. Haul yourself up to the terrace of the palace and you get a panoramic view of the valley, and, of course, the Lahori Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Lohagarh Gate and Delhi Gate of the fortified town.

The story goes that the royals and their distraught subjects were cursed by a tantric named Singha...
Sevra, who lost favour with princess Ratnavati, Chhattar Singh’s daughter. Tales of her beauty reached far and wide and she received many a marriage proposal. The tantric, well versed in the black arts, too, succumbed to her irresistible charms. He knew that there was no way he could press his suit upon her, so he decided to cast a spell on her.

In an attempt to get the princess to fall for him, the tantric slipped a love potion in the oil her maid was sent out to purchase in the market. The idea was that the moment Ratnavati poured out the oil, she would be overwhelmed by love for him. On questioning her maid, however, Ratnavati, ever alert to his devious nature and no stranger to black magic herself, saw through this sly plan and threw the bottle onto a large boulder nearby, which started moving, and gathering momentum, passed over the tantric, who was lurking nearby. It is said that in the last throes of his death, while being crushed by the huge boulder, the enraged Singhia roundly cursed her and the inhabitants of Bhangarh. The chhatri atop the hillside is his.

A year later, there was a battle between Bhangarh and Ajabgarh, in which Ratnavati died. Soon after, the inhabitants of Bhangarh upped and left its cursed soil.

Another tale linked to the ghost town is about a sage called Guru Balu Nath who used to live on the hilltop on which the fort is built. When the fort was being constructed, the sage gave the condition to the king that the fort should be built in such a way that it would not cast a shadow on his house. In the beginning, all Bhangarh’s rulers respected this condition, but Raja Ajab Singh decided to add columns to the fort. As a result, the sage's residence was hidden under the shadow of the fort. The furious sage cursed the fort.

Legends will live on, but historians opine that the population of Bhangarh diminished because Ajab Singh established a new fort after his father Chhattar Singh died. This was followed by a famine in 1783, which forced the rest of the villagers to leave the town.

### Timings
Sunrise to sunset

### Entry Charges
- Indian `25
- Foreigners `300

### Where to Stay & Eat
For obvious reasons, you can stay and eat in Alwar. Splurgers can also opt for the Amanbagh Resort (Cell: 09828166737) at Village Thanaghazi also provides taxis to their guests for a short trip to Bhangarh Fort.
Over a decade after a translocation programme was initiated to rehabilitate the cat in Sariska NP, its number steadily rose. In May 2020, ST-12 was seen with her three newborn cubs, which came as heartening news for wildlife lovers.

Sariska’s history, and its surviving wildlife, continues to be captivating in its own right. There’s the sight of the first hill burnished with the rust leaves of dhok, or Anogeissus pendula, as one crosses over the hill into Kalighati Valley. There’s the leaf-fringed avenue of dhok that greets the visitor at the old gate leading to Kankwari and the sound of the rill, overgrown with old trees of guler and pilkhan. There’s the sight of an explosion of the blue-breasted quail, of the pools of the Siliberi Nala flowing down from Pandupol and of eagles watching for prey from evergreen trees.

ABOUT SARISKA

Sariska was established as a Tiger Reserve in 1978 and upgraded to a National Park in 1982. Before independence, the reserve was part of the erstwhile Alwar state. In 1955, hunting, shooting, trapping or capturing wild animals was made

| FAST FACTS |

When to go The park is open throughout the year for pilgrims to Pandupol on Tuesday and Saturday. But in the rains, it’s closed for wildlife visits. The most comfortable time to go is November to March, though the best wildlife viewing is during the warmer months

Wildlife/Forest Dept office
• Field Director, Project Tiger
  Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska PO
  Alwar District
  Tel: 0144-2841333
  Cell: 09928162657

Tourist office
• Tourist Reception Centre
  Opp. Railway Station
  Tel: 0144-2347348
  Cell: 09887139926

STD code 0144
unlawful. In 1958, the reserve was upgraded to a sanctuary, and later, areas contiguous to the sanctuary were also included.

There are a slew of revenue villages and associated guadas or cattle camps inside its boundaries. The semi-arid Aravalli forest suffers from enormous human and livestock pressures. The huge number of pilgrims visiting the temples in Sariska has also adversely affected the forest.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

Sariska gives you a chance to see langur and nilgai and birds such as the white-breasted kingfisher. The locality also has places of historic interest.

**Aravalli Drive**

There are no government vehicles, so you'll need to rent a jeep (Gypsy) from a lodge or a travel agency if you don't have your own. Gypsies are typically available near the park office, at Tiger's Den and Sariska Palace (see Where to Stay on page 106). You can also hire vehicles from Alwar.

Just past the Tehla Road, a 15-km long track branches off to the north to **Kankwari Fort**. Passing through dense forest on the top of the Aravalli Ridge, this track leads to a point that gives an impressive view of Kankwari, a medieval fort standing on an isolated hill in the middle of a plateau. Kankwari has a bund with perennial water. It's believed that Aurangzeb imprisoned his brother Dara Shikoh here. Kankwari is worth a visit, with the splendid view it offers of the hilltop plateau. This plateau is also accessible by the metalled road running from Tehla and Neelkanth via Rajoregarh, an ancient settlement known for its 9th century Shiva temples. Only forest department Gypsies are allowed to venture inside.

**Pandupol**

Pandupol, to the south-east of RTDC's Tiger Den, is a lovely spot that has mythological significance: it's believed that the Pandavas spent part of their Agyatvas (exile) at this location. Pandupol is also the name of a 35-foot waterfall arising from near the crest of the Aravalli Ridge, where there's a deep fissure, said to have been created by Bhima. Near the waterfall, which is accessible by road, there is an old Hanuman temple.

Surrounded by thick forests lies the serene Neelkanth Mahadeva Temple

**The Temple Trail**

Neelkanth Mahadeva, a temple town near Tehla, houses the ruins of many Hindu and Jain temples constructed between the 8th and 12th centuries. The carvings here resemble those of the Chandelas of Khajuraho, and probably date to that time (9th-10th centuries).

The **Naldeshwar shrine** nearby attracts pilgrims. Located just off the main way to Sariska from Alwar, Naldeshwar is an old Mahadev temple. The approach to the temple, surrounded by dense forests, can be accessed only by a 2-km long walk from the main road.

**Talvriksh**, on the northern edge of the park, is another centre for pilgrimage in Rajasthan. It has a temple with hot and cold sources of water, and is close to the park on the Narayaniji Road. The **Bhartrihari Temple**, to the south of Kushalgarh in the sanctuary area, is famous all over Rajasthan for its fairs. The temple is located at the edge of the forest, though the throng of pilgrims undermine the pristine setting. It is named after the ancient ruler and sage, Bhartrihari of Ujjain, who renounced his kingdom to devote his time to prayer.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Sariska has only a few options, but it's still a better base than Alwar for
those wishing to take an early morning ride through the park.

Heritage
The Sariska Palace (Tel: 2841325; Cell: 07340186019) is set in a large lawn. The hotel also arranges jeep safaris in the sanctuary.

Others
The main accommodation at Sariska is RTDC’s Tiger’s Den (Tel: 0144-2841342, 2841344), situated near the park’s main gate and offering a serene location within the premises. It’s a convenient place to book jungle safaris. The facilities include a conference hall, a restaurant, laundry, TV and a dorm facility for drivers. Off-season rates are much lower.

Away from the park, at Village Thanaghazi (7km before Sariska and 2km from the Ajabgarh fort), is the high-end Hotel Amanbagh (Tel: 01465-223333-34) of Aman Resorts fame. It has a full-service spa, arranges safaris and also offers indoor games besides much else Hotel Tiger Heaven (Cell: 09251016312), is a more affordable option

For more details, see Sariska Accommodation Listings on page 346

JAIPUR DIVISION

Getting There

Air Nearest airports: Delhi and Jaipur. Both are well-connected to Alwar by road.

Rail Nearest railhead: Alwar (35km/1hr). Connected to Delhi by Jaipur-Delhi Express.

Road Take NH8 to Shahpura via Kot Putli and Patwa; 1km short of Shahpura, turn left before the toll gate for the 40-km run to Sariska. Bairat and Thanagazi villages are your landmarks.

AROUND SARISKA

Jaisamand Bandh (25km from Sariska, 8km from Alwar)
Close to Alwar, this large bund constructed in 1910, and its impounded waters are home to a multitude of water birds, which makes it all the more popular with avid birdwatchers. The bandh comprises a set of traditional chhatris and platforms in the same style, which make for a pleasant picnic destination in the monsoon season.
Faith and history inarguably define Ajmer. At the tomb chamber of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti the air is thick with not just the scent of roses and incense but also the fervour of prayer. Outside, even in the dingy lanes of the modest town, it’s possible to glimpse the layers of the past that bestow upon Ajmer a unique charm.

Once a stronghold of the Chauhan Rajputs, the legendary Prithviraj Chauhan lost Ajmer (then
called Ajayamru) when he was defeated by Muhammad Ghori in 1193. Emperor Akbar annexed it to the Mughal Empire in the 16th century. It became, for the Mughals, first a centre of operations against the kingdoms of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and later, a pilgrimage site.

The Mughal empresses and princesses spent time here, and invested this region with their trademark preferences. Nur Jahan, for instance, had roses cultivated for the making of her favourite attar.

It was at Ajmer that the English ambassador Sir Thomas Roe presented his credentials to Emperor Jehangir. Roe was granted trading concessions that allowed the British to usurp power and establish themselves as a colony in India, and in the early-19th century, Ajmer came under the domain of the British Empire. Like the Mughals, the British used it as a centre for exercising control over the kingdoms of the region, but they also provided it with educational institutions—including the Mayo College, initially set up for boys from India’s princely families. It’s with such glorious glimpses of its past, and with the promise of answered prayers, that Ajmer beckons us to drop by.

**Things to See and Do**

Ajmer’s closest association is with the Dargah Sharif of Khwaja Sahib, the final resting place of the Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, whose disciples included the Mughal emperors. The town is teeming with other interesting sights as well. Two days are adequate, and an active one day feasible for seeing all this.

**The Centre of Faith**

The Ajmer Dargah is a complex bewilderingly full of many structures. The entrance gates, looming 70ft over the congested bazaar, were built by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1915. The drums kept atop the gateway were gifted by Akbar after his successful campaign in Bengal. To the right, steps lead to the red sandstone Akbari Masjid (1571). Grand and robust, just ahead stands the Buland Darwaza, possibly built by Mahmud Khalji in the 15th century.

**Fast Facts**

**When to go** Best in winter. Pushkar and Kishangarh can be charming during the rains. Summer is best avoided.

**Tourist Office**
- Department of Tourism
- Regional Tourist Office
- RTDC Hotel Khadim
- Savitri Girl’s College Road
- Civil Lines, Ajmer
- Tel 0145-2627426

**Tourist Information Counter**
- Ajmer Railway Station
- Tel 0145-2627426
- STD Code 0145

Graphics PRAVEEN G; Illustration SAAHL
Next come two degs (cauldrons), of which the Badi Deg or big cauldron has a circumference of over 10ft. Gifted by Akbar, it is used—as is the smaller deg gifted by Jehangir—to cook food sponsored by rich devotees for mass distribution. On the right sprawls the Mehfil Khana, a hall opened only for the Urs, and on the left, the Langar Khana, where porridge is cooked for the poor.

Straight ahead lies the compound in which various buildings stand around the tomb. The first is the Sandali Masjid, built by Aurangzeb, and it’s here that sandalwood for the tomb is prepared. The path to the right leads to the tomb of the Khwaja’s daughter, Bibi Hafiza Jamal; also located here are the tomb of Nizam Sikka, a water-carrier who had saved Humayun’s life and Jannati Darwaza made of silver, but rarely opened. Overlooking these is Emperor Shah Jahan’s Jami Masjid (1638), a gracious play of white marble. On the left of Sandali Masjid is the tiny Auliya Masjid, marking the spot where the Khwaja first stayed after arriving in Ajmer.

From here, a path leads to the dargah chamber. From the outside, the marble tomb is a soothing structure, with silver doors and a golden finial. The vast courtyards on both its sides are often full of qawwali gatherings. The facet on the left is called the Begumi Dalaan, built in 1643 by Shah Jahan’s daughter Jahanara. Its walls were gilded in 1888 and the ceiling later etched with gold. In the chamber, the man who said “a faqir is one who is free of all needs” lies under a silver canopy in a world of costly velvet and silks, attar and sandal, and gold and silver zari chadars. A silver railing, inside which only the khadims (officials) of the dargah are permitted to stand, separates the tomb from devotees. Despite the crowd, the noise is hushed. The saint is asleep.

Khwaja’s death anniversary, the Urs, is observed every year during the first six days of Rajaab, the seventh month of the Hijri calendar. Qawwalis are sung almost all night; the lyrics are suffused with ‘love’, ‘longing’, or ‘union’, all mystical metaphors for the Sufi’s passion, which makes him forget attributes of the self. Parking is available outside Delhi Gate; walk 5 mins down the bazaar to the dargah.

OTHER SIGHTS

Walk 5 mins down a congested alley to the left of the dargah entrance and see the exquisitely carved 12th-century Adhai-Din-ka-Jhonpra, built by Qutubuddin Aibak, the general of the invader Muhammad Ghori and completed by his successor, Ilutmish, the founder of the Delhi Sultanate. Its name literally translates as the two-and-a-half-day-shed, and it is a relic of the largest mosque in the country, ordered by the Muhammad Ghori to be readied in this short time. A later example of Mughal architecture is the white structure of Abdullah Khan’s Tomb.

There are also charming picnic spots in the vicinity. These include Ana Sagar (open 8am-7pm), an artificial lake; Ajaipal, where the founder of Ajmer retired after his reign; and Foy Sagar, another artificial lake outside town. Visitors are allowed to see the museum on the premises of Mayo College, on request.
Also on the tourist’s itinerary is the unbelievably ornate Golden Hall of Jain Nasiyan Temple, located near Ana Sagar. It is replete with gold models of the life of Tirthankara Adinath. The Taragarh Fort (open all day) is 5km from town.

Situated on the outskirts of the city stands the serene Nareli Jain Temple, also known as the Shri Gyandoaya Tirth Kshetra. This modern structure is a seamless blend of traditional and contemporary architectural styles. The temple is flanked by 24 miniature shrines, known as Jainalay; they represent the 24 Jain Thirthankars. It is an important pilgrimage point for Digamba Jain devotees.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Ajmer can claim to have the best hotels in the region, and their advantage is that they operate round the year. **Hotel Mansingh Palace** (Tel: 0145-2425702/855/857), is located near the lake in Vaishali Nagar. Boasting its own shopping arcade, the hotel also arranges folk dances, fireworks and sightseeing tours. **Regenta Inn Embassy Hotel** (Tel: 2623859, 2425519;), opposite the Power House on NH48 (Jaipur Road), is another fine hotel.

**RTDC’s Hotel Khadim** (Tel: 2627490/26), adjoining the bus stand, has a wide variety of rooms accommodating all budgets. The added advantage is the travel desk and tourist information centre here. **The Ambassador** (Tel: 2425095, 2428479) on Ashok Marg in Nagina Bagh is a good option.

*For more hotels and details, see Ajmer Accommodation Listings on page 348*

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**AROUND AJMER**

**Pushkar (11km)**

*(See page 118)*

**Mangliyawas (26km)**

Of interest here are the two, eight centuries old, Kalpavriksha trees. Thousands of devotees congregate here each year on the dark moon day of ‘Sravana’ to worship them as they are considered sacred.

**Beawar (53 km)**

The little township has gained fame for the lavish pageantry of the procession in the **Badshahi Festival** held on the day after Holi. Celebrated by all communities it is held in remembrance of the Hindu, Todarmal—one of ‘the Nine Jewels’ of Mughal Emperor Akbar’s court; it commemorates the occasion of Todarmal being allowed by the emperor to play ruler for two and a half days.

**Nasirabad (33 km)**

Very much a military town today, it is home to one of the biggest firing ranges in India. The army has almost surrounded this town. It is also renowned for being one of the places in Rajasthan where the 1857 revolt erupted. Nasirabad Cantonment is also well connected by rail. The town is also linked by the new Golden Quadrilateral of the Delhi–Mumbai route.

**Todgarh -Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary (105km)**

Spread over 495 sq km of tropical deciduous forests and grassland, this sanctuary in the Aravalli hills was established in 1983. With access from the village of Todargarh, it straddles the spot where the districts of Ajmer and Pali converge. Beawar is the nearest railhead. For more info contact the DCF office here at Cell: 09468959229; Tel: 0145-2429796.

Another spot worthy of a visit here is the ‘Pragya Shikhar’ built in 2005 in the memory of Jain Acharya Tulsi. The shrine is built entirely of black granite and offers views of the splendid vistas of the Aravalli hills. Of interest too are the old C N I Church, the Qatar Valley, the Dudhleshwar Mahadev and Bhil Beri.
KISHANGARH Small is beautiful

The tiny kingdom of Kishangarh was founded by Kishan Singh, a prince of the pre-Independence Jodhpur state who carved out his own fiefdom from the kingdoms of Marwar, Amber and Mewar. It is famous for its marble quarries, from which the stone for the Taj Mahal was sourced. Kishangarh’s artists, with the patronage of the kingdom’s rulers, created some of the finest miniatures. The most famous paintings are of Bani Thani, the royal mistress—the icon of the Kishangarh School. She’s the lady with the high forehead, arched eyebrows, half-open lotus eyes, sharp, pointed nose, thin, curved, beautiful lips and dainty chin.

Kishangarh is also known for its fabrics and red chillies. Buy marble sculptures, ashtrays, and water fountains as keepsakes.

**Getting there** The taxi fare is approx ₹2,200-₹2,500

Roopangarh Fort 25km north of Kishangarh, was built by Maharaja Roop Singh in 1648 and was the capital of Kishangarh state for a 100-year period. It was originally a nine-turreted fort, to which several additions were made by succeeding maharajas. Roopangarh was built around the mausoleum of the 12th-century Sufi saint, Sultan Pir, and was located strategically on a major trade route of the Mughal Empire. Within its walls were foundries, armouries, granaries, jails and, of course, palaces. Maharaja Brajraj Singh has converted the restored palace into the Roopangarh Fort Heritage Hotel (Cell: 09414670193). It has a restaurant, a tennis court and arranges camel safaris and sightseeing. The hotel offers an interesting heritage experience.

KISHANGARH AROUNDS

Tilonia Village (25km)
The village is internationally renowned as the address of the Social Work and Research Centre, established in 1972 by the activist duo Aruna and Bunker Roy. Known today as the Barefoot College, the NGO has several high-profile patrons including the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, who has also visited this centre. While small and dusty Tilonia has little to tell it apart from other Rajasthan towns, Barefoot College has made a name for itself by helping the locals find solutions to problems from within the community itself. Thus far, it has addressed issues such as drinking water shortage, education of girls, unemployment and sanitation. Little wonder then that a visit to its campus, located just ahead of the village of Tilonia, is an uplifting experience.

Spread over 80,000 sq ft, the campus has many facilities, ranging from a library and dining room to a 10-bed referral base hospital and a teachers’ training unit. It also boasts of a water testing lab, a crafts shop, an Internet café and even a 700,000 litre rainwater harvesting tank. Tourists visiting Barefoot College can stay at the guest house located within the campus at a nominal cost (Indians: ₹1,500/ per bed; foreigners: ₹2,500/per bed including meals per day); they also arrange food. Timings: 9 am-5 pm; Sunday closed
Pushkar, legend has it, was created by Brahma by combining the waters of the four places of pilgrimage that are eternally sacrosanct to Hindus — Badrinath, Jagannath, Rameshwaram and Dwarka. According to the Padma Purana, Lord Brahma was searching for a place to perform a yagna when the lotus he was holding fell from his hand and landed in the spot where Pushkar now stands. He decided to perform the yagna there and then. As his wife Savitri was unable to reach the venue for the auspicious hour Lord Brahma decided to quickly marry a local lady (Gayatri) and completed the formalities. When Savitri arrived, and discovered what had happened, she was so angry with Brahma she told him that from henceforth Pushkar would be the only place where he’d be worshipped. The floating chattri in the centre of the lake, you see today, was built in the year 1791 by the Thakur of Khimsar to commemorate the spot where Brahma performed the yagna.

Things To see and do

Revel in the high-octane atmospherics of Pushkar’s iconic attractions—from the bustling streets and architectural delights, the sacred ghats and temples and the ritual baths in the holy lake, even as the amazing beauty of the stunning sunrises and sunsets obliterate the contentious quibbles of earthly pursuits.
perfume of the roses and jasmine. Or at night returning from a late dinner. Strains of music are heard over the thunder of the bikes in the medieval bazaar or in the rhythms of the chanting priests by the Brahma Temple by the ghats where you might find nagara player Nathu Lal Solanki mesmerising a small audience from the street.

And you hear the tinkling bells of a dance. You might never really have got the hang of classical Indian dance forms, but you could dance with abandon with your friends and the priests in the temple forecourt under a spreading peepal tree—A whirling mass of sheer *joie de vivre* in a sacred space.

You will rediscover maths, which you might have hated in school. You will re-learn ‘multiplication’ when gorging malpua in Halwai Gali near Gau Ghat. You could have a rethink on ‘addition’ as you watch the shopkeeper adding more samosas to your plate. You will rediscover ‘subtraction’ while bargaining for a mirrorwork notebook at the crafts shop. And, for sure, you will re-learn ‘division’ while sharing the prasad with your fellow companions at the Krishna shrine.

At Pushkar, you embrace the equation of life and death with joyful wonderment as you watch a man go through the time-worn *pind daan* rituals in the lake. This is your Pushkar—and mela or not, small and medieval as it is, it will sweep you off your feet as it celebrates the riddle of life in countless ways — all year round. The everyday world of Pushkar does more than ‘inspire and encourage well-being, tranquillity and self-discovery through music, yoga, and meditation’. You will find fresh meaning in everything that has become routine. Pushkar’s glory will always find voice in the hearts of visitors for its wondrous ability to engage and inspire.

**Architecture Speak**

Travelling around the city with a highly erudite guide comes highly recommended, for he knows how to deliver the goods on his beloved Pushkar. Through his eyes you will discover another world, beyond the layers of the mela mania. You will experience it all—from the ghats and temples and the havelis, to the music and yoga schools, from the craft shops which offer lessons in painting, to the wonder of exploring the local villages on motorbikes or the sand dunes on camels or horseback.

Wandering in his wake through the lake city’s noodle-thin medieval lanes, you will clamber nimbly up narrow staircases to arrive on terraces with jharokhas which offered new vignettes of the lake with its ghats and the leisurely sprawl of the temples on the hills and the township around its sacred waters. In ancient courtyards and lake-facing terraces, you might find yoga lessons in progress. In the shaded flanks of an ancient temple, you might found a clutch of sadhus deep in ‘spiritual’ debate. From temple to temple, you will wend your leisurely way, discovering many aspects of both northern and southern nuances in their architecture.

**Music to the ears**

This is the land of Saraswati, patron goddess of the arts and music. This is the sacred land where it is said that *Gayatri Mantra* was first recited, and where the *Aditya Hridaya Stotram* was written. The walk will refresh memories of Pushkar’s ancient associations with Hindustani classical music and dance. So delightful can some of the renditions be that it is not difficult to get inspired to enroll for music lessons—vocal or instrumental. Some foreign visitors are even known to have
Stayed on in the town to take a short course at the Saraswati Dance and Music School

Marigolds and merrymaking
Near the Rangji Temple Ghat you might come upon a bunch of backpackers dozing on the steps with their musical instruments piled up nearby—probably after an all-nighter. You can chill out with the backpacking crowd that stays on to enjoy the gay abandon of Pushkar’s famous Holi celebrations when they are not jamming by the lake or listening entranced to bhajans.

Devotion and the divine
The Brahma temple has been recognised as one of the ten most religious places in the world and is considered to be one of the five sacred pilgrimage destinations for Hindus. The present structure dates to the 14th century. The inner hall of the temple is dedicated to Brahma and his second wife, Gayatri. Constructed with pristine marble and embellished with silver coins, it features a red spire and the image of a swan (considered sacred to Lord Brahma). The inner sanctum houses a-chatumukhi (four-faced) idol of Lord Brahma. Standing guard at the temple entrance is a marble statue of Surya, the sun god. The Rangji Temple is dedicated to an avatar of Lord Vishnu. Though architecturally it’s a fusion of Rajput and Mughal architecture throughout its premises, its rearing gopuram (pyramidal tower) at the entrance has been borrowed from temples in southern India.

Pind daan, performed to propitiate one’s ancestors, is a time-worn ritual, even when the lake dries up and becomes a mere shadow of itself during a drought. This is the power of belief which pervades the aura of devotion and divinity here. Pigeons coo on in the shade of an ancient peepal tree where a sadhu is lost in deep meditation, mindless of the scurrying crowds heading down to the lake.

Pushkar Fair
Every year on Kartik Purnima (Oct-Nov) Pushkar explodes into Rajasthan’s most exuberant and colourful festival. Cows, camels, sheep, goats and their traders flood the city. The weeklong fiesta features competitions and state-sponsored entertainment programmes. Expect to see storytellers, hypnotists, snake charmers, magicians and monkey trainers with their line-up of attention-grabbing acts.

In the violet evening, as the sun slips into the lake, Varaha Ghat comes alive with the flickering of lamps during the scenic aarti accompanied by the chanting of the priests and mesmerised devotees.

You can take the ropeway route (Ropeway Timing 7.30 am to 7.30 pm) to the Savitri Mata temple atop the Ratnagiri Hill behind the Brahma Temple. If you prefer taking the stairway look out for those panoramic views every time you stop to catch your breath. A visit to the Brahma temple is considered complete only after a visit to his first wife, Savitri’s, shrine.

Sign up for yoga and meditation
Brahma set the trend here with his great yagna, even if he had to take a new wife to begin it at the auspicious time. An excellent place to start, if you haven’t already, is to join classes at one of the centres in the town. These are also a big hit with foreigners who visit Pushkar, regardless of what time of year it is.

Roses all the way
Pushkar is inextricably linked to its floral heritage on a spiritual platform. The glorious spill of the roses in a carpet of fields, just as you traverse the main bridge to explore another aspect of this lakeside retreat, brings you in direct contact to its ties with the temporal world. Pushkar sends its beautiful roses to the dargah of Ajmer across the Nag Pahar, and even exports them to the Middle East.

International culinary culture
The lines are blurring very fast in the bazaars of Pushkar where you will find yourself treated to a round of culinary delights. Taking the...
slow-paced road to pleasures, it’s not difficult to soak up the nuances of a life measured out in coffee spoons in bistros and cafés with quite a few tantalising food experiences. Over dinner in the colourfully embellished cafés, you can enjoy stunning views of the lake bathed in the evanescent hues of a sailing moon over starry skies.

**Pump up the adrenaline**

Adventure buffs can set off to explore villages nearby. You can join friends on a camel ride to the dunes on cooler days, in September, or find time to take in a horse safari after the monsoon. If you enjoy horse riding, you will have the privilege of riding Kathiawar and Marwari mounts bred at a local Riding School here.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Pushkar now has a range of heritage hotels and guesthouses on offer. Ananta Spa & Resort (Tel: 0145-3054000) at Leela Sevri Village, 4km away from Pushkar, is an excellent choice if you enjoy luxury. The Bhanwar Singh Palace (Cell: 08003 99393139) located in nearby Hokra village (9km), has rooms with private terraces, an impressive swimming pool and spa services. Aaram Baagh (Cell: 09929597370, 09799696962) near Goddess Savitri Temple, and RTDC’s Hotel Sarovar (Tel: 2772040) are other options.

For more hotels and details, see Pushkar Accommodation Listings on pages 349

**WHERE TO EAT**

Food in Pushkar is entirely vegetarian. The bazaar offers an amazing range of local and international cuisines.

**AROUND PUSHKAR**

**Ajmer On page 109**

**Merta (60km)**

An hours’ drive from Pushkar and 75 km from Ajmer, Merta is the birthplace of Bhakti poet-saint Mirabai, a passionate devotee of Lord Krishna. According to legend, with Krishna’s blessing, she survived being poisoned by an enemy because of her deep devotion to the god. There is a temple dedicated to her that’s worth exploring. A small museum here offers insights into the world of Mirabai. There’s also the Charbhuj temple and the massive mosque constructed by Emperor Aurangzeb nearby.
BHILWARA

FROM THEN TO NOW

District Bhilwara Division Ajmer
Location Lies in an upland region about 58km north of Chittorgarh
Distances 247km SW of Jaipur, 153km NE of Udaipur, 231km SE of Jodhpur, 58km N of Chittorgarh, 135km S of Ajmer
Journey time By road 5.5hrs from Jodhpur, 4hrs from Jaipur, 3hrs from Udaipur, 3hrs from Ajmer, 1.5hrs via NH48 from Chittorgarh
Route from Udaipur NH58 and Bhilwara Road from Udaipur

■ PRANNAY PATHAK

One of the many versions of the story that gave the present-day Bhilwara its name goes that in ancient times, there were coins minted here, and they were referred to as ‘bhilwadi’. ‘Bhilwara’, according to this contention, is a corruption/modification of that very term. The other story which also happens to be the more accepted one in these parts is that the Bhils were the first to have settled here, and that they gave the city its name. The temple established by the tribe,
the Jataun ka Mandir, still exists in the old quarter of the city. It so happens that should you be taking a walk in this part of town, known as Junawas, you may chance upon its oldest residents. Bhilwara is also home to the Ramsnehi Sampraday. The founder Guru of the Sampraday, Swami Ramcharanji Maharaj, had a great following. He later shifted his base to nearby Shahpura.

Bhilwara, long famed for the manufacturing of synthetics and cotton mix fabric and synthetic yarn, has emerged as India’s largest manufacturer of fabrics. Also known as the Textile City of India, this bustling industrial hub encompasses 50 % of the total polyester fabrics and suiting manufactured in India.

It is in Bhilwara district’s towns and colourful streets that one will also find flourishing little bastions of the folk art of phad painting. This religious, scroll-based art form which originated several centuries ago in the village Pur, moved to Shahpura in the 16th century — and moved to the modern-day Bhilwara in the 19th century. Noted examples of this art are Devnarayan Ki Phad and Pabuji Ki Phad.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**TEMPLE CIRCUIT**

All of Bhilwara abounds with many a religious site, and the Harni Mahadev Temple is said to be the most popular among them. Located 6km from Bhilwara town, Harni Mahadev, as the name suggests, is dedicated to Lord Shiva, whose followers congregate here in large numbers every year on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Mondays and Sundays are usually busy in the normal course of events. The temple’s elaborately decorated gate is a treat to the eyes, and the darshan of the deity can be had in a small cave filled with several shivlingas. Further up on the same hill is the Chamunda Mata Mandir, renowned as much among locals for its wish-granting reputation as the views of the city it affords from up top. About 13km out of Bhilwara town is Kyara Ke Balaji, where the image of Lord Hanuman etched on a rock is believed to have appeared there by divine intervention. Scattered around this site are other smaller temples such as Patola Mahadev Temple, Beeda ke Mataji Temple, Ghata Rani Temple and Neelkanth Mahadev Temple.

**Smriti Van**

About 5km from the city lies a huge swathe of verdure called Smriti Van, which is an important green lung for this bustling city. The park is maintained by the UIT (Urban Improvement Trust). It features a 2-km-long jogging track, slides and swings for children, an open gym and an artificial lake.

- **Timings** 6am to 10pm; 4pm to 6pm

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**

**Alaska Resort** (Cell: 09829553534) on NH79, Bhilwara Bypass has 118 rooms, a restaurant and a swimming pool. **Hotel Ashoka Residency** (Tel: 231902; Cell: 09571901333) is located near the railway station, Ashok Marg has 30 rooms, a restaurant, coffee shop, and a spa. **Hotel Delice** (Tel: 245800 Cell 09358859902) on the Old RTO Road offers 42 rooms, restaurants and Internet.

**AKOLA VILLAGE (9km)**

Dabu or mud-resist printing involves two timeless raw materials—mud and water. The oldest specimen found of Dabu printed fabric in Central Asia dates this craft back to the 8th century. There was a time when Rajasthan had lots of craft clusters of Dabu printing. Today very few remain to keep alive this legacy. The humble village of Akola near Bhilwara holds this precious heritage in the skilled
The Menal Waterfall is a popular picnic point

hands of its artisans who continue to thrive solely on the fabric demands of neighbouring villages. The regional attire is dominated by the hues of nature blue, indigo and red. The village is a self-sufficient system for Dabu printing.

Mandal (13 km)
Travel just a short distance from Bhilwara to visit the cenotaph of Jagannath Kachhawaha. Also known as Battis Khambon ki Chhatri, this is a handsome chhatri comprising 32 sandstone pillars.

Menal Waterfall and Temples
Menal in Chittorgarh district lies just an hour-and-a-half’s drive away from the city, at the periphery of Bhilwara district. The waterfall here gushes into a gorge from a height of 150 metres. The site is blanketed in thick verdure and right in the heart of it, scattered around the waterfall, lies a stunning temple complex built by the Shakambhari king Someshvar Chahamana in the 11th century. Best time to visit is after monsoon.

- **Mansa Mahadev Temple.** Rooms for camping are also available.
  - **Entry fee** Indians ₹55, Foreigners ₹330, Students ₹25
  - **Vehicle charges** ₹330 for bus, ₹220 for jeep, ₹70 for auto, ₹35 for two-wheelers
  - **Swiss Tents** ₹300 per night (for 2)

Shahpura (55km)
Tourists generally visit Shahpura from Bhilwara city, all through the year, but the charm of the 5-day Phool Dol ka Mela, usually held in the March/April, is something else. The town attracts many members of the Ram Sanehi sect, as it is an important pilgrimage hub for them. Shahpura is also closely linked to the fight for India’s freedom from British rule through Kesari Singh, Jorawar Singh and Pratap Singh Barahat, freedom fighters who belonged to Shahpura.

To the north of the town is a vast palace complex, which is worth a dekko, and so are Pivaniya Talab, Trimurti Smarak and Barahat Ji Ki Haveli.

Jahazpur (89 km)
The Jahazpur Fort features a double layer of ramparts, one within the other, each marked by a deep ditch and numerous bastions. It is said to have been one among many forts erected by Rana Kumbha to protect the frontiers of Mewar. Of interest too is the cluster of temples, called the Barah Deora, which are dedicated to Shiva. Within the fort itself are several temples including the one dedicated to Sarveshwar Nathji. The Jain temple, dedicated to Munisuvratnath, is also a worthy mention. The Gaibi Pir is named after a Muslim saint, Gaibi, who is said to have resided here during the reign of Emperor Akbar. The newer Swastidham Digambar Jain Atishay Kshetra is also worth a visit.

**GETTING THERE**

- **Air** Nearest Airport: Maharana Pratap Airport, Dabok, Udaipur (148 kms/ 2½ hrs). Taxi fare approx ₹2,500-3,000
- **Rail** Bhilwara Railway Station is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ajmer, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Indore, Ujjain etc
- **Road** NH 48 connects Jaipur to Bhilwara, and NH 79 connects Ajmer to Bhilwara. Bhilwara is well connected to Delhi, Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur etc by bus
KISHORE SINGH

A one-street town and a haze on the highway between Jodhpur and Bikaner, Nagaur has always lived by the cycle of summer sandstorms and brilliant winter sunshine. From the very outset, Nagaur provides an immersive experience. There are no secrets to be found hidden here, and a tour of the city reveals much about the ways and lives of its inhabitants. The mandatory vegetable stalls, a Gandhi Chowk, poster commercials and village boys with the swagger of someone who owns a place—the past and the present seems to coexist in perfect harmony in the city. Besides, what Nagaur offers ranges between the hot and the incendiary. The first is its famous red chillies and the second is the story of the man who’s the reason why people visit Nagaur today.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Nagaur’s Hindu and Islamic lineage has given it architectural wealth that belies its sterile main street. Even then, it can be a challenge for those who travel by a clock and an itinerary. Big-time tourism hasn’t thankfully reached here yet, so though the missing touts and guides will be a relief, chances are you’ll also muddy your feet as you navigate congested lanes searching for littleknown places. It’s ideal if you’re looking for a bit of exotica minus the frills. Time a visit during the annual Nagaur Fair in January/February. Even if you do not find bullocks a tempting buy, the famous Mirchi Bazaar is bound to add spice to your trip. Autos are certainly a convenient mode of transport in Nagaur.

Amar Singh’s Cenotaph

Any mention of Nagaur is incomplete without the name of Amar Singh Rathore, a 17th-century Rajput Rathore nobleman who would later serve the Mughals. As much respected for his valour, courage and battle prowess as he was feared for his mercurial temper, Amar Singh was given the governorship of Nagaur by Shah Jahan. Ultimately though, he would end up in the emperor’s crosshairs once too often.
Not only did he flatly and angrily refuse to pay a fine for an unauthorised absence, he stabbed the collector and several others in a court presided over by Shah Jahan himself, before making a daring, heroic escape.

Amar Singh went on to become a Rajput folk hero, remembered as their brave prince who stood up to the Mughals. Today, a handsome yellow sandstone cenotaph honours him, with his footsteps inscribed in the centre, next to which incense sticks are lit. There is a little floral carving on the pillars and ceiling, and surrounding it are cenotaphs in pink sandstone that honour his chief wife who died before he did, three other rani’s, as well as later members of his clan. All are well preserved. Close to the entrance is a small Hanuman shrine where puja is regularly performed. A caretaker looks after this ASI protected monument though you have to wait for him to turn up.

**Location** Near Collectorate

**Ahhichatragarh Fort Museum**

Nagaur Fort is a 35-acre complex with four main palaces and over 50 smaller buildings, surrounded by two fortification walls and—despite the arid climate—extensive gardens, fountains, pools, and water systems. The palaces located in the fort complex showcase period furniture, antiquities and a fantastic range of frescoes illustrating the palace interiors. Decorative details can be seen on the interior and exteriors, ceilings and floors. Considered to be of the highest quality, the subjects include both figurative and decorative elements which provide a wealth of historical information on court life, manner of dress and the use of the various palaces. The murals at Nagaur are considered to be the finest in Marwar. Even the quality of materials used is of the highest order. This includes organic colours, gold leaf and the traditional highly polished lime plaster they have been painted on.

In 2002, the Fort of Nagaur won the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation. It was also short listed for the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2011-2013.

**Timings** 9am-5pm

Nagaur was a stop on medieval trade routes, and hence the Rajputs and Mughals keenly contested control over it. After Amar Singh’s demise, the fort passed back to the Mughals with whom it remained for a long period. Thereafter, it came under British vassalage, even though it was recognised as part of the Marwar inheritance. After Independence, the fort went into decline as the government neither looked after it nor protected it from bouts of vandalism. Following a petition from Maharaja Gaj Singh II, the current head of the Rathore clan, it was finally restored to him as family property. Today, the fort attracts thousands of visitors.

Nagaur Fort was handed over to the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in 1985 and has been restored to its former glory, thanks to grants from the Getty Foundation. In 2002, the fort bagged the prestigious UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation. It also made it to the final nomination for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2011-2013. For a restoration project that’s won a United Nations award and could prove to be Nagaur’s turning point, it’s surprisingly difficult to obtain clear directions to Nagaur’s most imposing sight. It’s built on a slightly hilly elevation, and once you get there, you’ll park by the entrance to Hadi Rani’s Palace, and enter the section of the Zenani Deodi into what was the women’s wing. It becomes immediately apparent that though the battlements might have been defensive, the late Rathore had actually planned a pleasure palace for himself, before making a daring, heroic escape.

Overlooking ghostly remains of gardens, waterbodies and fountains are buildings such as the Hawa Mahal, in which remnants of wall
paintings can still be seen. To another side is the Diwan-i-Khas, where an elaborate system for trapping fresh breeze, as well as channelled water must have added to the comfort of the apartments. Of interest are the hamams where the ruler bathed in water tanks with piped hot and cold water.

Nagaur was also significant to the Mughals for its proximity to Ajmer. And so the fort houses the Akbari Mahal, a Mughal guest house built surrounding a water tank with a Sheesh Mahal where faint traces of mirrors and frescoes provide a glimpse of what must have been a sumptuous palace. Among the paintings of interest here is the one with ladies amid clouds and lightning bolts. The artworks in the Sheesh Mahal are among the most important examples of the fine, elongated figural style that is characteristic of Nagaur.

Ahhichatragarh Fort’s apartments may be an attraction for many, but its true charm lies in the fact that one can sit on any low wall, and gaze with interest at the shadows of its falling ruins.

**Location** Dilli Gate, 2km from main bus stand  
**Entry fee** Indian Rs30, foreigner Rs100  
**Timings** 9am-5pm  
**Tel** 0291-2548790

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**PLACES OF WORSHIP**

The Ahhichatragarh Fort—fine examples of fort restoration

One of the labyrinthine, narrow lanes leading out from Gandhi Chowk will take your car to the Jain Kaanch ka Mandir. It houses large-eyed, marble tirthankaras, their images multiplied a thousand times in the bits of coloured glass covering the walls, pillars and ceilings. Bansiwale ka Mandir, nearby, has a series of huge courtyards. Inside are idols of Krishna and Radha, whose attire is changed for the jhanki (viewing). Khwaja Hamiduddin-ki-Dargah, also known as Tarkin-ki-Dargah, is a mosque with an elaborately carved entrance. Inside, you are surrounded by graves, and right in front are two domed structures that are clearly modern. It is behind them that you will find the original, domed, stone cenotaph of Hamiduddin. To one side, there is a dharamshala with one locked room.

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Peep in to see the broken remnants of sandstone arches, pillars and other bits and pieces. The Bade Pir Sahib-ki-Dargah was built in the memory of a saint and disciple of Ajmer’s Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. This mosque is one of the oldest in Nagaur and a major attraction.

**Location** All the religious sites are close to Ahhichatragarh Fort  
**Timings** Temples are open from 5:30am-8pm

**Sri Ramdev Cattle Fair**

Nagaur is known for its fine cattle and, not surprisingly, one of the largest cattle fairs of the region is held in Nagaur sometime in January/February each year. Brisk trading of camels, buffaloes, sheep and goat liven up this atmospheric cultural experience. The much acclaimed Nagauri bull is considered highly valuable.

**Location** At Manasar Circle, on the Jodhpur-Bikaner Road

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**WHERE TO STAY**

Located in the Ahhichatragarh Fort, Ranvas Nagaur (Tel: 0291-2572321-26) is a heritage property that has 27 rooms spread through 10 havelis. Each haveli has two to three bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms. The hotel offers Mughal cuisine and organises guided tours of the Ahhichatragarh Fort.

**Royal Jodhpur Camps** (Tel: 0291-2572321-27) from the Mobile Camping Unit of Jodhana Heritage Resorts, offers luxury tents. Apart from the Nagaur Cattle Fair, the
royal tents are also pitched during the annual music festival, the Sacred Spirit Festival, held in Nagaur in the month of February. Rates are inclusive of stay and all meals.

Also see Nagaur Accommodation Listings on page 350

AROUND NAGAUR

Khimsar (40km)
This small citadel was constructed in 1553 CE by Rao Karamsiji, the son of Rao Jodha the founder of Jodhpur, is famous for its many temples and large black buck population. It has long been a popular tourist hub for jeep and camel safaris into the sand dunes around Khimsar village, and luxurious heritage experiences at the fort now a heritage hotel. Nila Moti Trust is an initiative by Mrs. Monica Matters, a Swiss national, for the upliftment for the local women. The handicrafts created here are sold exclusively at Khimsar Fort hotel.

Also rewarding are visits to the nearby Panchala Black Buck Reserve, where you can see black buck, chinkara and the blue bull. In the cold season you might also come upon the wintering Demoiselle cranes.
While some call it the ‘Lucknow of Rajasthan’, others call it ‘Adab ka Gulshan’. Poetry lovers remember it as ‘Akhtar Sheerani ki Nagri’ while some fondly call it ‘Meethe Kharboojon ka Chaman’. But the best definition of Tonk is ‘Hindu Musalman Ekta ka Maskan’ — or the abode of Hindu-Muslim harmony. Dotted with old havelis and grand mosques, Tonk is richly imbued with the old world charm of the Nawabi culture and can be a sheer delight for visitors. Once ruled by the Pindaries of Afghanistan, Tonk holds immense historical and
archaeological significance. Tonk has also gifted this country the late Irrfan Khan, one of the most acclaimed actors from Bollywood.

Located on the way from Jaipur to Kota, Tonk was founded in the 17th century and is known for its cross-cultural fabric. With its rich cultural heritage and magnificent structures it has long been a magnet for tourists from all corners of the world. The Tonk that we see today was founded by Nawab Amir Khan. It was a princely state till 1948, after which it was merged into the state of Rajasthan. Notable buys around town are its woollen rugs which feature appliqué designs or are richly embroidered.

**Things to See and Do**

**Sunehri Kothi**

Don’t be fooled by the plain exteriors of the Sunehri Kothi. Inside you’ll discover that every square inch is studded with tiny mirrors and painted in bright hues. The kothi is embellished with amazing glass and traditional meenakari work. Permission to explore the haveli is given by the Department of Archaeology & Museums Albert Hall, Ram Niwas Bagh, Jaipur.

- **Permits** Department of Archaeology & Museums Albert Hall, Ram Niwas Bagh, Jaipur Tel 0141-2820360 Superintendent Ajmer Circle Tel 0145-2620637
- **Tip** Only 3/4 people allowed at a time.

**The Arabic and Persian Research Institute**

Located in the heart of Tonk city, the Arabic and Persian Research Institute can be visited for its impressive art gallery, which was started in 2002. The gallery showcases an array of magnificent artworks and fine calligraphic designs. The institute also houses an elaborate collection of Persian and Arabic books and manuscripts, which date back to the 12th century. You will be amazed to see that some of the books here are embellished in gold, emerald, pearls and rubies.

**Jama Masjid**

Tonk’s Jama Masjid prides itself of being one of India’s largest and most gorgeous mosques. A fabulous exemplar of Mughal architecture, the mosque was built by Nawab Amir Khan, Tonk’s first Nawab. Its construction was completed in the reign of Nawab Wazirudhoula. The mosque is known for its golden paintings and rich meenakari work.

**Clock Tower**

Also known as Ghanta Ghar, it also has a historic note to share about the town. Built by Mohammed Sadat Ali Khan, the Nawab of Tonk, it is linked to a local story which speaks of the time there was an epidemic of cholera here in 1936. The nawab immediately set about distributing medicines to the victims. In the end, the money that had been collected in the process was used to build this iconic clock tower.

**Where to Stay and Eat**

- **Fort Pachewar Garh** (Cell: 09828341223) is a heritage property with 25 rooms. It is located in Pachewar village and has a restaurant. They will also arrange for jeep, camel and bull cart safaris on request. **Tordi Mahal** (Cell: 09983339002), about 50km from Tonk is located in Tordi sagar village. On offer are 22 rooms and a restaurant. You can enjoy camel cart rides in the dunes, jeep safaris and treks to Tordi Fort. While visiting Tonk you should definitely enjoy the experience of a unique stay at the Eco Dera Chandsen Wellness Retreat (Cell: 09351532109). Located at Chandson, near Diggi Kalyan Mandir, 55 km from Tonk it has 35 rooms, a Veg Restaurant and Ayurvedic spa; it is also a naturopathy treatment centre. Served by in house doctors it is a popular wellness destination.

**Haathi Bhata** (30km)

This monolithic elephant was constructed by Ram Nath Slat when Tonk was ruled by Sawai Ram Singh. Carved out of a single stone, the Haathi Bhata is a popular tourist attraction. The monument is known for its intricate inscription which tells the story of Nala and Damayanti.
Jaldevi Temple (45km)
An hour’s drive from Tonk brings you to the Jaldevi temple located in Bavadi village, near the town of Todaraisingh. Dedicated to the Jal Devi is said to be 250 years old. Local belief has it that the idol of Jaldevi resided in a well nearby, before being brought out placed in the temple dedicated to her. During Chaitra Purnima, a three-day long fair is held in the temple.

Bisalpur Dam (60km)
A great spot for birdwatchers, the Bisalpur Dam serves as the lifeline of Jaipur. The Bisalpur Forest Sanctuary is also worth a visit. Do go to the Bisaldeo Temple near the Banas River at the Bisalpur Dam. You can enjoy the ambience of a Mini Goa in the area. Boating is very popular here. A must visit is the fish aquarium with its multi-coloured fish.

Diggi Kalyanji Temple (60km)
Dedicated to the worship of Shri Kalyanji, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, this temple is over 5,000 years old, making it one of the oldest functional Hindu temples in the country. Every year, the grand Diggi Lakkhi Fair in the months of August and September attracts droves of visitors.

Hadi Rani Baori (65km)
One of the most impressive stepwells of the country, the Hadi Rani Baori in Todaraisingh was constructed in the 17th century. The rectangular-shaped stepwell is a double storeyed structure and each of its corridors is flanked with an arched doorway. The first storey of the stepwell houses images of Lord Brahma, Ganesha and Mahishasuramardini.
In north-eastern Rajasthan, near the Uttar Pradesh border, within the golden triangle of Agra, Delhi and Jaipur, 38km southwest of Mathura.

**Distances**
- 38km SW of Mathura
- 64km W of Agra
- 185km NE of Jaipur
- 196km SE of Delhi

**Journey time**
- By road: 1hr from Agra, 4hrs from Jaipur, 4hrs from Delhi

**Route from Delhi**
- NH2 to Mathura via Faridabad, Palwal, Hodal and Kosi Kalan; state road from Mathura to Bharatpur

**Route from Jaipur**
- NH11 to Bharatpur via Balaji, Dausa town and Mahua

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**KEOLADEO GHANA NATIONAL PARK**

**FLY AWAY HOME**

**District** Bharatpur Division Bharatpur

**Location** In north-eastern Rajasthan, near the Uttar Pradesh border, within the golden triangle of Agra, Delhi and Jaipur, 38km southwest of Mathura.

**Distances**
- 38km SW of Mathura
- 64km W of Agra
- 185km NE of Jaipur
- 196km SE of Delhi

**Journey time**
- By road: 1hr from Agra, 4hrs from Jaipur, 4hrs from Delhi

**Route from Delhi**
- NH2 to Mathura via Faridabad, Palwal, Hodal and Kosi Kalan; state road from Mathura to Bharatpur

**Route from Jaipur**
- NH11 to Bharatpur via Balaji, Dausa town and Mahua

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**A ruminating Painted Stork in the serene setting**
Keoladeo Ghana National Park is a gem in India’s ecological crown despite being one of the smallest parks in the country. Monsoon is one of the times when maximum avian activity occurs in the park, a fact that often gets lost in all the attention that winter and the accompanying migratory birds receive. During the rains, some of India’s most spectacular birds deck themselves out in their finest plumage, they get together to court their mates and nest in huge colonies in the trees which line the paths of the sanctuary.

July marks the beginning of this season. Location is the primary thing when birds build houses—no self-respecting open-bill allows another to trespass on its prime few square feet of treetop.

Once the chicks are born, they grow at a fast pace and demand food in loud voices. The colony of storks then dons a busy look, with parents flying in and out so fast that even an Air Traffic Controller would have a heart attack.

The cacophony of painted storks with their yellow bills and pink and white behinds has to be heard to be believed. They are a hungry lot too. Studies estimate that the 2,000 painted storks in the colonies require about 4 to 6 tonnes of food daily and, in the 30 to 40 days they breed, they consume around 1,200 tonnes!

Hopping along the road as you stroll towards the Keoladeo Temple in the centre of the park you will see some of the permanent residents, easy to dismiss as little brown jobs, or LBJs as they are called by birdwatchers. These were, in fact, the creatures responsible for Salim Ali, India’s greatest ever ornithologist, first taking an interest in birds. As a child, he shot with an airgun, what he assumed was a house sparrow. Then he noticed it had a yellow throat, he was fascinated, and began to investigate what it could be. However, these creatures are no
longer called yellow-throated sparrows. They are now chestnut-shouldered petronias.

When Keoladeo Ghana was made a World Heritage Site, its guests in the cold season included the Siberian cranes, with bills and faces as red as if dipped in blood, white plumage that was simply peerless and outstretched wingtips pitch black like a dark night. Sadly, the world proved too unfriendly a place for the flock that came to Bharatpur, which were driven away by consecutive years of drought. What’s comforting is that although vegetarian Siberian cranes have dwindled, there is still the chance of seeing delicate demoiselle cranes, common cranes, or our very own resident crane, the sarus.

**ABOUT KEOLADEO GHANA NP**

Keoladeo is actually a name of Lord Shiva and is the form in which he is worshipped at the small temple in the heart of the park. Ghana refers to the thick tree cover the area once had. This sanctuary is known by the name of the adjoining town of Bharatpur, which is also the name of the king who created the park in the late 19th century. He recognised the potential of this area of scrub woodland that formed a slight depression, a hollow where water could be collected to attract water birds until it dried up. By diverting water from an irrigation canal, building small dams and constructing a system of dykes and shooting butts, he succeeded in converting it into one of the richest wetland habitats in the world. He entertained all the big guns of his time, including viceroy and princes. Their bags are recorded on a sandstone inscription near the Keoladeo Temple.

In 1956, the hunting preserve was declared a sanctuary. The shallow, freshwater lakes, which make up about a third of the park's 29 sq km, form just one part of this amazingly biodiverse area of the Gangetic Plain, where some 350 species of birds find refuge and some 120 species nest. Keoladeo Ghana also boasts an amazing variety of flora with 181 genera.

**GETTING THERE**

Air Nearest airport: Agra (64km/1.5hrs). Taxi to Bharatpur ₹2,000 approx.

Rail Nearest railhead: Bharatpur Jn (4.5km/20min). A very convenient option if you are visiting from Delhi. The Frontier Mail and the Kota Janshatabdi are both good options from Delhi. There are also rails links with Sawai Madhopur. Hotels will arrange to pick you up from the station; there are cycle-rickshaws at the station Auto costs ₹80-100, Taxi costs ₹500

Road Bharatpur is 186km from Delhi on the Agra Highway via Mathura. The best way is to take the Yamuna Expressway to Agra. It makes a natural extension to a trip to Agra and Fatehpur Sikri; there is also a good link road from Jaipur. Tour buses operate from these places to the park. Taxi from Delhi costs ₹4,000

Winter in the park is one of the best times to see the various birds of prey together and compare their size and plumage. The largest and most impressive is the imperial eagle, while the smaller marsh harrier has an entertaining habit of gliding low over assembled ducks and putting them to flight. If you’re very quiet, and go with one of the trained guides, you might just be able to see the large owls before they see you. The most visible and distinct ones are the magnificent dusky horned variety.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Birdwatching**

One route is to head to Sapan Mori, and then to turn right towards the Keoladeo Temple. If you head left, then you will reach the sunning ground of pythons. The Mansarovar and Hansarovar marshes and the swamps and lakes of Bharatpur form one of the most important heronries in the world.
headed geese return to remote parts of Ladakh to breed. Other species come from Central Asia and Siberia, and the pied-crested cuckoo, the monsoon bird, comes from East Africa with the monsoon winds.

The sanctuary is home to one of the rarest birds in the world, the sociable plover, which breeds on open steppes in Central Asia where its natural habitat has been destroyed to such an extent that it is on the brink of extinction. A large area of the park is home to pipits and larks. These are generally overlooked by visitors as the star attractions here are the waterfowl and waders.

**Boat ride**
At the Tourist Reception Centre, you can book boat rides if there's water in the lakes. Boats are available for hire from the boarding point near the RTDC Hotel. These give you a peaceful way to get close to the birdlife and otters.

- **Boat ride** ₹300/hr/boat (6 pax)

**WHERE TO STAY**

Most places to stay are along Dr Salim Ali Road, running from Bharatpur to the entrance of the park.

**Heritage**
The pride of place is the **Laxmi Vilas Palace** (Tel: 05644-223523), a fine heritage property run by members of the Bharatpur royal family. It's set amidst 50 acres in Kakaji-ki-Kothi on the old Agra-Jaipur Road. A popular option, despite being 23 km from the park, is **Hotel Chandra Mahal Haveli** (Tel: 617839; Cell: 08696919073), in Peharsar on Jaipur-Agra Road.

**Others**
The **RTDC Bharatpur Forest Lodge** (Tel: 222760/22; Cell: 09024745528) in the park has the best location.

**RTDC’s Hotel Saras** (Tel: 223790) has 14 rooms. At Shanti Kutir, the Wildlife Warden’s Office complex (Tel: 222777) has a **Forest Rest House** with five rooms reserved for forest officials. Rooms are rented to tourists, but only at the warden’s discretion.

**For more hotels and details, see Keoladeo Ghana Accommodation Listings on page 351**
the only Jama Masjid in India built by Jat Rulers and features the Mughal architectural style of the Jama Masjid of Agra. An interesting story attached to this is that during a great water shortage in the area the spiritual leaders of the Hindu and Muslim communities started praying for relief from this crisis. Shortly thereafter the town witnessed a massive rainfall, which helped fill all the water bodies of Bharatpur. The relieved ruler, Maharaja Balwant Singh, told the leaders to ask him for a boon. The Hindu leaders asked for a temple (now the Ganga Mandir) to be built and the Muslim leaders asked him for a Jama Masjid. The ruler happily approved and commissioned both shrines, which came to be built right next to each other.

Deeg (36km)
Deeg was the second capital of Suraj Mal’s kingdom in the 18th century. The fort here has massive walls. Suraj Mal’s palace, Gopal Bhavan and the gardens in the Mughal-Rajput style make the trip worthwhile. The Braj Holi Festival in March attract great throngs.
• Palace Entry fee Indians ₹25, foreigners ₹300 Timings 9.30 am-5.30 pm, Fridays closed

Bandh Bareta (44km)
Not many know about this hidden birding paradise. A yesteryear royal wildlife reserve, this scenic spot invites over 200 bird species.

Kaman (55km)
Also known as Kamaban, Kaman is about an hour’s drive from Bharatpur and is part of the Braj region. An important pilgrim town it attracts a large number of Vaishnavs in the month of Badhva as a part of the Banyatra. The ruins of a shrine, consisting of 84 pillars named Chaurasi Khamba and the hallowed Vimal Kund are the main attractions. It is popular also for the Kaman Festival in which celebrates Lord Krishna’s birth. The highlight of this festival is the Raslila dance performed with great zest.
Back in the day when the jungles of Ranthambhore served as a princely private game reserve, it was rich in predators. Today you can only hunt them by camera. One of India’s best tiger reserves, Ranthambhore has ancient jungles which are a wealth of faunal and botanical splendour. Tiger sightings are the big lure, but
Antique rocks crumble under your feet and bounce down the side of Ranthambhore Fort to the sprawling dusty forest below. Walking into the skeleton of a house broken into by the roots of trees, and standing on a carpet of grass, you looked out of a thousand-year-old window on the magical landscape of Ranthambhore which has been adored by streams of visitors down the decades. The place is full of romance and intrigue — 12th-century ruins stand smothered by roots, herons share lakes with holy men and a million myths about Raja Hamir and the glory days of the ‘impregnable’ fort. The fort’s fall, along with that of the one at Chittorgarh by Al-ud-din Khilji, is a sharp reminder of Chauhan rule of Ranthambhore and its tumultuous history over the centuries thereafter. After Jaipur ruler Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh’s, request for Ranthambore Fort was spurned by his Mughal overlords he set about fortifying the nearby village of Sherpur and renamed it Sawai Madhopur. On 19th January 1763, two years after Sawai Madhopur’s founding, Madho Singh was granted. Ranthambore Fort, which continued to be part of Jaipur until India’s independence in 1947. Locals still visit a Ganesh temple here, as did their ancestors. And like them, they must walk through tiger forests to do so.

Once at Sawai Madhopur, the short drive from the station to the park unfolds a scene of ceaseless activity—swaying camel carts, vendors guarding heaps of guavas and the glitter of dazzling mirror work on the outfits of Rajasthani women catching the morning sunlight as they saunter by.

While out on safari it is not unusual to get the feeling that everything looks like a tiger when you are desperate to see one, so if someone mentions they spied one in the bushes it’s easy to be a bit disbelieving. That said, it is also true that tiger sightings at Ranthambhore are much more frequent than say in the lush terrain of Corbett National Park. It is not unusual either, that if one returns to a spot visited the day before, it might turn out to be your lucky day— because suddenly, and long before you noticed her, the mother tigress accompanied closely by two cubs, comes padding slowly, majestically towards you on the dusty track. Classic Ranthambhore moments — that keep you hooked forever to this gorgeous wilderness space in Rajasthan!

Making her way across a sliver of land in the water—literally a catwalk across the lake—she stops a stone’s throw from your parked vehicle, crouches down and begins to drink. Close enough to see her whiskers quiver, the slapping of her flat pink tongue against the water is the only sound you hear in that precious moment. Then she’s up, crossing the path in front of you and walks on, allowing you to follow her in the jeep for 20 minutes before vanishing with her babies like a ghost into the foliage.

Vignettes of some residents of Ranthambhore

When to go
The park is closed from July to September during the monsoons, and open from October to June. November to February is the best time. March, April and May are oppressively hot with the desert ‘loo’ — hot and dry winds that blow during the day — baking everything in its wake. On the up side, the dry summer months allow for some fantastic animal sightings through the bare vegetation.

Wildlife/ Forest Dept office
Field Director & Conservator of Forest
Ranthambore Tiger Reserve
Sawai Madhopur
Tel: 07462-220479

Tourist offices
RTDC Tourist Information Centre
Hotel Vinayak, Sawai Madhopur
Tel: 221333
Tourist Reception Centre
Railway Station, Platform No 1, Sawai Madhopur
Tel: 07462-220808

STD code 07462

Enclosed by the Banas River to the north and the Chambal River to its south, the national park is about...
BHARATPUR DIVISION

SAWAI MADHOPUR DISTRICT

150km from Jaipur. Once the hunting grounds of the maharajas of Jaipur, and later the British, this area, spread over an expanse of 392.5 sq km, was declared the Sawai Madhopur Wildlife Sanctuary in 1955. In 1973, it was declared the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger. An area of 274.5 sq km from within the Tiger Reserve was notified the Ranthambhore National Park in 1980. With the launch of Project Tiger in 1973, the National Park began to be protected in earnest, and as the forest returned to health, aquifers in the area began to replenish. Even now, the difference in the ecology inside the park and out is staggering. The areas of Kaila Devi Sanctuary (674 sq km), the Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary (127 sq km) and the Kualji Close (7.58 sq km) were consolidated and added to the National Park in 1992, bringing the spread of the reserve to 1,174 sq km.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

While truckloads of visitors may seem annoying at first, it is, if you can yourself see it that way, what makes the park not an artefact, but rather a real place where ancient ruins, wild nature and contemporary village life make layers of history almost tangible. Don’t miss the fort and wake up early to witness the forest at sunrise.

Tiger safaris
The highlight of your Ranthambhore experience is the 3.5-hr jungle jeep safari for tiger spotting. As no private vehicles are permitted into the park, book a tourist jeep safari well in advance (at least 365 days before), especially in the high season.

- Park entry fee Indian ₹125, foreigner ₹970
- Safari fee Canter ₹700/pp, Gypsy ₹1,100/pp
- Vehicle entry fee Canter ₹460, Gypsy ₹970
- Safari timings 6.30am-10am, 3pm-6.30pm (subject to change from time to time, so get an update when booking your trip)

Bookings
All safaris are booked through www.sso.rajasthani.gov.in.

Tip: Book well in advance to avoid last-minute disappointment.

Ranthambhore Fort
Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this 10th century citadel is situated almost exactly at the meeting point of the Vindhya and the Aravali hill ranges. It is a part of the the UNESCO serial site of the Hill Forts of Rajasthan. The fort, after which the National Park was named, is thought to have been built in 944 CE. It was occupied by Raja Hamir for many years until the siege by Allauddin Khilji’s army in 1301 forced the Rajput king to surrender. It can be tiring to walk up to the ramparts but the view of the park and its three lakes from the top is worth the effort. Locals believe that the mortar used in constructing the fort was mixed with the blood of brave warriors! Within its confines are a Digambar Jain Temple, a mosque, and a dargah.

- Timings 7am-5pm

Three Lakes
Also lying inside the Ranthambhore National Park are three lakes. The largest lake in Ranthambhore is Padam Talao whose name is inspired by the vast expanses of lotus flowers floating on its surface. Jogi Mahal, an atmospheric old hunting lodge nestles by its side. You can go croc-spotting at the Malik Talao, populated with marsh crocodiles. Raj Bagh Talao attracts great numbers of deer and water fowl. It’s a big draw for tigers as it is popular with its natural prey.

Ganesh Temple
Dedicated to Lord Ganesh, this temple is located inside the Ranthambhore Fort, within the park precincts. The Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, wherein devotees join in the singing of devotional songs, draw large crowds. Entry to the fort itself is free.

A cheetal at breakfast
to allow devotees easy access to the
temple. They arrive on Wednesdays
and on the chauth of every month.

- Timings: 7am-5pm

Jogi Mahal
Located at the foot of the fort, Jogi Mahal is an old hunting lodge in
red sandstone offers stunning views
of the Padam Talao, which is awash
with water lilies. However, visitors
are now banned from visiting it.

Chamatkar Ji Temple
Situated on the Old Sawai Madhopur
road in Swai Madhopur, this is a
popular pilgrimage site, because of
the legendary miracles said to have
occurred here at the time of its
founding. A fair is held here on
Sharad Poornima every year.

Gaura Bhairav Temple
Located atop a hill this popular
pilgrim hub attracts thongs of
devotees all year round. Dedicated
to Bhairav brothers— Gaura Bhairav
and Kala Bhairav, it is a wish-
fulfilling temple.

Rajiv Gandhi Regional Museum Of
Natural History
On display are specimens of the
diverse flora and fauna and
geological aspects of the Western
region of India.

- Timings: 10 am – 6 pm; Monday closed.

WHERE TO STAY

Most of the hotels are scattered on
Ranthambhore Road. Rates vary on
and off-season, and it is best to book
in advance.

- Run by the Oberoi chain, Vanya
  Vilas (Tel: 07462-223999) is super
  lavish with prices to match. The
  Aman-i-Khas Resort (Tel: 252052,252223),
  close to the park, has a spa
  and arranges safaris.

- The Sawai Madhopur Vivanta
  Lodge (Tel: 225155) is run by the Taj
  Group and has a restaurant, bar,
  swimming pool and travel desk. It also
  arranges safaris. Sher Bagh (Tel:252119-
  20) is 3km from the gate in Sherpur.

- Tiger Den Resort (Delhi Tel: 011-
  27570446; Cell: 07877796669) is 2km
  from the park and has a restaurant, a
  pool and a souvenir shop.

RTDC’s Castle Jhoomar Baori
(Tel: 220495) is located on top of a
hill with a great view of the park.
There are 14 rooms here and meals
are now served in the dining hall.

RTDC’s Hotel Vinayak
(Tel: 221333), on Ranthambhore Road
has 14 rooms and 10 tents with
attached baths. It houses the RTDC
Tourist Information Centre.

Just 2km away from the national
park the Maa Ashapura Resort
(Cell: 078487044212 maashapurafarm.
com) is located on Ranthambore
Road, Kutalpura Maliyan. It offers 5
cottages and several luxury tents. You
can go horse riding, take a village
tour, or jungle safari on request.

For more hotels and details, see
Ranthambhore Accommodation
Listings on page 352

AROUND SAWAI MADHOPUR

Bonli Fort (1km)
This abandoned fort was used by the
Army Chief of Ranthambore
Kingdom in the 17th Century. In the
evening light the fort looks magical.

Amareshwar Mahadev Temple
(6km)
The cave temple, dedicated to Lord
Shiva, is thronged by devotees on
Shivratri. Access to the temple is by
jeep through thick jungle. There is a
pretty waterfall here as well.

Shilpgram (9km)
Shilpgram Museum, which is actually
more of a craft village, is located near
Ramsinghpura village, about 9 km
from Sawai Madhopur. You will love
the experience of watching the
artisans at work on some of
Rajasthan’s most popular handicrafts.
Surwal Lake (10km)
Fun-filled birdwatching opportunities await you at this shallow seasonal lake, situated between acres of cultivated fields. Look for painted storks, flamingos, spoonbills, sarus cranes, greylag geese that arrive on the lake shore between the months of November and March.

Kachida Valley (13km)
This picturesque expanse of verdure is excellent for wildlife sightings, particularly panthers which are plentiful here, and botanical adventures. Located on the outer reaches of Ranthambore National Park it is one of the popular zones for jeep safari.
*Timing*: 6 am-5 pm

Bhoori Pahari (30km)
Soak in the rural cultural offerings of Bhoori Pahari, with its maze of lanes and dinky houses. To enjoy a true back to basics adventure stay with a local family in the village to discover the charms of its day to day routines and warm hospitality. Enjoy camel and horse rides, eat simple home cooked meals and enjoy a spot of birdwatching and nature inspired adventures, thanks to the village’s proximity to the confluence of the Banas and Morel rivers.

Chauth Mata Temple (35km)
The temple is dedicated to Chauth Mata, was the presiding deity of the region. It features, pillars, ceilings and walls with beautiful carvings.

Khandar Fort (45km)
Long held by the Sisodia rulers of Mewar this ancient citadel, which is built on Vedic architectural tenets, was considered to be invincible because of its strategic location on a hilltop. It is thronged by pilgrims attending the Jayanti Mata festival held on chaturthi ashtami in the Hindu month Bhadawa month.

Palighat (45km)
The boat safari from Palighat on the mighty Chambal River, is a huge attraction for crocodile spotting at the Chambal Gharial Sanctuary. Also popular on the boat cruise are bird watching expeditions. To reduce pressure of tourist traffic on Ranthambore National Park the area from Palighat to Rameshwar Ghat of National Gharial Sanctuary is proposed to be opened for the tourists. There are excellent opportunities for wildlife and avifaunal sightings on this stretch.
*Contact*: DCF Chambal; Tel: 07462-220617; w forest.rajasthan.gov.in
*Timing*: Sunrise-Sunset
*Fee*: `500/person

Ghushmeshwar Temple (50km)
Said to be the 12th or the last of the Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva, the temple is located at the Siwar village in Sawai Madhopur. It abounds in mysticism and many myths.

Macchli — Legendary Lady of the Lake
The most photographed tigress in the world, and the oldest at age 20, Macchli, lived in Ranthambore and became legend for her beauty, bravery and bewitching camera presence. Wooed by the lens, she was quite the diva. But there is more to Macchli than her charming interface with thousands of wildlife fans from around the world. The ‘The Lady of the Lake’ played a pivotal role in replenishing Ranthambore’s tiger population with her cubs again and again. Immensely brave she is legend to have taken on, single-handedly, a 14-foot long crocodile, and gave no quarter to this wily beast in that epic combat. Die-hard fans ached to get a viewing of this gorgeous queen of Ranthambore till she passed into the hunting grounds in August 2016.

Triveni Rameshwar Dham (65km)
Rameshwar Ghat is located at the confluence of the Banas, Seep and Chambal rivers. There are shrines here dedicated to Chaturbhujnathji (Vishnu) and Shiva. The annual fair held a fortnight after Diwali attracts devotees from parts of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Delicate brush strokes on the wall of a house in a village near Ranthambhore
The handsome Raj Nivas Palace

DHOLPUR

LAYERED NARRATIVES

District Dholpur Region Matsya Division Bharatpur
Location In eastern Rajasthan, about 4 kms from the Chambal River, an hour’s drive from the Taj Mahal
Distance 261km SE of Delhi
Journey Time By road 5.5hrs from Delhi
Route from Delhi NH 2 to Agra via Palwal, Hodal, Mathura and Farah; NH3 to Dholpur (Gwalior Road) via Shamsabad, Jaju and Mania

RANEE SAHANEY

Dolphins somersaulting in the Chambal, slack-jawed crocodiles turning longingly from the shoreline towards an approaching boat, Pinocchio-snouted-glass-eyed baby gharials and leather-backed river turtle cooling off at the nursery pool at an eco farm, the badlands of the once-dreaded Chambal ravines and a 400-year-old temple set along a lotus-filled pond—and that’s just the half of the erstwhile princely state of Dholpur.

Historically known to date back to the days of the Buddha, Dholpur was once a part of the Mauryan Empire and was to be ruled by various kings in the Mughal era. Around the 8th-10th century, it came under the sway of the Chauhans. Till 1194, it was under the sovereignty of Mohammed Gauri.

Dholpur was initially known as Dhawalpuri after the ruler Raja Dhawal Deo (Dholan Deo Tomar) who established the city in 700 CE, though some historians have dated it to 1005 CE.

Things to see and do

Dholpur’s geographic setting is part of its unique charm and importance. Strategically positioned by the waters of the Chambal, Dholpur was once a much-coveted milestone for raiders from the north intent on conquering the riches of Malwa and Gwalior.

Raj Niwas Palace

Spread over 13 lush acres, the Raj Niwas Palace Hotel at Dholpur is a lovely place for holidays with the family, but it also makes for the perfect getaway for couples—honeymooning or otherwise, heritage and history buffs or even artists and writers longing for a bit of private space, quiet and solitude. The scion of the erstwhile royal houses of both Dholpur and Gwalior, has striven hard to return the dilapidated palace to its former glory.

The Euro-Indo-inspired ensemble of its outward trappings is reflected in a glorious mélange of accoutrements within. The main complex now houses an engaging military museum. Guests are accommodated in the pool villas gathered around sprawling lawns where peacocks call and birds sing in the trees.

Machkund Temple

Located about 4-6 km from the palace, this ancient shrine is set along a lotus-filled pond. Along the banks of the pond is a string of minor shrines and temples over 400 years old. Steeped in ancient myths, it is named after the 24th ruler of Suryavanshi Dynasty, Raja Machkund, whose clan is said to have held the royal office for 19 generations before Lord Ram. Machkund has also been accorded the curious title ‘teerthon ka bhaanja’, or the nephew of shrines. Nearby stands the Sher Shikhar Gurudwara which signifies a visit by Guru Hargobind Singh.
This 19th century temple attracts many devotees during the annual Shivaratri celebrations in February/March. It is also remarkable for its wonderful architecture.

**Shri Ram Mandir**
This popular temple is significant for its unique idol of Lord Rama, which has four arms like Lord Vishnu and in its hands hold a shankh, a chakra, a gada, and a padma.

**Royal Stepwell**
This once lovely royal stepwell, constructed in the period 1873 to 1880, can be found behind the Nihaleshwar Temple. The four-storeyed building has artistic pillars and carved stones. A lot of work is needed to restore it to its former glory.

**Nihal Tower**
Popularly called the Ghanta Ghar this 150-feet high tower was started by Raja Nihal Singh in the year 1880 and completed around the year 1910 by Raja Ram Singh.

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**

**Raj Niwas Palace Hotel** (Cell: 08860518880) has a choice of 32 pool villas wrapped around the lush lawns with peacocks strutting around.

**Damoh Waterfall**
Located at Sarmathura, these falls can be seen in all their glory in the rainy season from July to September. The rich forest around it is also known for its wildlife sightings.

**Jhor** (5km)
If you are blessed with green fingers and love gardens, wend your way to Jhor, just 5km away from Dholpur, to set your eyes upon one of the oldest Mughal gardens, known as Bagh-e-Nilofar. Though not much of the original garden has survived, you can still find traces of the Emperor Babur’s hand in its construction.

**Van Vihar WLS**
The once-bustling shooting lodge of the Dholpur royals, now a notified wildlife sanctuary, is located 25 km from the palace. Clamber up to the terrace to take in the views of the lotus-filled lake.

**Talab-E-Shahi**
About 13km from the palace is the Khanpur Mahal hunting lodge built by Emperor Akbar in 1617. Situated next to a lake also built at the time, it is a must visit for birding enthusiasts in winter.

**Chambal Ravines and River Cruises**
About 4km from the palace, the Chambal offers thrilling boat rides. Enjoy dolphin sightings and crocodile spotting here. About 22km away, gharials and crocodiles from the Chambal are being conserved at the eco farm at Devri.

**Shergarh Fort**
South of Dholpur, the Shergarh Fort was built by Raja Maldeo of Jodhpur. Its reconstruction was carried out by Sher Shah Suri in 1540. The fort has several temples and a dargah.
At first glance, Karauli appears to have been a serene pit stop for a marauding history — a whole town that marching armies forgot to raze or hoist to power. No tempestuous rises and tragic falls here. No famous men either. Medieval Karauli, history’s sideshow, was ruled by kings who believed they were descendants of Lord Krishna.

Karauli’s story began in the 14th century, when one Arjun Pal founded the town. It was never a glorious empire, but at one point had considerable real estate. At its peak, the state of Karauli held the present district of Karauli, as well as parts of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Gwalior. During the reign of Akbar, it was incorporated into the Mughal Empire. Later, it was subjugated by the Marathas and, in 1817, taken under British protection. Then something interesting happened in 1838. Karauli’s king, Harbaksha Pal, died without any progeny. A relative, Pratap Pal, was raised to the throne. At this juncture, the dead king’s queen suddenly declared that she was pregnant and, a few days later, circulated reports that she had given birth to a prince and the legitimate heir to the throne. The British promptly appointed a commission to enquire into the legitimacy of this child. It’s not clear how the Englishmen went about it, but the commission reported that the queen’s rumours were absolutely false. She was so ashamed that she left Karauli and settled in Bharatpur nearby. In the annals of Karauli, such machinations were par for the course, though. If there is one thing the erstwhile princely state of Karauli might have been famous for, it is the inability of its incumbent kings to sire descendants. In the 19th century, at least seven consecutive rajas succeeded by adoption.

Karauli won over the British rulers in India during the events of 1857. For the support he gave the Englishmen during the insurgency, King Madan Pal got the salute of honour for the Raja of Karauli raised from 15 to 17 guns.
Even today, the walled city, with the bastioned fort looming large over the crumbling chhatris along the River Bhadrawati, does evoke a prosperous past. But, much like many small North Indian towns, the increasing neglect of Karauli’s poorer areas points to contemporary, unsavoury realities. Yet, even now, Karauli remains an unpolished gem in Rajasthan’s map that a tourist will always be delighted to discover.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

Karauli’s main attraction, the City Palace, is reached via a narrow, sloping road through an extremely crowded bazaar. Though parts of the palace have been ransacked by local villagers, it is still very beautiful.

**City Palace**

Start off with the City Palace, which you’ll enter from the Ganesh Gate. Arjun Pal built the palace, along with the town, in the 14th century. However, little or nothing of the original can now be seen. What you do see is the structure erected by Raja Gopal Singh in the 18th century. He chose to adopt the Delhi style of architecture — the abundance of red sandstone in Karauli, similar to that used in Delhi, made this rendering easy. The more embellished additions came in the 19th century. White and off-white stones have been used very becomingly, painted upon with bright blues, reds, browns and oranges. From the terrace atop the palace, you can see the town laid out by the River Bhadrawati below, and the ravines and hills beyond. The labyrinthine pathways through the palace and the many stairways, climbing up and down, should afford you a happy half-day.

The Diwan-i-Aam, the hall where the king met his subjects, has exquisite floral patterns in bright colours on the walls and ceiling as well as painted wooden doors. The upper floor has jaali work on the walls, from behind which the ranis could observe the goings-on below. The coloured glass jharokhas of the Rang Mahal, with their one-way visibility, made for beautiful purdahs. The mirror theme continues from the hall to the walls and ceilings of the bedrooms. Barahdwari, the women’s dance hall, is lined with moustachioed portraits of the kings of yore. In a move to avoid paying taxes, the palace was gifted to the Madan Mohan Temple Trust (the sole trustee of which was the Raja of Karauli) in the 1950s.

- **Location** Main bazaar
- **Entry fee** Indians ₹50, foreigners ₹400 (inclusive of camera fee)
- **Timings** 7 am-7 pm
Shrines and Cenotaph
The Madan Mohan Temple, adjacent to the palace, is a Vishnu temple. It is considered highly auspicious to visit the Govindji and Gopinath temples of Jaipur and the Madan Mohan Temple of Karauli on the same day. The chhatri of Raja Gopal Singh, outside the Nadi Gate leading out of the palace to the river below, is stunningly adorned with frescoes.

Karauli Cattle Fair
Every February, thousands of animals tramp into the town for a fair that coincides with the religious festival of Maha Shivaratri. Competitions provide both spectacle and a means to pick out the best of the animals. You should definitely plan your visit to Karauli around this time.

WHERE TO STAY
Most of the options here are rudimentary except for the Bhanwar Vilas Palace (Cell: 09929773744), a heritage property named after Raja Bhanwar Pal, who was among the more flamboyant rulers of Karauli. Ask to see the ‘museum’, which is the garage for the old Buick and other aristocratic paraphernalia. The hotel offers folk dances and camel or horse rides.

WHERE TO EAT
At the Bhanwar Vilas Palace, they are flexible about menu options and you can choose from many Indian, Continental and Chinese dishes.

Kaila Devi Temple (23km)
A magnet for the devout the Kaila Devi Temple is popular all year round. Enshrined within the sanctum of this temple made in marble, are the idols of Kaila (Mahalaxmi) and Chamunda Devi. The Goddess is presented with 8 arms and riding on a lion, here. Local Languriya songs are chanted on special occasions while paying homage to the goddess. A fair takes place in the month of April/May during the Navratras and witnesses various rituals and activities like Kanak Dandoti, Mina tribal performers and ladies participating in the celebrations.

AROUND KARAULI
Rangama Talav (4km)
This pretty lakeside retreat was a popular picnic spot for the Karauli royalties.

Shri Mahaveer Ji
The site became famous as a Jain religious site after an ancient idol of Mahaveer was excavated from its soil several hundred years ago.

Kaila Devi Sanctuary
The Kaila Devi Wildlife Sanctuary begins right after the temple (no entry fee or permissions required and no gates, for good measure!) and
runs along both sides of the road all the way to Karanpur (34 km from Kaila Devi), and further on to join the Ranthambhore National Park.

**Mandrayal Fort (40km)**
Located near the banks of Chambal River this fort is made up red stone and situated on a small hill. Gharial sightings are possible on the Chambal river here.

**Timangarh Fort (42 km)**
Dating back to 1100 CE this fort, near Masalpur village, was named after the Yaduvanshi raja Timanpal of Bayana who reconstructed it after the structure was destroyed in one of the many attacks it tried to repel. A unique feature of its structure is its priceless collection of ancient ashtadathu (eight metals).

**Garhmora (80 km)**
This historic place is said to have emerged during the time of Lord Krishna. Its architecture is reminiscent of the Konark temple. The 13th-14th century Buddhist stupas, temples built here, Kedarnath Baba’s cave, Lord Devnarayan’s temple, etc. are worth visiting. A fair is held on the occasion of Makar Sankranti in the temple of Narayani Mata.
BIKANER DISTRICT

BIKANER

THE OUTPOST OF CIVILISATION

District Bikaner Division Bikaner

Location Bikaner, a sandy trough in the deserts of northern Rajasthan, forms the apex of a triangle with the desert cities of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur, not far from India’s western border with Pakistan

Distances 317km NW of Jaipur, 544km SW of Delhi

Journey time By road 5hrs from Jaipur, 9hrs from Delhi

Route from Delhi Old NH8 to Kot Putli via Behror; state highway to Sikar via Nim ka Thana; NH11 to Bikaner via Fatehpur, Ratangarh and Dungargarh Route from Jaipur NH11 to Bikaner via Chomu and Sikar; rest as above Route from Ajmer NH89 to Bikaner via Merta, Nagaur and Deshnok Route from Jodhpur NH65 to Nagaur via Khimsar; rest as above
Sandstorms lash the town in summer and a golden haze hides even the tallest buildings. Fierce winds effortlessly and persistently bend trees. A land more hostile is difficult to imagine and yet, five centuries ago, a band of warriors rode into this desert with the hope of laying the foundations of a kingdom that would bring prosperity to the region.

Most of what was built by those warriors, the Rathores, scions of the royal house of Jodhpur, still stands, a testimony as much to the quality of the construction as to the arid conditions that retard decay. They speak of the colourful legends that blend into their walls, narrating among others, the tale of a certain Rao Jodha of Jodhpur, who once reprimanded his brother and his son Bika for whispering in court, asking in jest whether the two were plotting to build their own kingdom. They took the remark to heart and set out on their own. For 30 years, Bika led a band of marauding freebooters all over Rajasthan till he finally settled down here.

Sadly Bikaner has been largely ignored by the average traveller, despite its splendid havelis and palaces. It could be one of your finest finds if you like your destination less trodden.

On the face of it, Bikaner is a town known less for its architectural splendours—though these are truly marvellous—than for its savouries. Bikaneri bhujia may have become an exportable commodity today; but once Bikaner’s greatest export was its international diplomacy, raised to a fine art in the course of the sandgrouse shoots arranged by Maharaja Ganga Singh, remembered as the founder of modern Bikaner.
fragments of its original walls survive. In 1589, Rai Singh ordered the more spacious and strategically superior fortification of Junagarh, which was completed in five years. Enter through its stone elephant-flanked gates, go past the handprints of queens, and you come to the impressive ceremonial courtyard, where you get the first glimpse of the architectural treasures of Junagarh. Surrounded by a moat for defence, with public and private buildings added by succeeding maharajas, the whole effect is that of a series of buildings that seemingly blend on the outside but are vastly different within. The oldest parts are constructed in yellow sandstone while the rest are mostly in the striking red sandstone.

**Entry fee** Indian ₹50, foreigner ₹300, **Video** ₹150 **Audio guide** Indian ₹200, foreigner ₹350 **Timings** 10am-4.30pm, open all days (fees and timings applicable for museum as well)

The most opulent of the palaces within the fort is **Anup Mahal**, which includes the Raj Tilak Mahal (or Coronation Hall) with embossed lacquer-work of striking lavishness. **Badal Mahal**, painted with large blue clouds (perhaps aspirational in this desert state), gives pride of place to a large portrait of Maharaja Sardar Singh, painted by a visiting Italian artist. The courtyards house the family temple of Joramal, as well as Har Mandir, where weddings took place. The **Karan Mahal** courtyard leads to Dungar Niwas, with its fine inlays which will remind you of pietra dura. The **Chandra Mahal** is beautifully painted and was built by Gaj Singh, along with **Phul Mahal**, which boasts the small bed of Rao Bika. Maharaja Ganga Singh, the last of the royals to inhabit Junagarh, gifted it a pair of grand sandstone staircases as well as its stately **Durbah Hall**, which has a floor as well as ceiling made entirely of wood. The hall is now a museum filled with an eclectic collection of family and clan memorabilia. The entrance courtyard of the fort now also houses **Prachina**, a storehouse of vintage textiles and costumes, as well as a souvenir shop.

**Prachina** **Entry fee** Indian ₹30, foreigner ₹100 **Timings** 9am-6pm

**Bikaner new and old**

The greatest symbol of Bikaner's aspiration to be one of the world's modern kingdoms was the building of **Lallgarh Palace** (named after Maharaja Lall Singh, who insisted on the two lls). On the one hand, it served to advertise Ganga Singh's endeavour to make Bikaner more robust economically (to which end he developed the state railways so as to exploit local coal deposits and commissioned the Ganga Canal waterworks to overcome drought). Its architectural plan was drafted by Sir Swinton Jacob, the foremost architect of the early 20th century.

A huge but compact palace, Lallgarh is built—appropriately—entirely of red sandstone. Said to be the best exemplar of a Rajput palace, its façade is composed of the pierced stone screens called jaalis. Though Lallgarh has to two separate complexes—one is run as the Lallgarh Palace Hotel and is managed by the Maharaja Ganga Singhji Trust. A part of the palace is also the **Maharaja Sadul Singh Museum**, visitors can enjoy...
looking around the handsome corridors and the impressive stonecraft.

- **Maharaja Sadul Singh Museum**
  
  **Entry fee** Indian ₹30, foreigner ₹100
  
  **Video** ₹150
  
  **Timings** 10am-5pm (this also includes entry to the Sadul Singh Museum)

### MUSEUMS

The **Ganga Govt Museum**, also known as Darbar Hall is entirely taken up by clan memorabilia and consists of everything from a World War I fighter aircraft to more personal artefacts and insignia of the Rathores (including their original sandalwood throne). The **Sadul Singh Museum** within Lallgarh serves as an archive of all correspondence (which was considerable) and publications by Bikaner’s first family.

- **Ganga Govt Museum** info
  
  At the government-managed **Golden Jubilee Museum** (Ganga Singh Government Museum), having large oils by the German artist Mueller, sculptures from the Gupta and Kushan periods (a Saraswati, in particular, is of sterling worth), and remnants from pre-Harappan archaeological finds in Kalibangan as well as armour, coins, pottery and carpets of more recent vintage.

- **Entry fee** Indian ₹20, foreigner ₹100
  
  **Timings** 9:45am-5:15pm; Mondays closed

- **Anup Sanskrit Library** at Lallgarh is one of the largest private collections of manuscripts in India—many are originals, and a number of these in Sanskrit. The library is, however, no longer open to the public.

  - The State Archives too are a must-visit for history buffs.

- **Location** Near MN Hospital
  
  **Timings** 10am-6pm; Saturdays and Sundays closed

### GETTING THERE

- **Air**
  
  Naal Airport, Bikaner (10km) operates flights to only Delhi and Jaipur currently; Taxis for ₹1,500

- **Rail**
  
  Bikaner Junction is well-connected to Delhi by the Bikaner Mail, to Mumbai by the Jammu Tawi and to Kolkata by the Howrah-Jodhpur Express. The Jaipur-Bikaner Intercity and Jaipur-Bikaner express trains are the best options to Jaipur. Both taxis and autos are easily available at the station. Auto charge ₹10-20 (sharing), Taxi charge ₹9-13/km

- **Road**
  
  Bikaner is at the western end of NH11 that links Agra to Jaipur. Travellers from Delhi should turn off old NH8 at Kotputli and take the road to Sikar via Nim ka Thana and Khandela. From here, take NH11 to Bikaner.

  - **Bus**
    
    Regular (sitting/sleeper) buses also ply from Tees Hazari and Bikaner House in Delhi and Sindhi Camp Bus Stand, Jaipur

### Temples and memorials

The most popular temple for the masses is **Shivbari**, set within its own fortified walls and dedicated to Shiva, on the Camel Farm Road. Constructed by Maharaja Dungar Singh in 1880, to commemorate his father Maharaja Lall Singh, the temple is also known as Laleshwar Mahadeva. Built entirely in red sandstone, the temple stands as a fine specimen of Rajasthani architecture with its beautiful pavilions, domes, columns, and arched doorways. Don’t miss the beautiful miniature paintings on the ceiling and walls of the temple. The temple complex also houses two baoris.

For the visitor driven less by faith and more by curiosity, visits are recommended to the temples of Ratan Bihari and Rasik Shiromani, located within Ratan Bihari Park, in the heart of town. Also noteworthy is the 16th-century **Bhandeshwar Jain Temple** (in the old town), particularly its mirrors and gold-leafed paintings. The **Laxminath Temple** next door is also worth seeing and exploring.

The picturesque **Devi-Kundsagar Chhatris** are also worth a visit. Made of lime-based plaster and marble, these are memorials to members of the royal family.

### Havelis

Bikaner’s mercantile community built themselves impressive homes—once again in red sandstone. In Bikaner, they are tucked away from the public eye in narrow lanes, but have gained immense popularity.
over the past few years, thanks to new-age Instagramming travellers. As a result, they are attracting more visitors than ever. Though it is almost impossible to view the interiors, you won’t regret gazing upon these opulent havelis from the outside. The Rampuria havelis, famed for the beautiful stonework of their facades in the Old City, near Kote Gate. The inner halls and rooms are adorned with gold work and wooden carvings. A blend of Victorian and Mughal art, the haveli never fails to mesmerise. The Heritage Walk route from Rampuria Haveli to Bikaji ki Tekri, in the old city, offers interesting insights into the architecture, local bazaar scene, cuisine and cultural aspects of the Bikaneri lifestyle.

Shipyard of the desert
Bikaner’s camel breeding farm or National Research Centre on Camels is a unique institution devoted to improving indigenous species by crossbreeding. As a result, it is not unusual to find breeds of camel from as far as West Asia here. For rides into the dunes outside the farm, get in touch with local tour operators. Camel Man (Cell: 09829217331, 09799911117), run by Vijay Singh/Hiteshwar Singh Rathod, is a good option as is Vino Desert Safari (Tel: 2270445, Cell: 09414139245; vinodesertsafari.com).

WHERE TO STAY
There is now no dearth of accommodation in Bikaner.

Heritage Lallgarh Palace (Tel: 0151-2540202) is run by the trust under which it is managed. Within the same complex is Laxmi Niwas Palace (Tel: 2200088), perhaps its most beautiful wing. Basant Vihar

Horse Ecotourism
A recent initiative of the National Research Centre on Equines, Bikaner Campus, has been to conserve and propagate equines through ecotourism. Open to tourists from home and abroad, the campus offers horse riding, pony rides, as well as tonga and buggy rides. Among the species seen here are the elite Marwari horses, the Pride of Rajasthan, Kathiawari horses from Gujarat, Zanskar horses and ponies of Ladakh, horses and polo ponies from Manipur, the French Poitou donkey and White Gujarati donkeys. The Equine Information Centre is a useful addition to the site. One can spend some moments too at the hydrotherapy pool for the natural treatment of equines. The Souvenir shops offer handicraft items, leather items and traditional Rajasthani dried vegetables for sale.

Palace (Tel: 2250675), converted into a heritage hotel in 1993 by the House of Bikaji of namkeen fame. The glitzy Rajvillas Palace (Tel: 2525901-3) is one of Bikaner’s more recent heritage hotels. Karni Bhawan (Tel: 2524701-05) is an art deco bungalow with a pleasing old-fashioned ambience.

Among the cheaper options, there is Thar Exotica (Cell: 09351740020, 09351735073) on NH11, Hotel City Palace (Tel: 2526320-21) on MG Road and RTDC's Dhola Maru (Tel: 2529621) in Sadul Ganj.

FOR MORE HOTELS AND DETAILS, SEE BIKANER ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS ON PAGE 354
Singh into the finest sandgrouse shooting reserve in the country. The palace, built to front an artificial lake, attracted sufficient wintering birds from distant Siberia, as well as a variety of deer. Run as a heritage hotel, Gajner Palace (Tel: 01534-275061) is perfect for a quiet holiday in regal surroundings.

**Timings** 9am-6pm  
**Entry fee** ₹250 per person for those just wanting a ‘dekko’ of the palace

**Deshnoke (30km)**  
The Karni Mata Temple at Deshnoke is known by the epithet of ‘Temple of Rats’. Since it was Karni Mata who had bestowed her blessings on Rao Bika, the royal family has always held the saint-goddess in especially high regard. She is said to protect the city even today against everything from war to disease. Thousands of rats overrun the place today. Apparently the temple has a budget to feed them, and they are protected from cats and other predators by the staff. These rats are called ‘kaba’ by the devotees.

**Katuariasar Village (45 km)**  
Located on the Bikaner-Jaipur road, this village offers visitors a window into the ethnic, rural and cultural life of the region. The inhabitants, the Jasnathjis, are famed for being fire dancers. There are opportunities to walk the sand dunes and enjoy dramatic sunset views here. Herds of chinkaras, desert foxes, rabbits, peacocks, parrots and partridges roam at will in this arid landscape.

**Kolayat (52km)**  
This is where the vibrant Kolayat Fair is held. Kolayat is the sacred site where sage Kapil Muni is supposed to have meditated centuries ago. The 10-day fair takes place in November. The Kolayat Lake has 52 ghats, shaded by banyan trees.

**Location** On the Jaisalmer Road  
**Temple Timings** 6am-10pm
The quintessential Rajasthan experience is all about exploring the venerable history of its Maharajas through the forts and palaces that they raised. But, nothing intrigues the discerning traveller like the little town of Hanumangarh which captures one’s fancy with its archaeological surprises. Once a part of the Indus Valley Civilization, Hanumangarh holds immense historical significance and the adventurer in you will have much to ponder over. Recent excavations
carried out in the region revealed rare artefacts which are of great significance for human history.

Hanumangarh is also a haven for those on a spiritual quest. Its age-old temples are much revered by devotees not only from Rajasthan but also from its neighbouring states. The town once served as the kingdom of the Bhatti kings and was originally called Bhatner. Its namesake fort still stands proud as a reminder of Hanumangarh’s glorious past. Raja Suraj Singh of Bikaner rechristened it to Hanumangarh after he conquered the city.

But why Hanumangarh, one may ask? Well, history suggests that it was a Tuesday when Raja Suraj Singh captured the city and Tuesdays are dedicated to the worship of Lord Hanuman, according to Hindu mythology and belief.

Thanks to its location on the highway connecting Delhi with Multan, Hanumangarh has been an important centre of trade. In its heyday, the city attracted traders from Central Asia, Sindh and Kabul who used it as a stopover on their way to Delhi and Agra. Hanumangarh is also known for being the land of one of Rajasthan’s most revered folk deities, Shri Gogaji, and draws devotees in droves throughout the year. It is also an important agricultural market town. Hanumangarh is also well-known for its cotton and wool weaving.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Bhatner Fort**

Any trip to Rajasthan is incomplete without visiting a fort, and Hanumangarh certainly doesn’t disappoint in that respect. One of the city’s top tourist attractions is the Bhatner Fort. Situated on the banks of the Ghaggar River it is ranked amongst India’s oldest forts. Constructed around 1700 years ago, the fort finds mention in Mughal emperor Akbar’s Ain-e-Akbari. Its construction is credited to Bhupat, the son of King Bhatti of Jaisalmer. The fort has withstood the ravages of time and survived attacks by the likes of Timur and Prithviraj Chauhan. Bikaner’s Raja Surat Singh captured the fort in 1805. Also worth visiting in the fort complex are temples dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Hanuman among others.

**Temple of Shri Gogaji**

You can’t make the mistake of visiting Hanumangarh and not paying obeisance at the shrine of Gogaji, located 120km from the city in Gogamedi village in Nohar tehsil. According to local folklore, Gogaji was a warrior, who is believed to have had spiritual powers. He is also called the God of Snakes; Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner built a temple in his honour around 900 years ago. Standing on an elevated mount, the temple is a fine specimen of a blend of Hindu and Islamic styles of architecture. It is embellished with impressive engravings. The inner sanctum houses an attractive statue of the deity, sitting on a horseback with a snake around his neck and a lance in his hand. Gogaji is equally revered by those of the Hindu and Muslim faith. The best time to visit is in August, when a fair is held to honour the folk deity. Devotees throng the place in droves to pay homage to the saint during the three-day-long fair. It is a popular belief that Gogaji can cure diseases and fulfil the wishes of his true devotees.

**Sir Chhotu Ram Memorial Museum, Sangaria**

The Sir Chhotu Ram Memorial Museum or Gramothan School
Campus Museum in Sangaria, Hanumangarh, makes for an intriguing visit. In 1938, Swami Keshwanand put some stone statues in the school hostel, without a clue about their historical value. When more and more students came to see these statues, he had them shifted to a room. This further inspired Swami Keshwanand and he became a collector of rare things. Today, the museum has an interesting collection of not just statues but also of coins, pictures, costumes, artefacts, and much more.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Hotel Rajiv Palace located on Town-Junction Road has 40 rooms and a veg/non-veg restaurant. Hotel Gill Tower (Cell: 08619135704, 09414246766, 09414877717) located in Jyoti Market has 6 rooms and a veg restaurant. At Town- Junction Road, Sindhi Colony, Hotel Grand Inn (Cell: 09529377777) has 42 rooms and a fairly decent veg restaurant.

AROUND HANUMANGARH

Kalibangan

History and archaeology buffs will find it rewarding to explore the historic archaeological site of Kalibangan in Hanumangarh district. On display at the museum here are excavated finds from the Harappan Site conducted between 1961-69. The exhibits here have been showcased in three different galleries. These galleries are filled with pottery and antiquities; one gallery houses the Pre-Harappan finds, the other two exhibit Harappan artefacts. Other artefacts to be found here include Harappan seals, bangles, terracotta objects, impressive terracotta figurines, bricks, grinders, stone balls and the well-known six fabric pottery repertoire from A to E of Pre-Harappan level of Kalibangan.

Timings 9am-5pm; Friday closed

Entry fee ₹5
There is something about lesser-known border towns that beckon the traveller with even greater force than the desire burning in his heart for more illustrious metropolises. They are an amorphous lot, sucking in the aspects of their parents from either side of the border, and basking in a creedless glory.

Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan’s northernmost district that traces its antecedents in the erstwhile state of Bikaner, retains the joie de vivre and
gregariousness associated with *theth Punjab*—from the early-morning business-as-usual of Dhan Mandi to an up-and-coming educational hub culture reminiscent of the behemoths of Kota and Sikar.

**Anupgarh Fort: checkered history**

The region has bloomed like a desert rose as the bread basket of the state, thanks to canal projects introduced first by Maharaja Ganga Singh, who also lent the district its name, and later, the Indira Gandhi Canal Project.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Anupgarh Fort**

The abandoned citadel of Anupgarh, formerly Chugher, has found an interesting way to emulate the mushroom rocks of romantic desert landscapes. But even as the bricks at the bottom of its hulking exterior peel off at a rapid pace, the structure has managed to draw history and architecture aficionados from all over. Anupgarh Fort is located 120km away from the city proper, quite close to the Indo-Pak border.

The fortress, built in 1689 by a Mughal governor to keep the rebellious Bhattis away, and the eponymous town where it is situated, are witness to a checkered history of military and struggles for power between regional clans and Mughal forces.

**Laila Majnu Mazaar**

Hardly a twenty-minute drive away from Anupgarh is the supposed grave of the fabled star-crossed lovers Laila and Majnu, in a nondescript village called Binjaur. Legend has it that the legendary lovers who now lie buried here belonged to Sindh, and eloped to these parts having escaped the clutches of Laila’s family.

The mazaar is wildly popular not just among local couples but also honeymooners from Rajasthan and Punjab, who come here to pray for their desired partners. If you’re visiting in June, don’t miss the grand 5-day fair that takes place here, during which the residents of the village make eating and lodging arrangements for visitors.

Many may contend that this memorial was built only in the memory of the venerated pair and not on the actual site of their death. However, if you drive due east for a little under an hour on the 27A Road, you could actually come upon a site that has unearthed relics, skeletal remains and structures from the Indus Valley Civilisation at a village named Bror.

**Gurudwara Budhha Johad Sahib**

Legend has it that in 1740, a Massa Ranghar, the chaudhary of Mandiala in Punjab, was put in charge of the Harmandir Sahib, the chief house of worship of the Sikhs. Ranghar desecrated the gurudwara. Two staunch devotees called Sukkha Singh and Mehtab Singh avenged this by decapitating Ranghar and bringing his head to where the peaceful premises of the Gurudwara Budhha Johad Sahib
Gurudwara Budhha Johad Sahib stands. The calm, almost spotless expanse of this historical gurudwara, built in remembrance of this historic event, belies this bloody turn of events. The shrine is located 85km away from Sri Ganganagar city in Dabla village and houses smaller structures and historical paintings. The tree to which Sukkha and Mehtab tethered their horses when they returned with the head, fell down in 2000.

GETTING THERE

Rail Sri Ganganagar Railway Station is connected cities like Delhi, Bikaner, Jhalawar, Mumbai, etc by the Aravalli Express, Toofan Express, BTI SGNR Passenger etc. Auto costs ₹20-40. For sightseeing contact Raj Travels; Cell 09414291995; Full day Tour ₹2,000-2,700 (8am-8pm)

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Hotel Bellevue Inn (Tel: 0154-2463999, 2462999; Cell: 09672463999) on Suratgarh Road, near the railway station, Sri Ganganagar, has 17 rooms and a restaurant. Hotel Pagoda (Tel: 2442364, 2444364, 2443364; Cell: 08560042364) at 14, Gole Bazaar, near the railway station has 22 rooms and a vegetarian restaurant.

SHOPTING

The Punjab influence on Sri Ganganagar permeates nicely into the urban character of the city. The main market as well as streets in the other part of the city buzzes with garment shops selling odhnis, lehengas, saris and traditional Rajasthani footwear. Of late, branded outlets and such have also come up near Dhan Mandi.

The street food stalls continue well into the night, and this can be experienced in the bustling Gole Bazaar, close to both, the railway station and the bus stand. The market is popular for its sweets (another cross-border cultural import) such as Rewari barfi, gulab jamun, jalebi, rasmalai, gond paak and malpuas. Street food stalls throughout Sri Ganganagar sell lip-smacking moth kachori, a snack that enjoys widespread popularity in these parts.
CHURU

THE GATEWAY TO THAR

District Churu  Division Bikaner
Location Near the shifting sand dunes of the Thar Desert on the NH65 connecting Pali to Ambala and is a junction station on the railway line to Bikaner
Distances 51km NW of Jhunjhunu, 87km NW of Sikar, 182km NE of Bikaner, 204km NW of Jaipur, 252km NE of Delhi
Journey time By road 3.5hrs from Jaipur via Sikar, 3hrs from Bikaner via NH11, 6hrs from Delhi via NH9
Route from Jaipur Jaipur-Jhunjhunu Bypass road/Loharu-Sikar Road and NH52; via Kalwar Road and NH52
KARAN KAUSHIK

This tiny little yet important gem of the painterly expanses of the Shekhawati region attracts both art lovers and wildlife enthusiasts. Churu has also been a popular religious destination because of the deeply venerated Salasar Balaji Temple of Lord Hanuman. The painted havelis here are definitely worth a visit and will leave you pretty impressed. Founded in 1620 CE by the Nirban Rajputs, Churu was a part of Bikaner before India became independent. Churu was reconstituted as a separate district in 1948. It’s also known for its extreme temperatures, with the mercury soaring to 50˚ in summers and dropping to 0˚ in winters.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Kothari and Surana Havelis**

Of all the havelis that dot Churu, the ones built by the Kothari and Surana merchants are the most distinctive. Do check out the Malji ka Kamra, near the bus stand, which has statues of women with wings and angels. Initially built as a guest house, the haveli soon turned into a hub for artists. It stands as a fine testament of Italian and Shekhawati styles of architecture. The Heritage Walk route from Malji ka kamra to Nagarsree offers immersive insights to the town’s rich offerings. The **Surana Double Haveli**, is known for its many windows. It was built in 1870 CE and houses the Hawa Mahal, known for its 111 doors and windows. The **Bagla Haveli** is also worth a dekko.

**Shri Shantinath Bhagwan Temple**

This beautifully restored temple will leave you amazed with its attractive interiors which feature beautiful wall paintings and glass work. The temple is lit with colourful lights and is bedecked with impressive chandeliers. Other highlights of the temple include its stunning Portuguese tiles and chequered flooring.

**Sethani Ka Johara**

Built by the wife of billionaire Bhagwandas Bagla, one of the wealthiest merchants of Shekhawati, the **Sethani ka Johara reservoir** was a part of a relief project started to tackle the famine of 1899-1900. Today, the beautiful reservoir serves as a great place for birding. It is said that the water of the reservoir has not dried even once till date.

**WHERE TO EAT**

Krishna Hotel and Restaurant in Mahaveer Plaza serves great Rajasthani and Indian cuisine. You could also visit the **Rathore Lodge and Restaurant** located near the Old Bus Stand in Churu. They have tempting Rajasthani and Punjabi offerings. Do try their bajre ki roti with ker sangri.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Hotel Shakti Palace (Tel: 01562-250555-58), on NH65, has 16 rooms.
Malji Ka Kamra has 10 rooms and 2 suites. They also organise sightseeing and camel and jeep safaris. The Bhawani Kothi (Tel: 250340; Cell 09871716861, 09414084540) behind Shyam Cinema has 10 rooms and a dining area. Then there’s The Grand Shekhawati (Tel: 01562-253333; Cell: 09587662000, 09983003949) has 80 rooms. Facilities include a roof top lounge bar, swimming pool and gym.

and 4 suites. It also has a multicuisine restaurant that serves an amazing Rajasthani thali. Malji Ka Kamra has 10 rooms and 2 suites. They also organise sightseeing and camel and jeep safaris. The Bhawani Kothi (Tel: 250340; Cell 09871716861, 09414084540) behind Shyam Cinema has 10 rooms and a dining area. Then there’s The Grand Shekhawati (Tel: 01562-253333; Cell: 09587662000, 09983003949) has 80 rooms. Facilities include a roof top lounge bar, swimming pool and gym.

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Salasar Balaji Temple (78km) Dedicated to Lord Hanuman, the Salasar Balaji Temple or Salasar Dham is one of the most visited temples in Rajasthan. Every year, grand fairs are organised at the temple on Chaitra and Ashwin Poornima. The temple is constructed using white marble and floral patterns mark the interior.

Tal Chhapar Sanctuary (90km) This 71-sq km park is home to blackbuck, chinkara, desert fox, desert cats, partridges, black ibises, demoiselle cranes and sandgrouse. It is also a haven for raptor birds and the spinytail lizard. The sanctuary, with its savannah-like landscape is best visited early morning or dusk. Sanitation Entry Fee Indians ₹75, foreigners ₹410 Camera Video Indians ₹660, foreigners ₹990 Timings Sunrise-Sunset Vehicle fee ₹275 (Jeep/Car/Mini Bus/Canter); ₹90 (Tonga) Contact Churu Forest Office: Asst Conservator of Forests; DFO Tel: 01562-250938.

Salasar Balaji Temple (78km) Dedicated to Lord Hanuman, the Salasar Balaji Temple or Salasar Dham is one of the most visited temples in Rajasthan. Every year, grand fairs are organised at the temple on Chaitra and Ashwin Poornima. The temple is constructed using white marble and floral patterns mark the interior.
JODHPUR

FEELING BLUE

District Jodhpur Division Jodhpur
Location At the edge of the Thar Desert, in western Rajasthan
Distances 253km S of Bikaner, 280km SE of Jaisalmer, 344km SW of Jaipur, 600km SW of Delhi
Journey time By road 5hrs from Jaisalmer, 5.5hrs from Jaipur, 9.5hrs from Delhi
Route from Jaipur NH48 to Beawar via Dudu and Ajmer; NH14 to Bar via Sendra; state highway to Jodhpur via Bilara and Dangiaras

There is something magical about Jodhpur. Even after visiting the city a couple of times it’s not possible to peel away all the layers that intrigue and excite one’s curiosity of this desert outpost, which became rich and prosperous because of its strategic location on the old caravan route. A part of you will always be the first time tourist, marvelling at angles and perspectives hitherto unexplored, discovering treasures amidst everything you have taken for

Prerna Singh & Ranee Sahaney
granted whenever you have visited the Blue City. So don’t be surprised when you find yourself exulting anew in the rediscovery of Jodhpur’s architecture, colours and its history on your next visit.

Rao Jodha of the Kannauj family founded the house of Jodhpur in Marwar, the Land of ‘Maroo’ or desert, thus named because of the region’s extremely hostile living conditions. Their first capital was at Mandore, an honour which went to Jodhpur after the Mehrangarh Fort was constructed towards the end of the 15th century. The fort was built with defence in mind, and the slopes and the sudden twists and turns in the structure were meant to hinder the movement of enemy elephants. There was good reason for this too—the state was often at war with the neighbouring Rajputs and Mughals.

Nevertheless, the Rathore clan held on to its possessions and expanded over time. It eventually rose to become one of the strongest and biggest kingdoms of Rajasthan, along with Mewar and Amber.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

Jodhpur Town can be covered in two to three days in a leisurely manner. About three days should be kept aside for all excursions (see *Around Jodhpur*). While heritage properties such as Rohet and Sardar Samand Palace don’t offer too much by way of sightseeing, they are excellent stay options, provided their high tariffs are not a deterrent. A day could also be devoted to a visit to Osian where you can go on a camel safari or stay at a night camp. Keep aside a day for the Bishnoi village safari.

**Umaid Bhawan Palace**

The palace is a magnificent structure that’s representative of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture, and is made of sandstone that has been put together without the use of mortar. Umaid Singh, the then Maharaja of Jodhpur, ordered the construction of the palace in order to give relief and work to the people affected by the famine of the late 1920s. The project took 15 years to complete and gave employment to 3,000 artisans. In 1977, following the abolition of the privy purses, the current royal Maharaja Gaj Singh converted a part of the palace into a hotel. Today, the palace is divided into three sections: the royal apartments, the hotel that is now run by the Taj Group, and a museum. The royal wing is closed to tourists. The museum has a display of royal artefacts collected over the years, such as crystals, clocks, crockery and anything else that might have caught the royal fancy. The clock collection is perhaps the most interesting of all.

- **Location** East of the town, adjacent to the cantonment
- **Museum Entry Fee** Indian `30, foreigner `100
- **Camera** Not allowed
- **Timings** 9am-5pm

**Mehrangarh Fort**

The most imposing structure in Jodhpur is also the biggest fort in Rajasthan. Built atop a 150-m high hill in 1459 by Rao Jodha, the fort has withstood many a battle, as is evident today from the marks of cannonballs on the fort walls. The entrance ticket has to be bought at the main entrance at Jai Pol, built by Maharaja Man Singh. The view from here, of the entire city, is simply breathtaking. To the south you can see the Umaid Bhawan Palace and closer to the fort, the Old City, famously painted blue to ward off Marwar’s terrible heat.

There is a museum here with an exquisite collection of artefacts, including some very fascinating war booty and even more fascinating armoured (some of the deadliest looking swords one might ever get to see). The first several rooms of
the museum are arranged around a courtyard called Sangar Chowki, where coronations were held until 1952. Inside, in the delicately worked sandstone apartments, there is a wonderful collection of palanquins and elephant seats (howdahs), the outstanding one being a silver howdah gifted by Shahjahan. It is decorated with a relief of lions, whose faces look peculiarly like shocked Rajput warriors. Up one level is a room full of excellent miniature paintings in the Marwar style of the 18th and the 19th centuries. After this comes a series of apartments decorated with gilded wood, Murano glassware, Chinese tiles, murals, an opulent mix-and-match from different regions and historical periods that covers every available square inch of space. The royal splendour of the first family of Marwar is evident in the spread of costumes on display.

The Zenana Mahal and the Phool Mahal have frescoes and stained glass. If you want to pick up souvenirs, the museum gift shop has designer items as well as stalls run by local craftpersons.

When you’re done with the museum, turn left and walk 500m past the Chamunda Mata Temple to catch wonderful views of the Old City. Return to the right of the museum to exit the fort via Loha Pol, where you can see handprints of Raja Man Singh’s widows, who committed sati in 1843. On your way down you’ll pass Rao Jodha Ka Phalsa, where folk musicians will greet you. This used to be the last point of the old fort in the times of Rao Jodha. Walk past Fateh Pol and turn right for Jai Pol to exit the fort. To get to the Old City go straight down from Fateh Pol.

The Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park next to Mehrangarh Fort is best explored with a naturallist. Adults can enjoy a ride on the zipline guided tour around Mehrangarh Fort and through Rao Jodha Park (Rs 2,000 pp/1hr).

- **Entry fee** Indians ₹200, foreigners ₹600
- **Elevator** (1-way) ₹50
- **Audio guide** ₹180
- **Timings** 9am-5pm
- **Guide fee** ₹400-700

Jaswant Thada memorials of Jodhpur’s past royalties

- **Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park**
  - **Location** Next to Mehrangarh Fort
  - **Entry fee** ₹100, Free for students
  - **Naturalist guide** ₹200
  - **Timings** April-Sept 7am-6.30pm; Oct-March 8am-5.30pm
  - **www.raojodhapark.com**

**Sardar Government Museum**

There is an interesting story about the building of Jodhpur’s Umaid Bhawan that goes: in the 1940s, as the stately royal palace came to its completion, Maharaja Umaid Singh, who was quite knowledgeable about furniture, ordered it, along with the furnishings, for the 370-odd rooms of the palace, from Maples & Co. in London. Unfortunately, World War II was on, and a German U-Boat sank the ship on its way to India. But the maharaja wasn’t one to give

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**Jaswant Thada**

This is a beautiful marble cenotaph that was built by Sardar Singhji in the memory of his father, Maharaja Jaswant Singh II, who ruled over Marwar in the latter part of the 19th century. Jaswant Singh tried to set up a welfare state and was known for his reform measures. The grounds around it became the crematoria for subsequent rulers.
in. He tasked the Polish artist, Stefan Norblin, who was doing the paintings for his opulent residence, with furniture duties as well.

The quintessential insistence on luxury and fine craftsmanship that one associates with Rajasthan's erstwhile maharajas is unmistakable, not just in the Art Deco style and sumptuous sprawl of the Umaid Bhawan, but also in its humbler cousin, the Sardar Government Museum. The museum's assemblage of European glassware and crockery, curious iron locks (one even shaped like a scorpion), ornate brassware, clay toys, Persian-style ‘ganjifa’ playing cards and leather accoutrements, are a convincing showcase of the life and times of the royal family.

**Timings** 9:45am-5:15pm; Monday closed

### SHOPPING

Jodhpur’s bazaars are a riot of colour and tempting handicrafts, foodie pleasures and people-watching delights. Evocative vignettes play out as local men wander past with colourful turbans and handsome moustaches trailed by their women folk a-glitter with mirror work skirts and odhnis in the old city.

The mystery that surrounds the colour blue in some of the old houses in the Old Quarter is somewhat unveiled through local lore. While there’s one belief that they were painted blue to deter termites others have it that it was a sign to indicate the home of a high caste Brahmin!

From spices to fabrics, from local cheese to silver jewellery, from leather goods to wooden furniture and artefacts, Jodhpur's bazaars are a tantalising treasure trove to explore. From the drool-worthy snacks and savouries, biryanis and sweetmeats, to be found in its khau gullies to the exotic dishes to be sampled in hotels and restaurants, eating out will never be the same again for you.

### WHERE TO STAY

Jodhpur offers plenty of options for accommodation if you are looking for a luxury holiday, especially in terms of a heritage hotel experience. There are also mid-range and budget options available.

**Heritage**

The **Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace** (Tel: 0291-2510101) is the most obvious option for those who can afford a royal experience. **Ajit Bhawan** (Tel: 2513333, 2510410), near the Circuit House was built to be the home of Umaid Singh's younger brother. The heritage hotel offers luxury tents and exquisitely done up rooms. An excellent heritage-cum-homestay option is the **Ratan Vilas Haveli** (Tel: 2614418), on Loco Shed Road; a 1920s villa set in a large garden, centred around a pretty courtyard, it has interiors dotted with exquisite antiques.

**Others**

The **Taj Hari Mahal** (Tel: 2439700), on Residency Road, although not a heritage hotel, is a fine blend of tradition and modernity in terms of hospitality, ambience and service.

**Nai Sarak**, to the south of the Clock Tower, also has a number of mid-range hotels, catering to businessmen rather than tourists.

**Mapple Abhay, Jodhpur** (Tel: 2542980) is a straightforward, 4-star hotel near the bus stand, which is not in a great-looking area. The best mid-range option in town is **Devi Bhawan** (Tel: 2512215), a friendly guest house set around a spacious garden.

### GETTING THERE

- **Air** Jodhpur Airport is connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur and Udaipur.
- **Rail** Jodhpur Jn is connected to Delhi (Sarai Rohilla Station) and other major cities in the state and the country.
- **Road** Travellers from Delhi should turn off NH48 on to NH25 at Beawar. At Bar, turn right onto NH112 for Jodhpur Via Nimaj **BUS** Jodhpur is well connected to major cities in the state by private as well as RSRTC buses.
rooms are large and clean, with antique wooden furniture. If you’re in Jodhpur to relax and don’t care much if the television works or not, this is the place for you.

For more hotels and details, see Jodhpur Accommodation Listings on page 355

AROUND JODHPUR

Kaylana Lake (11km)
On the western outskirts of Jodhpur, about 11km from the city, the Kaylana Lake is a picnic spot where visitors can go boating.

Mandore (9km)
Mandore, the erstwhile capital of Marwar, lies on the outskirts of Jodhpur, about 9km north of the main city. The Mandore Gardens today are better known for the cenotaphs of the former rulers, built not as chhatris but like temples. The Hall of Heroes and the Shrine of the Three Hundred Million Gods here are worth a dekko. Further on lie the ruins of the abandoned Mandore City, which today serve as the stage for a number of cultural programmes. Also at Mandore is a temple to the 16th-century mystic poet Mirabai.

- **Entry Fee** Indians ₹30, foreigners ₹300
- **Camera** Still ₹80, Video ₹200
- **Timings** 8am-5.30pm, Tuesdays closed

Machiya Safari Park (12km)
When visiting the Kaylana Lake, do make a short stop at this park for its stunning birdwatching points and blissful sunsets. You can also spot denizens of the forest like deer, desert foxes, monitor lizards, blue bulls, hare, wild cats, mongoose, and monkeys.

- **Entry Fee** Indians ₹30, foreigners ₹300
- **Camera** Still ₹80, Video ₹200
- **Timings** 8am-5.30pm

Jhalamand (12km)
A small hamlet on the Jodhpur-Pali Road, there is very little of interest to the tourist in Jhalamand itself. However, **Hotel Jhalamand Garh** (Cell: 09351514444), the old castle of Jhalamand, a fiefdom of Jodhpur, is a becalming retreat, with painted accents and archways et al. The rooms are plush and have an old-world grandeur. The terrace offers a beautiful view of Jodhpur. They arrange jeep safaris. Taxis to Jodhpur cost ₹2,500 (return) for a full day.

Osian (66km)
The Jain Mahavira Temple here is famous for the idol of Lord Mahavira in the sanctum sanctorum, which is said to be made of cow’s milk and mud, with a coat of gold.

- **Entry Fee** Indians free; foreigners ₹10
- **Camera** Still ₹50, video ₹100

The **Sachiyay Mata Mandir** is the most important of the 16 Hindu temples here.

- **Aarti Timings** 6am and 8pm

A trip to Osian is incomplete without a camel ride. Tourists can stay in a desert camp (open/tented) and also go on a camel safari. The most popular ones are Reggie’s Camel Camp (Cell: 09928009602) and Camp Thar (Cell: 09982823333).

Sardar Samand (55km)
This isolated lake and palace in Pali district is a haven for birdwatchers. Built by the Maharaja of Jodhpur as an Art Deco hunting lodge, the **Sardar Samand Palace** (Cell: 08875015807, 08875004150) is now a heritage hotel. Taxis cost ₹2,700 for a day-trip.

Kheechan (135km)
Every winter, thousands of demoiselle cranes migrate to Kheechan, a village 5km from Phalodi, where they are fed and protected by the villagers. Locally the cranes are known as *kurjan*. They’re found at the Pakshi Chugga Ghar run by locals, where the cranes are fed grain. The haveli of the Dadhas, Lal Niwas (Tel: 02925-223813) has been turned into a heritage hotel. Adjacent is the Museum of Jain and Oriental Art, which houses artefacts and manuscripts. A day-trip by taxi costs ₹2,700-3,000.

- **Museum Entry Fee** ₹20
- **Timings** 8am-5pm

     Entry Fee for guests at Lal Niwas.
Nobody can be immune to the charms of Jaisalmer. The Jaisalmer Fort towering above the monochromatic desert landscape has a charm of its own. Brightly painted houses, cobbled streets, men in colourful turbans proudly giving a twirl to their thick moustaches, women’s mirror-embroidered skirts catching the glint of the sun, life inside the fort goes on as it has for centuries, the changes in lifestyle mostly functional. This is said to be one of the few ‘living forts’ in the world and was one of the five Hill Forts of Rajasthan which were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2013.

It’s also a world that has managed to survive for long. The fort, whose walls chronicle the deeds of its Rawals and the riches of its traders, is one of Rajasthan’s most celebrated living forts. Its havelis speak of the long trains of camels that trekked across deserts to reach Sindh and Afghanistan and West Asia, carrying silver, cloth and expensive goods. Its musicians sing the songs of its daily existence, of the beauty of their desires, and this music will echo in your ears for long.

Going to Jaisalmer is about learning these melodies and hearing these narratives. Going to Jaisalmer is also about visiting the desert and a far outpost there-in, an outpost built out of the same sandstone that...
stretches all around. Here you will realise that the desert is not an endless sequence of sand dunes—but there won’t be any reason for disappointment. For the sand dunes have an inescapable magnetism that will draw you in, just as Jaisalmer effortlessly does.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

The muted colours of the desertscape, the radiance of the traditional lives and the artistry embedded in stone are the highlights of Jaisalmer. Three days should be sufficient to see the place. Factor in more time if you want to go on a camel safari and camp out under the desert sky (see Around Jaisalmer on page 220).

**Famous Jain temples of Jaisalmer**

Jaisalmer Fort

From the outside, the fort looks small and toy-like, a fragile castle built on a miniature hill. Made of yellow sandstone, it turns golden as the sunlight falls on it. You have to pass through a series of gates as you follow the flagstone road. The first gate is located at Gopa Chowk. You enter the fort from the First Fort Gate at Gopa Chowk. Yellow stone towers all around, often becoming golden, and stone-paved passages wind through a series of massive and intricately positioned gates. All of it is teeming with life and history.

The fort walls are a mute chronicle of the lives of the Rawals (rulers), of the wealthy merchants who went back and forth, of the camel trains which travelled across the deserts carrying silver, cloth and other expensive goods to Sindh, Afghanistan and parts of West Asia, of attacks by armies from Jodhpur and Delhi. You will find the grand tales still narrated by the road-side folk-singers, the music echoing in your ears for long. Rawal Jaisal, a ruler belonging to the Bhatti clan of Rajputs and who gave his name to the town, is said to have started constructing the fort in 1156 CE. Later rulers added to it. Throughout the fort’s history, people have been living in the fort, and this adds to the sheer extraordinariness of the place.

The last gate, called the Hawa Pol, opens into the main courtyard of the fort or the Dussehra Chowk, located below the Rajmahal. From here streets with touristy shops, hotels, restaurants, temples and people’s homes lead to various parts of the fort. Enlivening these winding lanes are children coming back from school, women cleaning and washing, and milkmen with metal pots on their motorcycles. You can walk up to the ramparts and the numerous bastions, and absorb the stunning views of the town outside the fort and the rocky landscape beyond. Mornings and evenings are the best time to catch the panorama.

- **Fort Entry** free
  - **Contact** Tel: 02992-252981

**Rajmahal**

The palace of the former rulers is a seven-storey structure and towers above the Dussehra Chowk, the central square. The palace was built over many generations and the various buildings are connected by low and narrow passages, a protective measure against invaders seen in most palaces of Rajasthan. The main building dates from the 19th century and it boasts of beautifully carved stone. You can catch spectacular views are from the rooftop. Or, stand in the square and marvel at the intricate stonework on the façade of the palace building. One of the wing has been converted into the
Jaisalmer Fort Palace Museum and Heritage Centre.

- **Entry fee** Indian ₹100, foreigner ₹500

**Timings** 9 am-6 pm, daily

**Jain temples**

There are seven beautiful Jain temples inside the fort. Delicately carved in yellow sandstone and built in the 15th and 16th centuries. The temples were well-maintained and were revamped in the 1970s.

The **Parsvanath Temple**, dedicated to the 22nd Tirthankara, is the largest of the lot and the most impressive. The entry is through a magnificently carved ‘torana’ or gateway with an image of Parsvanath at the top. Inside the mandap, the ceiling contains a sculpture of a demon-like head with five bodies. The main idol of the temple is said to have been brought here from Lodhurva, the earlier capital of the Bhatti Rajputs of Jaisalmer (also see *Around Jaisalmer* on page 219).

Nearby is the **Chandraprabhu Temple** dedicated to the eighth Tirthankara. The sanctum sanctorum has four images of Chandraprabhu, and outside it, are finely sculpted statues of other tirthankaras. There is an upper gallery with marble images of Parsvanath. The **Rishabhadeva Temple** is known for its beautiful sculptures, especially the numerous ‘apsaras’ or heavenly maidens on its pillars. The **Sambhavanath Temple** is a dimly lit chamber, and steps from the temple lead down to a basement called Gyan Bhandar—a tiny, fascinating 16th-century library housing a number of ancient manuscripts, some of them dating to the 11th century. The other Jain temples are Shitalnath, Shantinath and Kunthanath.

- **Location** 150m SW of Dussehra Chowk

**Entry fee** Free

**Camera**

Indian ₹50, foreigner ₹150

**Timings** 8am-12pm, daily

There’s also a Hindu temple dedicated to Laxminath nearby, not of note architecturally, but interesting because it’s the oldest temple in the fort, built by Rawal Jaisal during its construction. It was damaged during Khalji’s invasion and then renovated in the 15th century.

**Gadsisar**

Just outside the town is this elegant tank, which was earlier the source of water supply to Jaisalmer. The tank was built in the 14th century by Rawal Gadsi Singh with the idea of collecting precious rainwater (remember this is the heart of the Indian desert). Now the Indira Gandhi Canal supplies water to the tank and it is, therefore, never dry. There are many pavilions and shrines on the tank’s banks, and a domed pavilion to its centre. Gadsisar, also called Gadisagar, is a popular picnic spot and people come here to shoot the breeze, feed the numerous catfish in the pond and also enjoy boat rides.

- **Location** 1km south-east of fort

**Entry fee** Free

**Boat rides** Paddle
Havelis
The wealthy merchants of Jaisalmer chose to be remembered by posterity by commissioning some of the most ornate residences human beings ever built. These havelis were built in the 18th and the 19th centuries when trade was most lucrative, before the rise of sea trade and the Bombay (now Mumbai) harbour made land routes redundant. The havelis are made of yellow Jaisalmer sandstone and are adorned with elaborate façades, including ‘jaali’ (latticed screens) and carved balconies. The most skilful stonework is done on the outside, reminding you that the havelis are a show of wealth more than anything else. In some of the havelis, the top portions are later additions and this is quite clearly discernible in the quality of stonework.

One of the heartening developments is that many new buildings are using traditional sandstone and employing local stone carvers. The new buildings in the city don’t quite match the elegance of the heritage buildings, but they bolster Jaisalmer’s unique look and feel.

Patwon-ki-Haveli
The biggest and the most ornate of the havelis is the Patwon-ki-Haveli, a set of five houses adjacent to each other, built by five Jain brothers in the first half of the 19th century. The most impressive work is on the outside, and the work is so intricate that the more time you spend studying it, the more it reveals itself to you. The multi-storeyed buildings are constructed in the traditional style – rooms set around a central courtyard. There are remnants of exquisite paintings on some of the walls; many walls have lovely ‘jharokhas’ (projecting stone windows) opening out to the courtyard or the street below. From the terrace, there are great views of the fort. One of the havelis now has a shop selling brocades and embroidered textiles to tourists.

Location Outside the fort; 1km NE of Gopa Chowk
Entry fee Indians ₹100, foreigners ₹250
Timings 9 am-6 pm, daily

Nathmal-ki-Haveli
Built by two brothers in the late 19th century, this haveli is still partly inhabited. The exterior is beautifully carved. The family living here tries to earn money by selling paintings and artefacts to visitors.

Location Old town, north of Gopa Chowk
Entry fee Free
Timings 10am-5pm, daily
The Eocene Epoch in Jaisalmer's Bandha village in recent years. The region is known for its rich paleontological history, and fossilised tree trunks, sedimentary rocks and sea shells from eons ago have been traditionally found here. The villages of Sanu and Kuldhara too have been part of these findings.

Stone crockery, sculptures and jewellery from the 7th-9th century BC, clay models, decorative pots, metal artefacts, carved plinths and shikharas, rare inscriptions and embroidered dresses—there is a lot to see here. The glass case displaying a stuffed Great Indian Bustard and a Tilor—birds of the desert—are a huge draw. There’s also the intricate carving and relief work of the 12th-century sculptures and architectural fragments from the temple ruins of Kiradu and Lodhrua. There is a war-time aircraft of the Indian Air Force at the campus, which is a selfie point.

- **Timings** 9.45am-5.15pm; Monday closed.

**Jaisalmer War Museum and Longewala War Memorial**

The drive to the border outpost of Longewala, opens up on the terrain where the famous battle of Longewala, in the Indo-Pak war of 1971, was fought. The battle ended in the annihilation of the poorly planned Pakistani offensive, including the decimation of a large bulk of their tanks—Chinese T-59s that were an upgrade to the iconic Soviet T-59 A model. The wrecker-in-chief of the Indian Air Force, the Hawker Hunter, also stands on display here. On display too is the captured Pakistani Patton tank. The claims that the famed US tank couldn’t be destroyed by anything were silenced in the 1965 war between the neighbours when havildar Abdul Hamid demolished three of them with his recoilless gun.

The open display at the museum, reminiscent of a company base camp, with its trenches, bunkers, and splintered paths, also showcases one of these anti-tank weapons, which were put to good use in both wars.

The engaging light-and-sound show narrates the battle in detail, supplemented by some impressive laser animation and voiceover— a must-do.

- **Entry fee** ₹30
- **Sound & Light Show** ₹100
- **Timings** Summer 8.15pm - 8.45 pm; Winter 6.15 - 6.45

**WHERE TO STAY**

Jaisalmer has many stay options inside and outside the fort. While staying inside the fort can be romantic, the accommodation here is basic. Besides, vehicles go only till the main courtyard of the fort, and the luggage needs to be carried manually till the hotel.

**Heritage**

The hotels and guest houses in the fort are small establishments, and are mostly converted old houses
and havelis. **Hotel Killa Bhawan** (Tel: 02992-251204) is a small place with beautiful décor and a great location. **Hotel Jaisal Castle** (Tel: 252362) is situated high on the ramparts with spacious but average rooms. **Desert Boys Guest House** (Tel: 253091, Cell: 09571600986) is a family-run place and some of their rooms are later additions to an older residence. **Narayan Niwas Palace** (Tel: 252408) in Malka Prol, near Jain Bhawan, is a 19th-century ancestral property converted and restored into a luxurious heritage hotel.

**Others**

- **Fort Rajwada** (Tel: 253233) is a lavish place with ornate architecture and interiors, situated about 3km

A happy rider and an equally happy camel

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- **Hotel Jaisal Palace** (Tel: 07340025200), at Gandhi Chowk in Talalaria Pada, is one of the older hotels in Jaisalmer. Its sister concern **Hotel Moonlight** (Tel: 07340025200) at Hanuman Circle, near the post office, is considerably more architecturally appealing.

*For more hotels and details, see Jaisalmer Accommodation Listings on page 357*

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**AROUND JAISALMER**

Ideally, about three days should be kept aside to see places around Jaisalmer. While Bada Bagh, Lodhurva, Amar Sagar, Mool Sagar and Kuldhara can be covered in half a day if you do not spend too much time over them, Sam and Khuri need more time. Barmer should be done as a full-day trip, and you can halt en route at the Akal Wood Fossil Park. Taxis are the best way to travel. Taxi fare `5/km; `1,250/half-day (60km); `2,700 (130km)/ full-day. Barmer Fare: `5,400 (return).

- **Bada Bagh** (6km)

  The cenotaphs of the Bhatti rulers are located at Bada Bagh. The cenotaphs can be divided into two distinct styles - pyramidal and domed, with the latter being a little more impressive. There’s an array of windmills close by, creating a peculiar contrast.

  - **Entry fee** Indians `100, foreigners `150, students `50

  **Timings**

  8am-7pm

  West from Bada Bagh is Amar Sagar, with a 19th-century Jain shrine whose architecture is a fascinating mix of temple and haveli. Ten kilometres west of Amar Sagar is Lodhurva, the former capital of the Bhatti Rajputs, which was destroyed by Muslim invaders in the 11th-century. Lodhurva’s main attraction is a Jain temple dedicated to the Tirthankara Parsvanath.

- **Lodurva** (16km)

  Surrounded by a great expanse of golden sand dunes, it was the ancient bastion of the Bhatti rulers, before Rawal Jaisal established Jaisalmer state. While not much remains of its flourishing past, the Jain temple here, raised in yellow sandstone and dedicated to the
23rd Jain Tirthankara Parshvnath, is still in pristine condition. It is remarkable for the grandeur of its elaborate gateway or toran, its beautiful stone carvings, jali work and the aath dhatu (eight metals) sculpture representation of the wish-fulfilling Tree of Life. As Jaisalmer lay on the old Silk Route traces of Chinese influence can also be seen in the temple’s pagoda-style architectural lines.

Kuldhara (18km)
Ghost yarns are woven around the precincts of this largely deserted village making it a huge draw for those who love exploring haunted places. Once a prosperous desert town, it was apparently abandoned overnight, centuries ago by the Paliwal Brahmin community, leaving behind an intriguing mysterious legacy.

Sam (42km)
On the road that leads to the Pakistan border, on the edge of the Desert National Park, are glorious white mounds of clean dry sand. Here you will find picture-postcard images of the desert: camels silhouetted against a setting sun, surrounded by glistening sand. Hordes of tourists descend on the sand dunes in the evening pursued by camel drivers urging the tourists to take a ride.

During the high season (Oct-Feb), many travel companies pitch their tents here. Packages include transport from Jaisalmer in the late afternoon, dinner, entertainment and night-stay, breakfast next morning and transportation back to Jaisalmer. Camel drivers charge ₹200-300 upwards for camel rides. Ganesh Travels (Tel: 02992-250138; 09929280777), near the city palace, run by camel drivers, and Sahara Travels (Cell: 09414319921), owned by ‘Mr Desert’ and located outside the fort near Akhayprol, are the most popular travel agencies and offer two-day jaunts starting at ₹2,000 per person. RTDC Tourist Reception Centre can help you find a good agent for a safari.

Khuri (40km)
The small village of Khuri is another option to experience the beauty of sand dunes. It’s largely peaceful despite its popularity. The sand dunes here contain some vegetation, providing many solitary-tree-on-the-dune photo frames. There are many guest houses in this region, which are basic thatched mud huts.

POKARAN Tracing the unknown

Famous as the site of India’s nuclear tests, the small town of Pokaran lies on the highway that links Jodhpur to Jaisalmer. It’s 110km east of Jaisalmer and 171km north of Jodhpur. While the chief attraction here is Fort Pokaran, with its museum and heritage hotel, there is a lot to be explored around Pokaran too.

The museum is small but interesting, housing artefacts ranging from armory to costumes to miniatures, which have been collected by the Pokaran family over the years (the Thakurs of Pokaran were nobles in the darbar of Jodhpur).

- **Entry Free** Indians ₹40; foreigners ₹100,
- **Timings** Sunrise-sunset, open till 9.30pm during the Ramdeora Fair

A part of Fort Pokaran (Cell: Jai Singhji 0966407170) was converted into a heritage hotel by the present Thakur and his wife, with the aim of promoting Pokaran as a tourist destination. The rooms are vibrant, luxurious and very tastefully done.

Village safaris from Pokaran include visits to nearby potters’ villages, where people specialized in terracotta work, and weavers’ villages, assisted by the Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti (Tel: 02925-222272; Cell: 09414123510). This NGO was set up in 1991 with the idea of streamlining the production and marketing of textiles woven by its member villages in Jodhpur and Jaisalmer districts. These textiles are woven in the traditional ‘pattu’ style of weaving, with ‘kashida’ or ornamentation on the surface of the fabric. While the original were mostly made of wool, Urmul Trust has also started providing the weavers with cotton yarn to cater to urban tastes and preferences.

About 10km east of Pokaran is Ramdeora, the temple built around the samadhi of Bhagwan Ramdeoji Maharaj, revered by Muslims as Ramshahpir or Ramapir. He was a Tanwa Rajput, who was looked upon as a reincarnation of Lord Krishna by the Hindus. Legend has it that five ‘pir’ (spiritual guide) from Mecca came to test his miraculous powers and after being convinced of them, paid him homage. He is thus revered by both Hindus and Muslims. Ramdeoji took ‘samadhi’ in 1459. A tomb was built at the spot and subsequently a temple was constructed. Every year, a fair is held around August-September, when devotees from all over throng the temple.

By Prerna Singh
DESERT NATIONAL PARK

THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD STORY

District Jaisalmer Division Jodhpur
Location In the Thar Desert in southwest Rajasthan, next to the border with Pakistan
Distances 42km SW of Jaisalmer, 317km NW of Jodhpur, 689km W of Jaipur via Jodhpur
Journey time By road 1hr from Jaisalmer, 6.5hrs from Jodhpur, 12hrs from Jaipur
Route from Jaipur NH48 to Beawar via Ajmer; NH14 to Bar; state highway to Jodhpur via Bilara and Dangiwas; state highway to Pokaran via Balesar and Dechhu; NH15 to Jaisalmer via Odania and Chandan; district road to Sam Village (Desert NP) via Dedha

Amit Mahajan

The drive from Jaisalmer till the sand dunes close to Khuri Village on the edge of the Desert National Park is hard and rocky. Yet, the very first sight of the sand dunes is picture-perfect, like a painting with perfectly contoured shadows of ripples and undulating crests.

It is easy to see how deserts can be one of the most incredibly beautiful, thrilling, eerie, treacherous and inhospitable places on earth, all at the same time. And it's easy to see why people flock to gaze at them, to get their photographs clicked with camels in the foreground and sunset in the background. It is an out-of-the-world experience.

The Wildlife Department officials will advise you that the best way to see wildlife, especially the rare Great Indian Bustard, in the Desert National Park, is to go to Sudashri, about 55km southwest of Jaisalmer. Set off early in the morning, your jeep hurrying across on the deserted pebbly flats and the brownish piedmont plateau past the famous sand dunes near Sam, where you can stop for just enough time to take in the red sun rising over the clean golden sand. Some dunes spill on to the road, the wilderness attempting to reclaim the tract. Turn off the road, which goes on to the Indo-Pak border and, in earlier times, would have led into Sindh.

Sudashri is a 2,000-acre area enclosed with barbed wire and, at first sight, the enclosure seems like an unlikely place to visit for a wildlife experience—patches of clumpy sewan grass, a few shrubs and, an occasional tree, mainly acacia. Plus six camels wandering around, grazing busily. You will be offered a choice between walking and riding a camel cart to traverse the 4-km long trail. You might want to choose the unknown entity—the camel cart, accompanied by a guide.
Often, you will stop, while binoculars are passed around to focus on the desert landscape which is actually teeming with life. The sparseness of the vegetation, you will realise, in fact, provides an excellent wildlife viewing opportunity. There is far less occasion for the animals to disappear than there would be in a heavily wooded jungle. The possibilities to observe animals and birds are better, even when they have taken shelter.

All of a sudden, coming into view is your first Great Indian Bustard. Even the guide is quite excited, because they consider it a privilege to get a sighting of these shy creatures. Further away, a chinkara breaks cover from behind a bush and streaks away swiftly. There’s another movement close by another bush. A small and hairy creature darts away—a desert fox. High above the arid sand a tawny eagle looks for prey.

Spying 17 or 18 Great Indian Bustard on your ride on a single day is considered quite a record. No wonder your guide feels what a privilege it is to get a sighting!

**ABOUT DESERT NP**

An area of 3,162 sq km in the desert was declared a sanctuary in 1980 to preserve its fascinating and fragile habitat. There are 72 villages within the park. Some enclosures of barbed wire, with water holes, have been created, to which the villagers and their cattle are denied access. This is meant to preserve the grasslands so that they can become wildlife enclaves. **Sudashri** is the best maintained of these enclaves, and the best place to see the fauna. The most outstanding of the fauna is the Great Indian Bustard, **GIB** to the initiated. Apart from the bustard, several other birds are also found in this national park.

The park is to the southwest of Jaisalmer. The villages of Sam and Khuri lie on the edge of the park and are easily accessible from Jaisalmer. Sam is 45km west of Jaisalmer and Sudashri is 10km SE of Sam. Khuri is 40km SW of Jaisalmer and Sudashri is about 8km further on, heading northwest.

**Contact** DCF, Desert NP, Mysalgar Road, Jaisalmer; Tel: 02992-252489

**Entry fee** Indian ₹50, foreigner ₹200, Student ₹20, **Park timings** 6am-6pm, lunch 1.30-2pm, Sundays closed

**Vehicle fee** ₹245 (Gypsy)

**Cameras** Still free, video Indian ₹730, foreigner ₹1,090

**GETTING THERE**

Air Nearest airport: Jaisalmer airport (New) (15km/20min) operates 7 flights/day which connects to Mumbai, Delhi, (Oct-March) Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Surat (all year). Taxi from Jaisalmer Airport to Khuri costs ₹2,300 and to Sam ₹2,000; another option is Jodhpur airport (280km/5hrs). Taxis from Jodhpur, charge about ₹3,800-₹5,500

Do remember that rates fluctuate during the high season

Rail Nearest railhead: Jaisalmer Railway Station, is well-connected to Delhi by the Delhi-Jaisalmer Express (19hrs), which starts from Old Delhi Railway Station. Mumbai offers connections up to Jodhpur via Ahmedabad (Surya Mail). From Jodhpur, there’s the Jodhpur-Jaisalmer Express. Taxi costs ₹2,300 to Khuri and ₹2,000 to Sam

Road Jaisalmer is at the far western end of India, tucked into the hip of Rajasthan. Though it is just a few degrees off the same latitude as Jaipur, you have to arch up to Bikaner or way down to Jodhpur to get here from the state capital. So road journeys to this desert town tend to be long. Only travellers coming in from the north should use the Bikaner route

**BUS** Luxury buses connect Jaisalmer to Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaipur

**NEAREST AIRPORTS**

- Jaisalmer Airport
- Jodhpur Airport
- Bikaner
- Jaipur

**NEAREST RAILHEADS**

- Jaisalmer Railway Station
- Old Delhi Railway Station
- Ahmedabad
- Surat
- Bikaner
- Jaipur

**NEAREST TOWNS/VILLAGES**

- Jaisalmer
- Bikaner
- Khuri
- Sam
- Jaipur

**ENTRY FEES**

- ₹50 (Indian)
- ₹200 (Foreigner)
- ₹20 (Student)

**PARK TIMINGS**

- 6am-6pm
- Lunch: 1.30-2pm
- Closed on Sundays

- **Vehicle fee**: ₹245

**CAMERAS**

- Still free
- Video: ₹730 (Indian), ₹1,090 (Foreigner)

**OTHERS**

- **Safari**: Desert
- **Nearby Places**: Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Jaipur

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Tourists riding across the desert on camelback

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in a few huts within the fencing. One of the gentlemen will act as your guide on the 3-4km long circuit. You can either walk the way or opt for a camel cart (₹250/3hrs). Morning is the ideal time and it’s advisable to be there by sunrise. You can easily spend three to four hours on the walk. Alternatively, you can also arrive in the afternoon, about three or four hours before sunset. Binoculars are a must. Do remember to pack water and food.

Dunes and wildlife
A round of the sand dunes is not to be missed. The best places to see the dunes are the villages Sam and Khuri, located at the edge of the sanctuary. Take a jeep from Jaisalmer (₹1,000-1,800, depending upon the time you want to spend there) and arrive in time for the sunrise or the sunset. A short camel ride on the dunes costs about ₹200.

Birds found here include sand grouses, partridges, bee-eaters, doves and bulbuls. Demoiselle cranes and common cranes arrive in winter. Among the mammals, the chinkara is easily spotted. Chinkara, or gazella bennittii, is the smallest Asiatic antelope. It grows to a height of 65cm and weighs 25kg. Most males have short horns, although some grow to a length of 25-30cm. The other notable inhabitants are the desert fox, desert cat, monitor lizard, spiny-tailed lizard, sandfish and saw-scaled viper. Jaipur-based naturalist and BNHS conservationist Manoj Kulshrestha (Sneh Deep, B-33, Sethi Colony, Near Transport Nagar, Jaipur; Cell: 09314880887) arranges field tours in the park.

WHERE TO STAY
To visit the Desert NP, you should ideally base yourself at Jaisalmer, where there are plenty of hotels.

In Khuri
Khuri has a host of very basic stay options. Prices tend to vary according to the kind of stay option you choose. The Gangaur Guest House (Cell: 09929296900, 09929699662) has thirteen mud and thatched huts and 35 fully furnished Swiss cottages with attached baths. If you want to return to Jaisalmer after the dinner, the charge is ₹500. They also customise 3 to 4-day safaris at budget rates.

WHERE TO EAT
Sudashri has no food provisions. If you stay there, you can eat what the staff cooks for themselves. Travel agencies offer excursions to Sam and Khuri, with dinner, night stay and breakfast included. If you plan to visit Sudashri, carry lunch with you or tie up with a travel agency to organise a meal at Sam or Khuri.

AROUND DESERT NP
Barmer
See page 228
Steeped in its centuries-old folk heritage and handicraft traditions Barmer now offers another side of its visage, which marks its moorings to the modern world, with the discovery of oil — which has added a new thrust to its economic profile and an impetus for the locals to expand their horizons to other professions than the traditional occupations of herding and farming.

**Things To see and do**

**Barmer Fort**
It marks the shift of the capital of Rawat Bhima in 1552 CE from the old dynastic bastion of Juna to the city of Barmer (formerly Mallinath). You can get a short tour of the court room in Barmer Fort if you send in a request in advance to erstwhile royal, Rawat Tribhuvan Singh Rathore. Atop the fort stands the Jogamaya Temple which resounds with the patter of feet of hundreds of eager devotees during the annual Navratri festivities.

**Juna Fort and Temple**
Now in ruins, the fort and temple make for an interesting explore.

**Chintamani Parshwanath Jain Temple**
Looking down on the sprawl of Barmer from its hilltop perch this Jain temple was built in the 16th century by Shri Nimaji Jiji Bohra. Of interest are its magnificent sculptures and paintings and the inlay work in the interiors.

**Folk Music and Dance**
Plan ahead to enjoy one of Barmer’s most ancient traditions. Priest singers known as Bhopas compose and sing songs to honour the deities and heroes of war. Dholis (drummers) hailing from the Muslim community traditions, are invited to perform at weddings and other festivities. An interesting move in preserving Barmer’s folk heritage has been the tie-up with UNESCO and the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, to promote community-based responsible tourism through the development of its intangible heritage such as the songs of the Langas, Manganiyars, Mirs and Bhopas, and the Kalbelia and Gair dances; this also expands to cover traditional crafts such as pottery, textile, duree making and appliqué.
work, both for the tourism sector in new product development and also for the benefit of rural artists communities and safeguarding ancestral art and craft forms.

Plan on being here in March to savour the vibrant Barmer Festival and all its folksy richness.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Hotel Sanchel Fort (Cell: 07727007790, 07727007781) located at Kushal Vatika, NH-15 Mahabar Sand Dunes, Barmer Garden, has 27 rooms, a multi-cuisine restaurant, bar & lounge, spa, swimming pool, gym and arranges folk entertainment on request. Hotel Kailash International (Tel: 222511, Cell: 09928014691, 07300173001) on the Chohran Road, NH 15, By-Pass Road, Dangriya, Barmer, has 140 rooms, a restaurant, bar, swimming pool, and gym. At The Good Hall (Cell: 09828822300, 09414294581) on NH68, near Kushal Vatika, feast on Malani (desert-style) cuisine.

ARROUND BARMER

Mahabar Dunes
Visitors who’ve experienced the bustling crowds at the Sam and Khuri Dunes near Jaisalmer will appreciate the serene Mahabar camel ride experience with great relish. Under the starlit sky the entertainment provided by the Gair dancers and the folk music of the Langas and Manganiyars is nicely balanced by a yummy repast of traditional local fare.

En route to Mahabar stop by at Safed Akra with its Sideshwara Mahadev Temple. You will love the gardens in the complex; as it appears, the local peacocks do too.

Kiradu Temples (40km)
Sign up for a jeep safari to the five nearly-forgotten, myth-drenched 11th century Kiradu Temples. Located amongst the sand dunes the site is just 40km from Barmer. Marvel at the lavishly carved pillared and still well-preserved Someshwara Temple. En route, if it’s the rainy season, stop amongst the sand dunes and thin scrub of the tiny Redana Rann, just 4km from Redana village; this white desert, a salt pan in winter, in the rainy season transforms into a lovely lake attracting migrators.

Nakodaji Jain Temple
This wish-fulfilling shrine is located around 10km from Balotra town near Jasol. It is dedicated to Lord Parshvanath. About a 2hour drive from Barmer town it’s a popular pilgrimage centre. Jasol town itself is popular for its Rani Bhatiyani Temple, which was constructed from the material from a Jain temple in Khed.
Alauddin Khilji, the then Sultan of Delhi conquered it. Four centuries later, the rulers of Marwar restored Jalore and brought back its lost glory in 1704.

Today, Jalore is a small but important industrial town. The refreshing part is that it has a glorious history, which most industrial towns don’t usually have. Jalore prides itself as the birthplace of Jeevant Kunwar, Maharana Pratap’s mother. The Jalore Fort was used by the Maharajas of Jodhpur for storing their treasures because it was believed to be invincible. Jalore attracts visitors with its age-old temples and grand fort, known for its cannon foundry. Devotees of Goddess Chamunda Devi hold Jalore in special regard, owing to the Sundha Mata Temple here. Jeep safaris are arranged by hotels to explore the surrounds of Jalore.

**Jalore Fort**
The Jalore Fort is the most important tourist attraction of the town. Built during the 10th century, the Jalore Fort was among the nine fortresses constructed by the Parmaras. Standing 1,200 feet high, the fort prides itself as one of the most invincible citadels in India. Its walls and bastions have huge cannons mounted on them and it is approached by four massive entry gates, known as pols. So you have the Dhruv Pol, Suraj Pol, Siroh Pol and Bal Pol. The

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**FAST FACTS**

- **When to go** October to February
- **Tourist Office** Department of Tourism
- **Opp. Bus Stand** Mount Abu
- **Tel** 02974-235151
- **Cell** 09636276496
- **STD Code** 02973
Chamunda Devi, the Sundha Mata Temple sits atop the Sundha Mountain, at an altitude of 1,220 m in the Aravalli Range. The sanctum sanctorum enshrines a white marble idol of Goddess Chamunda Devi. The pillars here will remind you of the Dilwara Jain temples of Mount Abu. Also worth checking out are the historical inscriptions on the temple walls. The temple can now be accessed by a ropeway.

Malik Shah's Mosque
This popular mosque was commissioned by Alauddin Khilji when Jalore was under his control. Khilji built the mosque as a tribute to the Seljuk Sultan of Baghdad, Malik Shah. The mosque stands in the heart of Jalore Fort and serves as a fine example of Islamic architecture.

Sirey Mandir
Perched atop the Kalashachal Hill at an altitude of 646 m, the Sirey Mandir was built by Rawal Ratan Singh, who dedicated it to the saint Maharishi Jabil. Reaching the temple is quite an adventure in itself as devotees need to walk for 3km. The temple complex houses several imposing mandapas featuring lattice windows and delicately carved pillars and imposing arches.
Hollywood Western could have been like if it were set in India, only, the horses and the men riding them would be dressed a lot better, and a lot pricier than your standard bounty hunter.

The painting is also an evocative reflection of the grand lifestyle and leisure activities of the rulers of Ghanerao, amongst them horses and riding, something that resonated rather well with its English audience. In fact, horse riding is one of the most popular holiday activities on offer at Ghanerao even today.

The leader of this band of men, Raja Viram Dev, belonged to a long line of thakurs of the Mertia clan, descended from the Rathores of Marwar. At the beginning of the 16th century, Ghanerao was established as a thikana comprising 37 villages, and helped maintain the balance of power between the neighbouring kingdoms of Marwar and Mewar, owing to its unique strategic location. James Tod, speaking of Ghanerao in his Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan notes: “Ghanerao is the chief town of Godwar, with the exception of the commercial Pali, and the garrison-post Desuri. From this important district the Rana could command four thousand Rathors holding lands on the tenure of service, of which the Ghanerao chief, then one of the sixteen nobles of Mewar, was the head.”

Ghanerao might not compare to the grandeur of Mehrangarh and the gleaming lakes and opulent palaces that define its more illustrious neighbours such as Udaipur, but it from the south, the sign to know you have entered the town is the Government Primary Health Centre. Lush fields enclose the village, with the temples scattered all around. The Ghanerao Royal Castle, which has now been converted into a heritage property, is towards the south of town. About 7km from the Rawla, inside the precincts of the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, and close to the Muchhala Mahaveer Temple stands the Jungle Lodge, which once served as the private hunting preserve of the Ghanerao rulers. From Udaipur, taxi for a day-trip costs around ₹3,000 (Rajputana Cabs Cell: 09828627722)

Ghanerao thikana was established in the 16th century

GHANERAO

RIDING A FINE HORSE

District Pali Division Jodhpur
Location In north-eastern Rajasthan, Alwar is set amid the Aravali Hills, not far south of Delhi
Distances 148km NE of Jaipur, 156km SW of Delhi
Journey time By road 3hrs from Jaipur, 3.5hrs from Delhi
Route from Jaipur NH48 to Shahpura via Amber; state highway to Alwar via Bairat, Thana Gazi and Sariska Route from Delhi NH48 to Dharuhera via Manesar; state highway to Alwar via Tijara

PRANAV PATHAK

A t the Sainsbury Centre in England’s Norwich, on display is a compelling Indian painting on paper. The subject, the work of Bikaner painter Shahib Al-Din, is Raja Viram Dev of Ghanerao, haughtily puffing on his hookah as he rides across the lush Aravali landscape. In the background, at one end of the painting, a procession of elephants and horses is headed for a temple. It’s what a

![Image of a painting](image-url)

The painting is on display at the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich.
JODHPUR

DIVISION

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Rajasthan

has its own exciting attractions. The historical Jain and Hindu temples and crumbling havelis strewn around are worth a dekko, as are the baoris—33 of them. The network of backstreets, with their close-knit line-up of houses and shops, offers opportunities to mingle with the locals (and often cattle). Your wanderings will also lead you to a complex of interesting chhatris.

The Rawla

The town proper isn’t particularly large, and asking around will lead one to a stately marble and red sandstone structure with its façade painted in lemon yellow. The Royal Ghanerao Castle, which now operates for the most part as a heritage hotel, was built by the Mertia ruler Gopal Das Rathore in 1606 upon receiving his jagir (fiefdom) from its parent kingdom of Mewar (House of Udaipur).

The tumbledown-yet-dainty features of the impressive mansion, with its jharokhas, domes and latticework, are reminiscent of the familiar Rajput style of architecture. The sun-drenched central courtyard is overgrown with bougainvillea and the inner walls have finally begun to reveal the scenes painted on them centuries ago, obscured by the blistering effect of limewashing. The grand structure recently underwent a restoration under the present-day erstwhile prince Shakti Ghanerao, who worked in close coordination with local craftsmen to reverse the ravages of time and neglect.

The Shikar Ghar

Nestled in the erstwhile hunting grounds of its owners, the Jungle Lodge entails a short drive up from the Rawla, through the narrow streets of the town. The manor-style stone building is the usual ‘base camp’ of treks and horse safaris starting from Ghanerao. Enter a not-so-smooth jungle trail (680m) leading up to the property. The surrounding area has been devoted to an organic farm, part of the Navdanya initiative by Vandana Shiva.

Trekking

The 14km trek to the Kumbhalgarh Fort through the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary is sure uphill, but a rewarding one. The trek begins post-breakfast, at Baaghon Ka Baagh, or The Jungle Lodge, passing through a dense forest cover, revealing macaques, jungle cats, antelopes and a wide variety of avian life. Spotting a leopard or sloth bear, however, needs a little luck. The Thandi Beri forest rest house is the first stop. Also called Crocodile Lake, the water reservoir is a frequent favourite for crocs looking to sunbathe! The trail also passes through a village that’s home to the native Bhils. The final leg of the trek requires you to take the testing climb up to the majestic Kumbhalgarh Fort.

GETTING THERE

Air

Nearest airport: Dabok Airport, Udaipur (110km/2hrs) Taxi costs ₹3,000

Rail

Nearest railhead: Falna Railway Station (36km/1hr) which is well-connected to major cities in the country. Taxi costs ₹700-800/drop, ₹2,500-2,700 approx/ full day

Road

Taxis can be hired from Udaipur at negotiable rates.

Bus

Apart from the small one in town, there are multiple BUS stands in Desuri (5km), Sadri (10km) and Falna. From Jodhpur, buses are available at the RSTC bus stand.
Packages (for two) generally include one night’s accommodation, daily buffet, an English-speaking guide, entrance fee, transportation, and taxes (Rajputana Adventures; Cell: 9649374222). Also on offer are cycling tours, leopard safaris and treks in Jawai, Ghanerao and nearby areas of Udaipur. Log on to www.rajasthancyclingtours.com, www.leopardsafaricamp.com, www.rajasthantrekking.com.

Outfitters also arrange the permits required for entering the sanctuary. You could also ask the staff at the Ghanerao Rawla to plan your own tailored trek where you will be guided by the staff member, Bhura, who is of the local Garasiya ethnicity. A jeep safari, which the hotel can arrange, takes you to tribal areas and you can witness crocodiles at sundowners. Ghanerao Safari & Tours (Cell: 09829017427) also organises day-long horseback expeditions to the famous Ranakpur temples and the Kumbhalgarh’s surrounds.

One also has the option to do some full-day treks to Ranakpur and from Desuri to Sumer for a package rate which is inclusive of a guide, snacks, water bottle and entry fee to Kumbhalgarh WLS (Nature Trails; Udaipur Cell: 09829085265). Trek organisers are usually happy to customise treks to other places as well. Forest trails generally require shoes with heavy-duty soles and an extra water bottle.

**The Temple Circuit**

The road from Ranakpur passing through Ghanerao cuts south into the Muchhala Mahaveerji Road. After driving for a few minutes, one reaches the **Muchhala Mahaveerji**, which is the most prominent amongst the 11 Jain temples in the area.

Constructed in the 10th century, it features the statue of a mustachioed Lord Mahavira—the only one of its kind—and with quite a legend behind it. But don’t let the caretaker convince you that it is 4,000 years old! The Muchhala Mahaveer Temple is just 5km from the town and can be walked to as well.

The **Gajanand Temple** houses beautiful idols of Ganesha and his wives Riddhi and Siddhi. You will also discover during your wanderings that Ghanerao is home to quite a few Hindu temples as well, including the Badmata Mandir, Gupteshwar Mahadev Mandir, Khetlaji Mandir and Sri Britweswar Mahadev Temple.

**Ranakpur Jain Temple Complex**

Barely half-an-hour of leisurely driving takes you back to the famous Jain shrines of Ranakpur, so try to arrive an hour in advance of the temple’s opening time. At the Chaturmukha Dharana Vihara, dedicated to the first Jain master, Adinath, stroll around to marvel at the intricate carvings on the pillars, sculptures, mandaps and toranas as you take a self-guided tour instead of being taken in by the fleecing ‘priests’ offering personal tours. Do remember: food and leather accessories/clothes aren’t allowed inside the complex.

- **Timings** 12pm-5pm (non-Jains)
- **Audio guide** ₹200
- **Camera** Still ₹100
- **Locker fee** ₹10

The complex also includes other buildings such as the Surya, Parsavanath and Amba temples.

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**

The **Ghanerao Royal Castle** (Cell: 09829784035) a portion of which has the royal family in residence, offers 15 unique rooms. The **Jungle Lodge** (Cell: 07777096723) offers seven rooms. With a gazebo and a nice garden, the location is the perfect spot for a bout of birdlife and wildlife spotting.
When you see Ranakpur from a distance, it appears as an expanse of greenery, with hills dovetailing into each other. Far below in the valley, amidst all this green, stands a gleaming white jewel, radiant in the wilderness. The radiance is the work of the marble-carvers who made Adinath glow with spiritual bliss. They have made the white marble come to life, speak, and tell beautiful stories—the legend of Lord Rishabhadeva, who meditated under a Rayan tree and left his footprint here; the account of Dharanashah, the minister to Rana Kumbha, and his vision of a celestial vehicle as a temple to the lord; the tale of Depa, the architect and his team of artists who gave life to the stones. Not to forget Rana Kumbha, who gave a generous amount of land for the temple and his name to this place, Ranakpur.

**things to see and do**
Most people visit Ranakpur, located about 2.5 hrs away in Pali district, for a day-trip, which is more than adequate. But, to experience the inspiring setting, go for an overnight stay.

**temple trail**
The gloriously sculptured and enchantingly situated main temple, called the Chaturmukha Adinath Temple, is a 15th-century ode to Rishabhadeva, or Adinath, the first of the Jain Tirthankaras. The three-storied marble edifice is perched on an elevated plinth, and has an unusual four-sided plan. The unadorned exterior does not prepare you for the shower of architectural complexity and intricate ornamentation as you enter the assembly halls and shrines. Gradually, the vastness of the structure, the architectural balance and symmetry will envelope you. The miniatiae and the delicacy of the carvings combine beautifully with the loftiness of the 1,444 pillars seen here, each of them engraved with unique patterns. Four huge luminous white-marble images of Adinath face the cardinal directions in the sanctum sanctorum. The pujaris (priests) of the temple will offer you guide services (pay as you wish). Do look for the column with the carved figures of Dharanashah, the chief financier of the temple, and that of Depa, the chief architect. Marvel at the translucence given to marble, at the poise of the dancing figures, and at the delicacy of the Kalpavalli (wish-fulfilling creeper) medallions.

The other two temples are dedicated to the Jain Tirthankaras Parsvanath and Neminath. Although dwarfed by the main temple, they exhibit some exquisite carvings and pierced stone-work. Nearby is an older temple dedicated to the Sun God. The temple has sculpture panels, embellished with carvings of warriors and solar deities riding splendid chariots.

- **Entry fee** Free
- **camera** ₹100
- **Timings** 12pm-5pm/tourists open all days

If you are staying longer at Ranakpur, go for walks in the surrounding forest.

**where to stay and eat**
The luxurious [Fateh Bagh Hotel](#) (Cell: 07357164222) is a unique hotel; the crumbling ruins of a 200-year-old Rajput-style palace near Jodhpur were relocated stone by stone to Ranakpur (4km from the temple complex) and converted into a luxury retreat, with a pool, spa and a restaurant. The restaurant offers Indian and Continental food.

[The Maharani Bagh Orchard Retreat](#) (Cell: 09610085151 is a set of comfortable cottages located in a mango orchard next to Fateh Bagh. Their restaurant is open to non-guests and offers Indian (some Rajasthani dishes) and Chinese cuisine.

[The RTDC-run Shilpi Hotel](#) (Cell: 09829491186), located near the Jain temples, is a more modest affair. It has a vegetarian restaurant.

For more hotels, see Ranakpur Accommodation Listings on page 364

**getting there**
**Road** The road from Udaipur through Iswal, Gogunda and Saira is usually well-maintained, but it can be a bumpy ride during the monsoon. From Udaipur, a taxi for a day-trip costs ₹2,600-3,200.

By Amit Mahajan
A frail temple pujari with a long, flowing, white beard descends the steps of a shrine up on a hill. Minutes later, the patches on the mottled surface of the granite flanking the stairway appear to stir a little. A shape moves, more lifelike than the background, with its green eyes peering at you. It is a leopard, who has come to deliver Shiva’s message—He is happy. It’s business as usual at the Perwa Shiva temple.

The leopard has long been known to be a creature of the night, a solitary wanderer, a deadly killer. But in Pali’s Jawai Bandh, where peaceful coexistence has come to define the relationship between the local Rabaris and the spotted big cat, it is a different story.

The ethnic tribe, worshippers of Shiva, accord it godly status, and consider it the guardian of the temples, which are in dense concentration in Jawai. So, when the animal resurfaces at night to claim a calf or a goat, the natives consider it an appeasement to the leopard skin-wearing Destroyer-god. In return, human life lives on—there hasn’t been a single instance of a human killing in the past 150 years.

Jawai isn’t just about prehistoric outcrops sheltering spotted beasts in their crevices. The place is also teeming with avifauna—at least 100 different species have been reported on the lake shores in winter—and then, of course, there are the crocodiles. The Jawai Bandh which was completed in 1957 under Maharaja Umaid Singh of Jodhpur offers glorious views of the surrounding settlements.

The 102,315-acre Jawai Bandh is fed by the river of the same name, a tributary of the River Luni. The territory is made up of a network of low hills and patches of farmland in between. About 15km to the southwest lies the pastoral region of Bera, a legitimate hotspot for leopard sightings. Perwa (9km), where the famous Shivgada Shiv Mandir is located, is to the northeast. The Sumerpur bus stand is about 8km to the northwest and the Jawai Bandh railway station, 4km to the north, can be approached via the Sumerpur Road.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Leopard spotting**

The Jawai hills, formed from cooled lava, are home to the highest concentration of leopards in the world, in their innumerable natural crevices that form a safe haven for the elusive animal. Even the unluckiest of wildlife watchers spot leopards within minutes of their first trip out into leopard country in Jawai. The cave features of the rock formations have also been turned into temples and memorials.
Tour organisers and camps start early in the morning or at around 4pm, these being the best time for leopard sightings, in 4X4 jeeps with guides on board. Chances of spotting sarus cranes, bar-headed geese, flamingos and other specimens of avian life are high, so do carry a pair of high-quality binoculars and a DSLR. If you aren’t carrying one, ask the organisers to arrange it for you. Cotton is the fabric to wear in these parts, and a pair of good shoes, a wide-brimmed hat, and long-sleeved shirt are a must. Refer to your tour operator’s checklist on their website for the exhaustive list. Thour Resorts (Cell: 07426936663) and Sujan Jawai (Delhi Reservations Tel: 011-46172700) offer customised experiences based on the group size or occasion.

The bandh’s backwaters are set against the same granite hills that are home to the leopards. The top of the dam, perfect for birdwatching or even spotting crocodiles, can be reached via steps or a curving road.

Hill temples
Given the locals’ faith in divinity and its close connection with ecology and animal life, it is only natural to find the area strewn with Hindu shrines, that too, at the most scenic spots. If not the Shiva temple frequented by leopards, one could always trek up to the others. The Dev Giri Temple is situated atop the hill of the same name, and can be reached via a walkway with a gentle gradient. The cave shrine is dedicated to the local deity, Ashapura Mata. The Kambeshwar Mahadev Temple (11km) in Sheoganj, Sumerpur, is also worth a visit for the views of the hilly outcrops that the ascent provides and some friendly langur company. The temple sees an annual fair in November, which is attended by devotees in the droves, who come here from all parts of Rajasthan and its neighbouring states.

Witness tribal life
Venturing out into the village area is a nice way to acquaint yourself with the leopard-loving Rabaris. Chat up shepherds passing by, sample some chaach and local cuisine and witness local farming from up close. Leopard safari organisers and resorts operating in the area also organise village walks. Jawai Jungle Camp (Cell:09555356669) and Jawai Manohar Vilas (Cell: 09828353525; Email: jawaimanoharvilas@gmail.com) do cycling tours as does Sujan, which also offers bush walks and guided Rabari walks. Apart from this, Jawai Manohar Vilas also organises evening Leopard Safaris.

Where to stay and eat
A constant favourite with the well-heeled visitors is Sujan Jawai (Delhi Tel: 011-46172700) with its tented
JODHPUR DIVISION

AROUND JAWAI BANDH

Rawla Narlai (61km)
The picturesque setting of Narlai village, an hour’s drive from Jawai Bandh, and mid-way between Udaipur and Jodhpur in Pali district offers visitors a superb opportunity to explore some of Rajasthan’s richest traditions from olden times.

In the shadow of Elephant Hill lies the 17th century rawla, a royal hunting lodge converted into a delightful heritage hotel, are ancient cave and rock temples. A stiff climb up the granite hill brings you to a cave shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. The ancient sage Narada is said to have meditated here and the name of the small village is inspired from him. The centuries old Narlai Baori lies within the precincts of the heritage hotel, which arranges candle lit dinners here on prior notice for walk-ins. A guided walk in Narlai village past old havelis and temples can be fun. Narali is an excellent base for leopard spotting and horse safaris. You can visit a Marwari horse stud farm in the area or ride down to the pristine Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary just 45km away. Seli Bandh attracts a huge variety of avifauna round the year.

camps. It offers 10 tents that provide a nice ambiance of living in a stark wilderness. Sujan also has a spa and wellness program and meals cooked out in the open and served around a bonfire. The Bera Safari Lodge (Cell: 09413312133) is located on the Leopard Safari Road, Kothar village, district Pali. A small, homestay-style property, it offers five exclusive cottages that have individual sit-outs. Thour Nature Resorts (Cell: 07426936663) and Jawai Jungle Camp (Cell: 09555356669) are other, more affordable options.

Enjoy a Marwari horse experience

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Mount Abu’s reputation as a ‘honeymooners’ paradise’ does not do justice to the charms of this lovely hillscape. To begin with, it takes something special to be a lush hill station in a desert state. Then, there is the long history of Hindu myths that is attached to the lakes, caves, temples and ashrams tucked away in these rocky hills. Added to this, there are the more recent layers of Rajputana palatial and British colonial architecture through which one can...
amble one’s time away. Further, there are dense forests and trekking trails vanishing into them, not at some unapproachable distance but right in the heart of things. And most of all, there are the Jain temples of Delwara, where marble becomes rain, dew, fire, silk... leaving all but the tourist guides speechless.

Legend has it that a huge yagna was conducted at Mount Abu by Sage Vashishtha, who created the four agnikuls, or the Rajput fire-born dynasties. The rest of the clans are said to have descended from the sun and the moon. The agnikuls were entrusted with the task of protecting the earth from demons. The descendants of many of the princely kingdoms that governed these Rajput clans built themselves summer palaces in Mount Abu, the coolest spot in overheated Rajasthan to escape the heat of the desert. Dozens followed their lead, and continue to do so decades down the line.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

Mount Abu sits around the Nakki Lake, which, according to legend, the gods scraped from the ground using their nails. The lake is also the centre for most activities in Abu, and boating on the lake is a must-do activity. Give at least three days to soak in the place and its charms.

**Viewpoints**

For some more sightseeing, or trekking, head towards Toad Rock (SW of the Raghunathji Temple with its 14th century idol of Lord Rama near Nakki Lake) or Sunset Point (2km south-west from town on Sunset Point Road), the latter for its panoramic views. There is also an amusement park for children at Sunset Point, ideal for a family outing. At Guru Shikhar, the highest peak (5,650ft) of the Aravallis, located 15km out of town, one may combine views of the range with a visit to a to the Dattatreya Temple (Shiva). The forests surrounding these sites are home to wildlife, so trekking late into the evening is not really recommended.

**A walk on the wild side**

Mount Abu Wildlife Sanctuary is spread over 288 sq km. The park is another summer draw, for during the hot months of March and April, the champa, jasmine, mango and khajur trees that give the animals shade and cover are weighed down with blooms and fruit. A birdwatcher’s paradise, it has more than 250 species of birds. The most common among them is the grey jungle fowl. Also to be seen here are leopard, chinkara, sloth bear, wild boar and langurs. The Tourism Department has identified 17 nature trails that make for lovely hikes. Guides for the walks can be contacted through the Tourist Reception Centre.

**Location** 8km N of town

**Entry fee** ₹50, **Vehicle fee** ₹300-600 pp

**Timings** sunrise-sunset

**FasT FacTs**

When to go

Summer, Holi, Diwali, Christmas and New Year are crowded and get very expensive. Visit between Diwali and Christmas or in January-February, despite the chilly nights.

**Tourist Office**

Department of Tourism
Tourist Reception Centre
Opp. Bus Stand,
Tel: 02974-235151
Cell: 09636276496
STD code 02974

A fabulous sunset greets a stream of visitors at the hill station
landscape was supposedly built in the 15th century.

Vimal Vasahi Temple
Named after minister Vimal Shah of the Gujarat Solanki court, who built it in 1031, this temple is dedicated to the first Jain Tirthankara Adinath (also called Rishabhdev). Each block of marble here—whether it makes a pillar or a ceiling slab—is carved with the care, precision and detail with which one puts a thread in a needle. The pillars in the entrance portico and in the corridors surrounding the shrine have figurines carved with great detail of movement, clothes and jewellery. Sixteen four-armed Vidyadevis preside on the pillars supporting the dome, each holding her own symbol. Fifty-two smaller shrines in the corridor hold images of the tirthankaras. Inside the finery lies a plainer hall in which Jain devotees sit in preparation for a ritual. In the sanctum is a 57-inch high icon of Lord Adinath in a brass-gold alloy.

Luna Vasahi Temple
Locally called the Devarani-Jethani Temple, this was built by two brothers—Vastupal and Tejpal—ministers of a Gujarati Jain king, in 1230, and is dedicated to the 22nd Tirthankara Lord Neminath. Its beauty is as simultaneously awe-inspiring and serene as the first temple. The Luna Vasahi's literal centre of attraction is the gigantic inverted lotus that ‘hangs’ from its dome. The lotus is made of hundreds of delicate tiny marble petals that look as if they were made of luminous crisp paper. The Pittahara Temple was made in the 14th century, dedicated to Lord Adinath. It contains a celebrated image of the lord, 41 inches high and made of panchdhaatu (an alloy of five metals), with a substantial proportion of gold. The Chaumukha Temple was made in the 15th century and dedicated to the 23rd Tirthankara Parshvanath. The Mahavira Temple is a small 18th century shrine to Lord Mahavira; on its ceilings, you can observe the fading frescoes.

Adhardevi Temple
An atmospheric natural cave structure with a very low and narrow entrance, the Adhardevi Temple is crowded during festivals, especially during Navratri time. Adhardevi, also called Arbuda Devi, is seen as a form of Durga, and was the family goddess of the Parmar kings. It is a climb of some 350 steps to the statue of the goddess.

Achalgarh
About 11km away from Mt Abu the Achaleshwar Mahadeva Temple which is dedicated to Lord Shiva is quite unique. Conventionally the sanctum would feature a lingam; instead there is a deep natural cavity said to lead all the way to the underworld. Another object of worship here is what is believed toe of Shiva.

The temple also has the mandatory Nandi made of panchdhatu (five metals- gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper). Near the car park you will see three stone buffaloes standing around the Mandakini Kund, while a statue of raja Dharawash Parmar shows him shooting the buffaloes with a single arrow. This mirrors the legend that the tank used to be filled with ghee, but demons, in the form of buffalos came and polluted it till they were shot down by the king. If you follow the path up a nearby hillsid you will come upon a cluster of colourful Jain temples, which offer fine views of the plains below.

WHERE TO STAY
Mount Abu has a number of stay options, but prices vary widely between season and off-season, so do remember to phone and check tariffs in advance.
Located in south-western Rajasthan the district derives its name from “Siranwa Hills” where it nestles. Sirohi town is the administrative headquarters of Sirohi district which covers five tehsils—Abu Road, Sheoganj, Reodar, Pindwara, and Sirohi itself.

For more hotels and details, see Mount Abu Listings on page 360

AROUND MT ABU

The Mt Abu Wildlife Sanctuary
Declared as a wildlife sanctuary in 1960 it is a huge draw for wildlife enthusiasts. Located in the beautiful Aravalii range it is small enough for visitors to enjoy the full spectrum of its botanical wealth and opportunities for sightings of animals like leopard, sloth bear, wild boar, sambar, chinkara, and langur. Increasingly popular now as an eco-tourism escape the sanctuary is home to roughly 112 plant families with 449 genera and 820 species; it is also renowned for its orchids, herbal medicinal plants, and its birding opportunities.

Sirohi Temple Trail
Located in south-western Rajasthan the district derives its name from “Siranwa Hills” where it nestles. Sirohi town is the administrative headquarters of Sirohi district which covers five tehsils—Abu Road, Sheoganj, Reodar, Pindwara, and Sirohi itself.

Sirohi town
Located about 80km away from Mt Abu the town of Sirohi has long been renowned as Devanagari or the ‘City of the Gods’. Devotees arrive even from great distances to visit the many shrines and temples scattered across the district. The Sarvadam Temple, a kilometer’s distance from the circuit house in Sirohi town, features several deities enshrined in the sanctum. Notable aspects of the temple are its architecture and the sacred trees like the Rudraksh Harsingar, Kalpvriksh, Kunj, Belpatra planted here. On Temple Street the line-up of 18 Jain temples is of interest for its architectural splendor. The tallest one, the Chaumukha Temple, is dedicated to Lord Adinath, the first Tirthankara of the Jain faith. The decorative and architectural elements here are reflective of the many-pillered temple of Ranakpur.

Just 3km from the bus stand you come upon the Sarneshwar Mahadev Temple; this dates back to the reign of the Parmars. It is perched on the western slope of the Siranwa Hill and is managed now by the Sirohi Devasthanam; it is the kuldev of the Deora clan of Chauhans of Sirohi.

At Kolargarh, 10km from Sirohi is the Ambeshwar Ji Temple. You will discover the remains of an old fort, a Jain temple, the Laxmi Narayan temple, a Shiv temple and Gorakhmath. Climb up about 400 steps to the ancient temple Lord Shiva with its views of the beautiful surroundings and waterfalls.
The Mirpur Jain Temple is about 20km away from Sirohi in Mirpur village. Dedicated to the 23rd Jain Tirthankara, Lord Parshavnath, it dates back to the 9th century CE. Considered one of the oldest monuments to be made in marble in Rajasthan, it is said to have inspired the Dilwara and Ranakpur temples. It was destroyed by Gujarat's Sultan Mahmud Begada in the 13th century, but was rebuilt in the 15th century. All that remains now is the main temple with its mandapa set upon carved pillars and engraved parikrama with its scenes from Indian mythology. Several inscriptions found here date between the 12th to 15th century. About 32 km south of Sirohi is the Karodi Dhwaj Temple. Dedicated to Lord Surya it is said to have been built by the Hoons who were the worshippers of the Sun.

The Ajari Saraswati Temple, 28km from Sirohi town, falls on Abu Road, 5km from Pindwara. Its picturesque setting is an additional attraction for devotees. Enshrined at the temple site are the goddess Saraswati and Lord Shiva. Prayers are offered here for children with speech disorders. Local lore has it that child sage Rishi Markandeswar spent time meditating here. The poet Kalidasa is also supposed to have worshipped here. At the Gaya Kund here funeral rites are held by devotees.

Varman
Located in Varman village, about 60km from Sirohi is the beautiful Surya Mandir. The temple is also known as the Brahman-Svamin Temple. It is renowned for its beautiful carvings and decorative features. The artistry of the workmanship is reflective of that of the Delwara Temples at Mt. Abu.

The Bheru Tarak Dham Jain Temple is located in Nandgiri valley, en route to Mt Abu. Many sages are said to have settled in these tranquil environs. The Sahastrafana (one thousand hooded serpents) temple is dedicated to Lord Parshavnath and is renowned for its beautiful carvings. An hour’s drive from here brings you to the ancient Jiraval Temple. Set upon Jairaj Hill in the Aravalli Ranges, it is 85km from Mt Abu. The lavishly renovated temple has a palatial look and draws many devotees.

The Jain Pavapuri Temple Dham, 35km away from Jirawal temple, is also worth a visit if you are in the area. The sanctum houses a 69 inch high idol of Shri Shankeshwar Parshvanath. Beautiful carvings adorn the mandap and the ceiling of the Sringar Chowki. In Bamanawada village, 8km from Pindwara, visit the Bamanvad Ji Temple. It is dedicated to Lord Mahavir 24th Tirthankara. It was built by Nandi Vardhan, brother of Lord Mahavir.
The surprising fact is that Kota has a history—industrial towns with power and atomic plants aren’t supposed to, belonging as they do to the genre of sci-fi cities. But Kota is as much a child of fractious history as its fellow Rajput kingdoms, born of blood, gore and diplomacy. The city’s history goes back to 1241 when Kotah was under the Bhil tribals led by their chief Koteya. It was in 1624 that it achieved de facto independence from Bundi. The independent kingdom of Kota lay on a major trade route that regularly saw marching armies and camel trains. Being on the Mumbai-Delhi railway line furthered the city’s growth. Today, the sharpest brains of the country from different cultures unite here to chase the great Indian dream of becoming engineers and doctors. Thousands of students
dressed in uniforms walk through the streets with umbrellas above their heads and identity cards hung around their necks like an army headed towards the battlefield. The coaching centres here would give a tough competition to glassy corporate offices and IT Parks. You don’t see Khans and Kapoors endorsing cold drinks as much as you’d see faculty members and nerdy exam toppers on billboards.

What was once a sleepy nondescript town, now bustles with malls, multiplexes, lounges, fine dining restaurants and coffeeshops. Who would have imagined that this modest town would one day make for a great shooting location for Bollywood movies and play the backdrop for super hit web shows? Being seventh in the World Economic Forum’s list of the world’s top ten most densely populated cities, Kota is the most urbanised city of Rajasthan, second only to Jaipur. Its streets are filled with Audis, Mercs and BMWs and its skyline dotted with towering skyscrapers. Yet, Kota has managed to retain its small town charm with honking autos and cows lazing around on its streets.

Though the city is known more for its coaching classes, kachoris, Dussehra, sarees and stone, than for touristy charm, Kota is still a traveller’s delight. The recently constructed Seven Wonders Park and Ghatotkach Circle are quite the draw amongst locals and tourists, as is the Hanging Bridge, which has become a hotspot for young photography buffs. Thanks to the brilliant advertising campaigns launched by the state tourism department, Kota has finally found itself that one overused stock shot in the gorges of river Chambal at the Garadia Mahadev Temple.

The state government is developing a world-class City Park near the coaching zone of the city. The ₹80 crore project will feature a science garden, an art gallery, amphitheatre, punting canal for boating, wi-fi cyber zone, bird aviary and leisurely trails among others.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Hiring an auto is the best option to explore the small town. Unmetered autos charge about ₹50-70 from the railway station to the Nayapur area.

FAST FACTS

When to go October to early March is best, but the monsoon has its own charm.

Tourist office

- Department of Tourism
- Regional Tourist Office
- Hotel Chambal (RTDC)
- Near Chatra Vilas Garden, Nayapura, Kota
- Tel: 0744-2327695
- STD code 0744
and ₹700-800 for 4 hrs of travelling within Kota. Tourist taxis charge ₹2,000 for a half-day and ₹2,700 for a full-day trip in and around Kota.

Heritage Circuit
Garh Palace and Fort complex
The fort's construction began in 1264, after Koteya was slain. Each generation of rulers that came along built on, around and over what was already standing, resulting in a gargantuan monument. Along the fort's inner battlements, public and private buildings, schools and homes have come up. But you'll soon leave these behind as Naya Darwaza, built circa 1900, looms ahead. The oldest gate, called Sailar Ghazi which dates to 1264, commemorates the spot where Koteya's head was buried in the fort's foundations.

Among the parts open to the public are Hawa Mahal and Jaleb Chowk, where parades and processions used to be held, the Nakkarkhana Darwaza, where kettledrums played, and Hathia Pol, where flanking stone elephants recreate a motif borrowed from the palace in Bundi. The apartments that can be visited include Kunwarbade ka Mahal, the wing where the heir-apparent was traditionally in residence, Bada Mahal, the palace where the king resided, and Raj Mahal, the throne room. Private performances were given at Bhim Mahal and parties at Baradari. Elaborate work characterises Sooraj Gokh, the Chattra Mahal, Zenana Mahal and Alsi Mahal. The mirror inlays and murals that wash the walls in colour is what makes Kota's City Palace exceptional.

Garh Palace Museum Entry Fee
Indians ₹50/20, foreigners 350 Garh Palace, Museum and Bada Mahal
Entry fee Indian ₹100/70, foreigner

Air
Nearest airport: Jaipur International Airport (249km/ 3.5-4hrs), connected by daily flights to all metros. Taxi costs about ₹3,500-5,000 to Kota.

Rail
Kota lies on the Mumbai-Delhi rail route. There are numerous trains between Kota and Hazrat Nizamuddin station in Delhi. The Kota Jan Shatabdi leaves at 1.15pm every day. The fastest trains are Mewar Express, Mumbai August Kranti and Trivandrum Rajdhani superfast. The best trains from Jaipur to Kota are the Jaipur-Bombay Central superfast, Ranthambore Express, Dayodaya Express, Mysore Express and Jaipur-Kota Fast Passenger. Autos from Railway station to city cost anywhere between ₹60 to ₹150. Autos from Kota to Nayapura (6km) cost ₹50-70, Taxi costs ₹100-150

Road
Kota is a comfortable three to five-hour drive along NH52 from Jaipur via Tonk, Devli and Bundi. Regular buses are available from Sindi Camp and Durgapura Bus stands in Jaipur. Private buses run from Tees Hazari, Delhi via Narayan Singh Circle, Jaipur. Taxis from Jaipur charge ₹10/km plus ₹300 toll.

The serene environs of Abheda Mahal

₹350 Camera Still ₹50, video/mobile
₹100 Timings 10 am-4.30 pm

At the Rao Madho Singh Museum, you'll see fine examples of Kota painting, wall frescoes, textiles, sculptures, photographs, arms and armour and other regal memorabilia.

Entry fee ₹50, Upper section ₹100
Timings 10am-5pm

Jagmandir Palace
Located in the Kishore Sagar Lake, this eighteenth century palace was built by a queen who couldn't bear Kota's heat. Constructed in red sandstone and adorned with palm trees, the palace can be visited by a boat.

Abheda Mahal
A recreational spot for the erstwhile rulers of Kota, this medieval palace is now a favourite for pre-wedding photo shoots and bird watching. This is where the royals came to enjoy nature and wildlife back in the day. You must also visit the next door Karni Mata Temple, which is dedicated to Kota's reigning deity.

Nature Study
Kishore Sagar Lake
What the Fatehsagar Lake is to Udaipur, the Kishore Sagar Lake is to Kota, only the replicas of the seven wonders replacing the hilly backdrop. The lakeside features a chaupatai bazaar lined with food stalls and a row of temples. People take their morning and evening walks on its banks. No vehicular movement is allowed at the chaupatai and you will have to park your vehicle at the museum road. This is the greenest
zone of town with beautiful gardens and the city zoo surrounding it. Every night, a colourful musical fountain show is also organised at the lake.

- **Entry Free Sound and Light Show**
  - **Timings** 7pm-7.30pm (winter); 8pm-8.30pm (summer)

  On the banks of the lake also stand the enchanting **Chhattar Vilas Gardens**, the city's biggest garden. A jogger's park for locals, the garden has small duck ponds, walking trails, swings, fountains and everything tranquil. It is flanked on one side by **Ksharbagh**, where the royal cenotaphs stand, and **Brij Vilas Palace** on the other. This palace is now a government museum of manuscripts, weapons, paintings and photos.

  **A replica at the Seven Wonders Park**

- **Brij Vilas Museum Entry fee**
  - ** ₹20**
  - **Timings** 9.45am-5.15pm; Mondays closed

**Seven Wonders Park**

One of the most visited spots in the city, this park is a ₹20 crore project developed on the banks of Kishore Sagar. If you have kids in tow, you must take them here and show them a glimpse of the replicas of all the Seven Wonders of the world. The replicas of the leaning tower of Pisa and Rome's Coliseum stand out from the rest.

- **Park Entry Fee** **₹5-10**
  - **Timings** 2.30 pm-10 pm, daily

**Chambal Gardens**, to the south of the fort, lie along the banks of the Chambal and next to Amar Niwas, a former royal pleasure retreat. They are now Kota's favourite picnic grounds.

- **Entry fee ₹5**
  - **Mini Train ₹25**

**Chambal River Boat Safari**

Boat rides take place from Forest Office near Chambal Garden to Garadia Mahadev and back.

- **Boat safari fee ₹1600/pp/ 2hrs/ 4 pax min (charges may vary)**
  - **Bookings**
    - Tourist Reception Centre, Chambal Hotel (RTDC), Nayapura, Kota

**Bird Watching**

From cormorants and moorhens to storks and lapwings, you’ll spot quite a number of species. Birdwatchers can contact Hadoti Naturalistic Society (NGO) and Bombay Natural History Society or Nature Trails.

Museums of Kota display a range of artefacts

**SACRED SPACES**

**Temple Run**

One of the oldest is the **Mathureshji Mandir**, built in 1738 CE near the Patan Pol gate. Kota became a major pilgrimage centre in the early 18th century and drew devotees of the Krishnaite sect of the Vallabha Sampradaya. The temple was built two decades after Shri Brijnathji Temple, housed in the Garh Palace, was raised by Maharao Bhim Singh I. The deep connection between the rulers of Kota and the Vallabha Sampradaya resulted in Kota producing several hagiographical texts, philosophical treatises and devotional manuals on Krishna worship. Another archaic temple is the **Kansua Temple**, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The beautiful temple houses a small pond and stone inscriptions dating back to 738 AD.

Just outside the City Palace is the **Neelkanth Mahadeo Temple**, dated to the 10th century and adorned with outstanding carvings. Right next to the entry gate of the palace sits the **Sai Baba Temple**. You would have visited many Ganesha temples for the blessings of a seated Ganpati, but if you want to see him standing, head to the **Khade Ganesh Ji Temple**. The only temple of its kind in the country, it's surrounded by a lush garden called Ganesh Udyan.

You may also visit **Rangbadi Balaji Temple** where you can also relish the besan laddoos distributed as prasad. At the **Shivpuri Dham**, there are as many as 525 shivalingas of varying sizes. Shivratri is observed with great pomp here.
The festivities for Dusshera (Oct/Nov) in Kota take place on a grand scale. The 19 day carnival is a feast for the senses. Cultural programmes, featuring traditional acts like Lord Rama’s victory over Ravana, are dominated by excellent performers who keep the crowds delighted.

WHERE TO STAY

Heritage
Umed Bhawan Palace (Tel: 0744-232526-65), designed by Sir Swinton Jacob, the British architect known for his Rajput/Indo-Saracenic palaces and now part of the WelcomHeritage chain, is Kota’s best option. Until recently, it was the residence of the royal family; the queen mother still lives here. The residence of the current head of the Hara clan, and formerly the British Residency, Brijraj Bhawan Palace (Tel: 2450529) has nice views.

Built by the British in 1870, the family-run Sukhdham Kothi (Tel: 2320081, 2332661) in Civil Lines is a delight to stay in. The owners have restored the sandstone architecture and personalised service and food fit for a king. Palkiya Haveli (Tel: 2387497; Cell: 09829747316), is more than a hundred years old, and built in traditional Rajput style.

Others
Hotel Menaal Residency (Tel: 2371073-74) has all AC rooms, a swimming pool and a big garden. Maheshwari Resort (Cell: 08290453084), on Bundi Road has an open-air restaurant that serves the best veg food in town. RTDC’s Chambal Tourist Bungalow (Tel: 2326527), near Kishore Sagar, has rooms with TV and its own restaurant and parking.

For more hotels and details, see Kota Accommodation Listings on page 361

AROUND KOTA

Godavari Dham Temple (10km)
Dedicated to Lord Hanuman the temple lies close to the Chambal Garden and the iconic river. Made entirely of white marble this impressive structure features a sculpted marble swan atop the entrance gate. Throngs of devotees gather at the shrine on Tuesdays, the holy day for the god.

Garadia Mahadev (20km)
This Shiva temple, nestled in the deep ravines of Chambal, is where the Aravali and Vindhyachal ranges meet. The Chambal meanders below, creating a horseshoe gorge. It is utterly magnificent—the red hills covered with green foliage that dips in and out of the river. As the temple lies in the Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve, you’ll have to pay an entry fee and show a valid identity card to get access to this gorgeous spot. A 2-way taxi costs ₹1,200-1,500.

Entry fee ₹75 Vehicle Entry fee ₹175 Timings Sunrise-sunset

Geparnath Temple (22km)
The place has been an important pilgrimage for Shaivites since the 5th-6th century, when a temple was built here in 1569. There is an old inscription in the temple to this effect. A three-step waterfall cascades down into a narrow gorge among trees and foliage where birds, pilgrims and picnickers wait to drink in the beauty. A 2-way taxi to Geparnath costs ₹1,200.

Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve (56km)
Spread across the districts of Kota, Bundi, Chittorgarh and Jhalawar, Mukundara has a core area of around 417 sq km and buffer zone sprawls over 343 sq km. Commonly spotted animals include panthers, bears, wolves and antelopes.

Tiger Reserve is not open for tourist Safari; Entry Only for Garadia Mahadev is allowed Boating Safari from Jawahar Sagar Dam to Jawra (charges may vary)
drizzles on and off all day. The clouds drift from one mountain-top-lookout-tower to the next, often revealing blues you have never imagined. The breeze stirring the skies occasionally comes down to ruffle your hair, clouds roll down the mountainside and wrap all manner of things in a moist blanket, the sun is present but only just to make it day and is content to let the clouds hold sway. When you have these ingredients in place, Bundi is a few notches better than perfect. Then your options are wide open.

You can amble along the lazy lanes and bazaars, going from havelis to baoris to mosques. Or visit temples and figure out why Bundi was also called ‘Chhoti Kashi’. Hire a bicycle or a mobike or a car and cruise around Bundi, often coming across people packed in Sumos or tractors, cooking, bathing and playing in the numerous tanks, lakes, streams and waterfalls. Or spend the day in the royal enclave ruminating on love, romance, worship, architecture and military strategy. Look through the palace jharokhas and get enchanted by the orange-red-yellow brush strokes in the evening sky. Or just sit at a rooftop restaurant, sipping the ambience. In the evening hike up to the fort to gaze at the tiny drop that is Bundi hiding in the fold of a green leaf that is the Aravali. Be here if you can during the Kajli Teej falls on the 3rd day of Bhadra. It kicks off with a traditional procession of Goddess Teej (Goddess Parvati) in a decorated palanquin from the Naval Sagar.

When to go October to March is pleasant, as is July to August, when it rains

Tourist office

Tourist Information Bureau
Near Circuit House, Bundi
Tel: 0747-2443697
STD Code 0747
It is not difficult to imagine that a Rajput royal in the 14th century searched high and low for a suitable hilltop in the Aravali to build a fort. Imagine then that over the next eight centuries life flowed down the hill and spread in the valley below. This will give you a sense of the temporal-geographical spread of Bundi, and a couple of meandering days will give you time enough to explore it. For a relaxed schedule, give a day for any of the arounds. Talwas, Dugari and Indergarh are in the same direction and two of them could be combined in a day visit.

Garh Palace

This is a fortified complex of many palaces built by different kings between the 17th and 18th centuries. You enter through the huge and magnificent Hathi Pol into a world where local stone has been used in typical Rajput-style architecture to create jharokhas, pillars and intricately carved brackets. The Chhatra Mahal, Phool Mahal and Badal Mahal are justly famous for their murals. The palace has been restored and renovated during lockdown. Jhoola Chowk and a new garden inside the palace has been opened up recently for tourists.

- **Entry fee** Indian ₹80, foreigner ₹500
- **Camera** Still Free
- **Timings** 8am-6pm, open all days
- [garhpalacebundi.com](http://garhpalacebundi.com)

Chitrashala

The Chitrashala or Ummed Mahal is part of the Garh Palace, with a separate entrance, and is located on a slope. Built in the 18th century, it is a set of rooms on a raised platform above a garden courtyard, and its walls and ceilings are embellished with Bundi style miniature frescoes.

- **Entry fee** Free
- **Timings** 8am-6pm, open all days

Taragarh Fort

A walk up from the Garh Palace will convince you of the fort’s reputation for inaccessibility. Built on a 1,426-foot high hill, this 14th-century ramshackle but impressive structure will reward you with bewitching sunsets, immense bastions and the aroma of a disappearing past.

- **Entry fee** Indian ₹80, foreigner ₹500
- **Cameras** Still Free
- **Timings** Sunrise-sunset, daily;

**Chited halls in a palace of illusions: The murals of Bundi’s Chitrashala**

**Tip** Entry Fee is for both Taragarh Fort and Garh Palace

**Stepwells**

Baori, vav, kund, vapi, sagar—different shapes of collected water, different shades of collective lives, Bundi is famous for its 50-odd ancient wells and tanks, sources of water in a land easily dehydrated. In addition to being utilitarian, baoris were centres of religious and social life. For the rich and the powerful, building these stepwells was nothing less than a sacred act.

**Raniji-ki-Baori** is the most famous because of its impressive composition with arches and pillars, and beautiful ornamentation. Commissioned by Rani Nathvatiji in 1699 (she is reputed to have built 20 other baoris too), this is the most well-maintained baori in Bundi.

- **Entry Fee** Indian ₹50, foreigner ₹200
- **Timings** 9am-5pm, Sundays and holidays closed

Other sights

The Nawal Sagar is an 18th-century lake with a temple of Varuna, the God of water, presiding at the head of Bundi just below the Garh Palace. To the north-east of the town is the lake **Jait Sagar**, on which stands a small palace called **Sukh Mahal**, famous for once hosting Rudyard Kipling. It is now a part of the monuments managed by the State
Archeology Department. On the other bank of the lake is Kshar Bagh, the final resting place for Bundi's royalty, with some beautiful cenotaphs built between the 16th and 19th centuries. Located near the Jait Sagar Lake, it is easily accessible by road.

The finest cenotaph in Bundi is to the south, the Chaurasi Khambon ki Chhatra (the 84-pillared cenotaph). This artistic 17th-century creation is a two-storeyed structure on a high plinth. Phool Sagar (10 km west of town on Ajmer Road) is a 17th-century palace, closed to the public but worth visiting for its location, nestled as it is between hills next to a lake filled with quiet.

**HERITAGE**

The best area to stay is just below the palace in the Balchand Para, with homely guesthouses in havelis and old houses, some with obviously spurious claims about their age. The Haveli Braj Bhushanjee (Tel: 0747-2442322) is a 250-year-old building that has been converted into a hotel with beautiful effect. Living in the immaculately clean, well-kept premises is like staying in a museum as the place is full of memorabilia.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Bundi has no dearth of good hotels and you can easily find hotels here for all budgets.

**Ishwari Niwas Palace** (Tel: 2442414;) is clean and well-maintained, with some royal connections and memorabilia, but suffers because of its non-romantic location near the Circuit House. Haveli Katkoun (Cell: 09414539146) is homely and well-kept. Kasera Paradise has a great rooftop terrace.

Daulat Niwas (Cell: 07726974108) is a current favourite among tourists and offers four rooms. Facilities you can expect here include garden, bonfire pit, kitchenette, bicycle and scooter rentals, free Wi-Fi and jeep safaris to less explored places near Bundi.

For more hotels and details, see Bundi Accommodation Listings on page 362

**GETTING THERE**

Air: Nearest Airport: Sanganer, Jaipur (192 km/3.5 hrs). Taxi to Bundi costs ₹2,500 approx. (₹8-11 per km)

Rail: Nearest Railhead: Bundi Railway Station is well connected to Delhi, Kolkata, Nagpur, Udaipur, Ajmer, etc.

Road: Bundi is located on NH52 between Jaipur and Kota. The road conditions vary with rains and disrepair.

BUS: There are frequent buses from Kota to Bundi (every 15 mins). A few buses run daily from Jaipur too (5 hrs).

The elegant Sukh Mahal overlooks the serene waters of Jet Sagar

Ramgarh Vishdhari Sanctuary & Tiger Reserve (44km)

It has recently been designated as a tiger reserve, the fourth in Rajasthan. It will link Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve in the north-east and Mukandra Hills Tiger Reserve in the southern side. Over 300 sq km will be reserved as a habitat for the animals, the rest will serve as a buffer zone. The sanctuary, a part of the buffer zone of the Ranthambhore National Park, is nestled on the Bundi-Nainwa road and sprawls over an area of 1,071 sq km. Known for its wide variety of flora and fauna, it was established in 1982 and continues to be a huge draw among tourists visiting Bundi. For the best experience, visit in the months between September and May.

Keshoraipatan (45 Km)

When you are done sightseeing in Bundi do make it a point to visit the Ramgarh Vishdhari Sanctuary & Tiger Reserve (44km)

It has recently been designated as a tiger reserve, the fourth in Rajasthan. It will link Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve in the north-east and Mukandra Hills Tiger Reserve in the southern side. Over 300 sq km will be reserved as a habitat for the animals, the rest will serve as a buffer zone. The sanctuary, a part of the buffer zone of the Ranthambhore National Park, is nestled on the Bundi-Nainwa road and sprawls over an area of 1,071 sq km. Known for its wide variety of flora and fauna, it was established in 1982 and continues to be a huge draw among tourists visiting Bundi. For the best experience, visit in the months between September and May.

Keshoraipatan (45 Km)

When you are done sightseeing in Bundi do make it a point to visit the
Keshoraipatan, which is just 45 km away from town. The temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, lies on the banks of the Chambal River in Bundi District. On the other side of the Chambal falls Kota district. A huge pilgrimage hub it was constructed by Maharaja Shastru Sal of Bundi state in 1601. Travel by the traditional Mallah boats (chappu boats) that ply on the river. The sight is almost reminiscent of that of the sacred ghat scene of holy city of Varanasi, ancient Kashi. This is also an important Jain pilgrimage center here. Noted writer Nemi Chandra is said to have complied the holi granth (text) – the Vrahed Dravya Sangarh at this temple. Also located here is the Mratunjya Mahadev Temple, one of the oldest temples of Rajasthan. Keshoraipatan is one of the oldest towns of India and went by the name of “Ashram Nagar” in ancient times.

**Bijolia (50 km)**  
This tiny peaceful township is home to the popular 13th century Undeshwara Temple. In its sanctum stands a half-submerged shivalinga. Another shrine is dedicated to the Jain tirthankar Parsvanatha. Bijolia was a great cultural centre for art and architecture of the Chauhan rulers. It is said that Mandakini Kund was once skirted by a hundred temples, but most of them now lie in ruins.

**Menal (70km)**  
(see page 336)
What makes Baran a traveller’s delight are its wooded hills and picturesque valleys. Baran is known for its beautiful picnic spots and age-old temples dedicated to Lord Rama and his consort Goddess Sita.

Baran’s history goes back to the 14th century, when it was ruled by the Solanki Rajputs. It was in 1949 that Baran was reconstituted. It became a separate district on April 10, 1991. The name of this picturesque district is inspired by the fact that it was a conglomeration of 12 villages ruled by the Solankis.
It appears, as indicated by the gazetteer of Kota district published in 1982, that Baran was popular also for its tie and dye work but with the arrival of imports of cheap printed foreign cloths. Its demand started going into decline somewhere around the early years of present century. Of interest too are the handwoven cotton cloth and doria sarees of the district and the embroidered elephant and horse trappings of Shergarh. Baran district is also home to the Sahariya tribe-Rajasthan’s only habitat for this primitive tribe, which mostly resides in Madhya Pradesh. Also to be found here is the rare Great Indian Bustard.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

**Shahabad Fort**
One of Hadoti’s most remarkable forts, the Shahabad Fort was built by Mukatmani Dev during the 16th century. Surrounded by a densely forested area and the lush Kunda Koh valley, the fort is known for housing impressive structures. The fort has been famous for its rare collection of 18 powerful cannons, of which one is a whopping 19 feet tall. It is also said that Mughal emperor Aurangzeb also spent some time at the fort.

**Shahi Jama Masjid of Shahabad**
Built during the reign of Aurangzeb, the masjid stands as an architectural marvel and attracts tourists and devotees in the droves. Modelled on Delhi’s Jama Masjid, the mosque is known for its attractive pillars and intricately designed ‘mehrab’.

**Tapasviyo Ki Bagechi**
This is a popular picnic spot that draws nature lovers with its peaceful environs. Set against the backdrop of majestic mountains, the Tapasviyo ki Bagechi looks straight out of a picture postcard. The place once served as a hub of betel farming. One of the major highlights of the spot is an impressive Shivaling.

**Manihara Mahadev Mandir**
Located it 3km from the ancient of town this is famous for the ancient Mahadevji and Hanuman temples. Surrounded by green trees and a pond, it is a serene spot. A fair is organised at the temple on Shivratri every year.

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**

**Sorsan Wildlife Sanctuary (26km)**
Wildlife enthusiasts must make a trip to the Sorsan Grasslands. You will see herds of blackbuck grazing around this 35 sq-km sanctuary, also home to birds, insects and gazelles. A birdwatcher’s paradise, Sorsan plays host to plenty of migratory birds, including robins, weavers, quails, partridges, flycatchers, starlings and larks.

**Ramgarh Bhand Devra (40km)**
Modelled on the temples of Khajuraho, the Ramgarh Bhand Devra Temple dates back to the 10th century. This fascinating spot is also renowned as the ‘mini Khajuraho of Rajasthan’. The temple stands on the banks of a small pond.

**Ramgarh Crater**
A unique geographical curiosity, which is situated about 40km from

**FasT FacTs**

**When to go**
Oct-Feb

**Tourist Offices**
- Department of Tourism
- Tourist Reception Centre
- RTDC Hotel Chandravati Campus, NH52, Khandiya Ciricle, Jhalawar
  Tel 07432-230081
  Cell 09414489598
  STD Code 07432

**Ramgarh**

**The Sorson Grasslands are much favoured by families of black buck**

![Sorson Grasslands](sorson Grasslands.jpg)
KOTA DIVISION

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BARAN DISTRICT

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complex are sheltered a multitude of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sculptures, statues, figurines awaiting their turn to be housed in better conditions. Sequestered in the area are some ancient Jain shrines as well. The cave shelters in the surrounding jungle are said to house pre-historic cave paintings and petroglyphs.

Shergarh Fort (65km)
Perhaps the most popular tourist attraction of Baran, this impressive fort stands on the banks of the river Parvan. It is said that the fort was named after Shershah of the Sur dynasty. The rich history of this place fort can be understood from a 790 CE inscription at the fort.

Shergarh Sanctuary (65km)
Blessed with a rich flora and fauna, the Shergarh Sanctuary provides habitat to several endangered plants. You could also spot sloth bears, leopards and wild boar here, which makes it an absolute delight for nature lovers and photography enthusiasts.

Kakuni Temple Complex (85km)
Standing on the banks of river Parvan, the Kakuni Temple complex houses ancient shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva as well as worship of Jain and Vaishnava deities. Some of the temples here date back to the 8th century. A range of idols from the temples here have been showcased in museums in Kota and Jhalawar. When here, you must also visit the remains of the Bhimgarh Fort, built by King Bhim Deo.

Kanyadhi – Bilasgarh (45km)
A treasure trove of historic remains and artefacts await the visitor in this quiet setting by the Vilas River. Bilasgarh was an important hub for the Khichi Chauhans of Gagron back in the 10th century. Mughal emperor Aurangzeb laid this area to waste in later times. Of interest, and what remains of this once flourishing hub is the Vishnu, locally known as the Charkhamba. Now an ASI protected site the compound features a scattering of stone carvings and fallen sculptures. The idol from the sanctum has been spirited away to a museum in Jaipur for safety. The red sandstone platform features detailed carvings of Vishnu’s various avatars. Within the ASI

Baran. It was created as a result of a meteorite collision with earth about 75,000 years back. Since it is one of the four impact craters know to exist in India, Ramgarh Crater has been declared as a Geological Monument of National Importance.

Sitabari (45km)
A popular spot for picnicking families, Sitabari is home to temples dedicated to Goddess Sita and Lakshman. Some also believe it to be the birthplace of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita’s twins Luv and Kush. Also worth visiting here are the Valmiki, Sita, Lakshman and Surya Kunds.

**GETTING THERE**

Air
Nearest Airport Sanganer International Airport, Jaipur (300km/5hrs) connects all the major cities and states by flights like Spice Jet, Air India, Go Air, Indigo, etc. Taxi from Jaipur to Baran Costs ₹6,000,

Rail
Baran railway station is served by trains like Kota JBP Express, INDB Kota SF EXP connecting cities like Jabalpur, Kota, Indore etc. Auto from Baran station to any hotel costs ₹10-50

Road
The city is connected with neighbouring districts and with major cities outside the state. BUS Direct buses are available from New Delhi, Jaipur, Kota, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Indore, Ujjain, etc. Fare for bus From Jaipur to Baran is ₹380-400. Taxi fare from Jaipur to Baran is ₹6,000 approx

The Ramgarh Crater as seen from an aeroplane

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In an earlier life, he had danced in rage and grief carrying her dead body in one of the many gems that lie scattered in the area as if a bag of treasures had burst here. In a previous birth, she had stood on one foot for 16 years, eating only dying leaves, in her love for him. But now they look as if their foreheads have never known nightmares. They lean towards each other in lazy serenity, Shiva and Parvati, seated on a Nandi, holding each other with more than just arms. Their eternal tranquility fills the sanctum sanctorum of the 7th-century remains of the Chandra Mouli Mahadev Temple, perched on the banks of the Chandrabhaga River in Jhalrapatan, the ‘old town’ near Jhalawar. The temple announces the once-presence of Chandravati, a city founded by the successors of king Vikramaditya.

Understanding the region invoked by the word ‘Jhalawar’ means unpeeling layers of religious expression, political thicknesses and commercial undercurrents. When Rajasthan Tourism uses the word ‘Jhalawar’, they mean Jhalawar District which, along with Kota and Bundi, makes up the old cultural region of ‘Hadoti’. There’s the town of Jhalawar itself, the seat of the 160-year-old Jhalawar kingdom and its gorgeous palaces. Just 5km away, there’s Jhalrapatan, teeming with old temples and havelis. At a distance of 15km, there’s the Gagron Fort controlled by different dynasties over 1,300 years. And there are any number of ancient Hindu temples, Buddhist cave temples and viharas, and sculptures strewn around in forests... All this in an area called the ‘Cherrapunji of Rajasthan’ by locals, a green hillock-dotted terrain that bursts into huge ponds and lakes during the rains.

 Strictly speaking, there was no entity called Jhalawar in earlier times. This area of south Rajasthan was part of the history and fortunes of the Malwa Plateau from the time of the Mauryas and eventually became part of the Kota kingdom.
KOTA DIVISION

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held the forests in which kings are shown hunting in the famous Kota-Bundi miniatures. An able Kota minister, Zalim Singh, became Kota’s de facto ruler and developed good relations with the British. The state of Jhalawar was created in 1838 out of parts of Kota kingdom because of a treaty between the British and Zalim Singh’s descendants. It was called Jhalawar, thanks to their ancestors, who were the Jhalas, hailing from Kathiawar.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

The infrastructure of Jhalawar District still needs to keep pace with the richness of its offerings. The town is small enough to hardly take up a day of your time. Jhalrapatan can keep you occupied for a day, but to merely ‘see the sights’, half a day is sufficient as well.

Garh Palace

The original residence of the royal family, the Garh Palace is, as its name suggests, a grandeur-defining citadel-palace. Built by Maharaj Madan Singh during 1840-1845, it was later handed over to the government to house the Collectorate offices. Now the palace is under the possesion of A&M Department. You can walk through and see the Sheesh Mahal rooms partitioned into cubicles, splendid frescoes with electric fittings, and the inlay work on walls and ceilings.

A few locked rooms are repositories of every variety of artistic expression, from pietra dura to miniature styles to religious portrayal to portrait painting to English landscapes and floral studies to some rare glasswork.

Within the Garh Palace enclosure stands the interesting Bhawani Natya Shala, an opera-house-style theatre made by Bhawani Singh, the king responsible for the creation of modern Jhalawar. Renovations are on at present, and are expected to be done with by 2022. This was once a vibrant centre for staging the works of Kalidasa and Shakespeare; the proscenium is built with an underground extension, such that horses and chariots could appear on stage! At the Government Museum, inside the Garh Palace, you can see abundant treasures of ancient Indian art, many dating back a millennium if not more, some of them rescued from the jungles of Kakuni. It houses lovely sacred sculptures, rare manuscripts, paintings, coins and 5th and 7th century inscriptions.

Location

Garh Palace, at the heart of Jhalawar, is easy to find.

Museum Entry fee: Indian ₹20, foreigner ₹100
Timings: 9:45am-5:15pm, Mondays closed.

Jhalrapatan

Zalim Singh, the founder of the Jhalawar kingdom, used to camp at Jhalawar but the place he lovingly nurtured from 1796 was Jhalrapatan, translated as ‘the City of Temple Bells’, locally called Patan. The riverside township overlaps the city of Chandra Shati, said to have been founded by Parmar Chandra Sen, Vikramaditya’s grandson. Rajasthan’s chronicler James Tod counted 108 temples here. Today, Patan is a walled settlement you enter through a formal doorway and are immediately gifted with the combined stillness of three banyan trees, a huge pond and quaint chhatris under which villagers rest in the afternoon. On the day of the local haat, nomadic men and women, iron-smiths by trade, bounce their red ghagras, silver jewellery and black moustaches off the bright yellow mounds of poha.

Chandrabhaga Temple

A visit to Garh Palace will make your Jhalawar trip memorable

JHALAWAR DISTRICT

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For some uncluttered moments drive down to the site of the Chandramouli Mahadev Temple, cared for by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), in beautifully maintained grounds next to the Chandrabhaga River. The complex holds the remains of many 7th-14th century temples. In early mornings or at dusk, the quiet river, the shrines and temples, the richly carved pillars, and the profusion of heart-stopping art bathe themselves in a golden glow and match the serenity that can be found, in the best traditions of classical Indian art, on the faces of the icons. The Chandrabagha Fair is held every year at Jhalrapatan, in the Hindu month of Kartik (October-November). A big cattlefair coincides with the event with livestock being assembled here for sale from distant corners of Rajasthan.

The 10th-century Sun Temple is dedicated to Padmanabh, whose image was enshrined here in the 19th century. With its lofty 97-foot high shikhara and its association with the sun, the Jhalrapatan residents call it the ‘Konark of Rajasthan’. The shikhara is indeed impressive, teeming with small images of Gods, Goddesses, ganikas, apsaras.

**Location**

In the Old Quarter about 5km south of Jhalawar, along NH52

**Timings**

7am-5pm

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**GETTING THERE**

**Air**

Nearest airport: Sanganer, Jaipur (340km/8hrs). A deluxe night bus leaves from the Sindhi Camp Central Bus Stand daily for Jhalawar; there’s a return service as well. Taxis charge ₹9-12/km; Devi Ahilyabai Airport, Indore (M.P) (230km/4.5hrs) Taxi charges ₹10-15/km

**Rail**

Nearest railhead: Kota, where all Delhi-Mumbai bound trains halt en route. The best options are: from Delhi, the Intercity; and from Mumbai, the Rajdhani Express. From Kota, taxis take approx. 2.5hrs (approx.₹10/km) to get to Jhalawar. A special train and two passenger trains are available between Kota and Jhalawar. It’s not easy to get taxis from Ramganjmandi, which is the nearest railhead

**Road**

Express buses ply regularly from Kota Bus Depot and New Bus Stand near Ahluwalia Mall. Buses heading for Ujjain or Indore also stop here

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**WHERE TO STAY**

The few stay options in Jhalawar include a heritage property and a couple of budget hotels. If you are planning only a day-trip to Jhalawar, it’s best to stay in nearby Kota.

**Heritage**

The Prithvi Vilas Palace (Cell: 09891349555, 09911544432; Delhi Reservations Tel: 011-46526335) in Civil Lines, is locally recognised as ‘Darbar ki Kothi’ and offers 4 rooms.

Prithvi Vilas arranges guided tours on request. There is also an elegant Palace Guesthouse (Cell: 09891349555, 09911544432; Delhi Reservations Tel: 011-46526335), which is almost adjacent to the main palace.

**Others**

RTDC has another property Hotel Gavdi Talab (Cell: 09414291934), on Dak Bungalow Road, has eighteen rooms with TV, attached bathrooms, a restaurant, bar, Internet.

**AROUND JHALAWAR**

Gagron Fort (12km)

In the classical categorisation of forts in India, the huge and dramatic Gagron Fort is a rare one because it is a water-protected fort as well as a forest-protected fort. Gagron is a rare example of a hill and river fort and is protected on three sides by the confluence of the Ahu and Kali Sindh rivers and by a dense forest along the fourth side. The fort was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2013 and draws visitors from all over. Begun in the 7th century, with additions till the 14th, it was controlled successively
by Rajputs, Mandu Sultans, Khaljis, Mughals, Kota and Jhalawar. The fort provides spectacular views from many vantage points especially from the burj at the very end.

**Entry Fee**
- Indian ₹50, foreigner ₹200
- Camera Free, videography not allowed

**Timings** 9am-4.30pm

**Borda Mau (24km)**

Once the capital of the Khichi Chauhans of Gagron, Borda Mau, in Khanpur tehsil of Jhalawar district, was in a state of ruins close to the Bhimsagar Dam built over the River Ujad. Efforts are now on for the restoration of the Mhow palace and other structures in the fortified site which includes remnants of the temples, and mosques dating to those days. It’s now a very popular picnic spot for locals from Jhalawar town.

**Kolvi (90km)**

A pleasant drive through the verdant expanse of Jhalwar’s countryside brings you to Kolvi village, an ancient Buddhist enclave, famed for its 5th-8th century caves on a desolate laterite hilly outcrop. It features 35 caves ringed around the hill. Of interest here are the several lifelike images of Buddha. The largest is a standing Buddha. Also of interest here are the hand carved jharokhas. The architectural style indicates the dominance of Hinayana sect in this region in Rajasthan. Most of the caves on the south side are still in good condition. Two other sites are worthy of exploration in the area. In a village nearby the Hathya Gour Site (also under ASI protection) features five caves. The yields of Vinyaka Hill Site with its 20 caves carved into the hills side is more interesting as it features a stupa-like structure.
UDAIPUR

WATER KINGDOM

District: Udaipur Division, Udaipur
Location: In southern Rajasthan, amidst the low hills of the Aravallis, bounded by its two big lakes, Pichola and Fateh Sagar, and River Ahar
Distances: 276km SE of Jodhpur, 396km SW of Jaipur, 652km SW of Delhi
Journey time: By road 5hrs from Jodhpur, 9hrs from Jaipur, 14hrs from Delhi
Route from Jaipur: NH48 to Udaipur via Ajmer, Beawar, Rajsamand and Nathdwara
Udaipur is a happy city. So are its residents. And this happiness will soon envelope you. It will make you sit by the lakeside and listen to the city’s sounds and cherish its silences. It will make you wander aimlessly in the gullis and streets, or spend hours in the palaces learning about history and fate, war and misfortune. Udaipur's skies are full of water and so are its lakes. The walls are a smiling cream or a radiant white, and the caparisoned elephants and horses painted next to welcoming doors sport a splash of red and indigo. The abandoned ruins muster up an ochre melancholy, and the lively palaces are a shower of gold. The waters provide a silvery sheen. Udaipur is akin to a charming, seductive miniature painting of the Mewar School.

**AMIT MAHAJAN**

City Palace Complex

The City Palace is where it all began in the 16th century when Udai Singh met a sage who advised him to establish a city here. Now the complex is a conglomeration of palaces built over 400 years. This largest palace complex in Rajasthan is a fascinating edifice. Twenty-two maharajas of Udaipur contributed to this structure and yet it maintains a graceful uniformity. Despite its huge size and the profusion of architectural elements—jharokhas, columns and towers—the elegant palace has an airy lightness about it. Perhaps that's because of its creamy hue.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

A tourist's itinerary in Udaipur inevitably revolves around the sites of the erstwhile rulers: the palaces they lived in, the lakes they built, the gardens they frequented, and the cenotaphs built for them. All these places today dutifully echo a fictional history in which the Sisodia Rajput rulers of Mewar are famous for their virtues, victories and fierce independence. However, the splendours of Udaipur's architectural heritage belong mainly to its peaceful periods. Having done the regular tourist bit, the best thing to do in Udaipur is to discover the quiet in the maze of streets between Jagdish Temple and Suraj Pol. You will need at least three days in Udaipur.

When to go

October-February is the best time to visit, however July-August is pleasant during rains.

**Tourist Office**

- Regional Tourism Office
  - Fateh Memorial, Suraj Pol, Udaipur
  - Tel: 0294-2411535, 2521971/1364
  - STD code 0294

**FASST FACTS**

- **Graphics Praveen G; Illustration SAAHL**
also gels easily with the blue waters of Lake Pichola.

Keep aside a few hours to explore the City Palace. Walk up the hill from Jagdish Temple, buy your tickets at Badi Pol, and enter the complex. After Badi Pol, the imposing Tripolia Gate welcomes you, with seven arches or toranas to its left, commemorating the seven times when the maharajas were weighed against silver and gold which was then distributed among the people. On the right is a wall called Agad, across which elephants were made to fight each other—a royal idea of sport.

A part of the City Palace Museum has been converted to a Government Museum. Shambhu Niwas is the present home of the royal family. Further south are Taj Fateh Prakash Palace and Shiv Niwas Palace, both luxury hotels today.

**City Palace Museum**

Ganesh Deori leads you inside the City Palace Museum. Just inside the entrance notice the paintings of the important Krishna deities of Mewar—Srinathji, Eklingji and Charbhujaji—all lovely examples of the Mewar School of painting. **Chandra Mahal**, is a palace with stunning views of Lake Pichola, its islands and the surrounding hills. **Badi Mahal**, or Amar Vilas, was built on a rock formation and ingeniously incorporated into the complex with an enclosed garden. The **Kaanch Ki Burj** is a chamber with its walls inlaid with red and silver glass. The **Krishna Niwas** has some remarkable miniature Mewar paintings. A room is dedicated to Col James Tod, displaying a manuscript of his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* and his portrait. The **Mor Chowk**, originally built in 1620, was decked with brilliantly coloured mosaics of three dancing peacocks in the 19th century. The **Zenana Mahal** has princesses' apartments.

**City Palace and Museum Entry fee**

- Adults ₹300, child ₹100
- Camera Free

**Timings** 9am-4.30pm

**Government Museum**

The Government Museum is also accessed from the Ganesh Deori.

There are stone inscriptions from the Mewar region, dating from the 2nd century BCE to the 19th century. One gallery depicts the Mewar tradition of miniature art, and includes a series on Krishna-Rukmini. The **museum** also houses eclectic exhibits including a turban belonging to Mughul prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan), who took refuge in Udaipur during a rebellion against his father Emperor Jehangir.

**Location** City Palace complex

**Entry fee**

- Indians ₹20, foreigners ₹100

**Timings** 9am-4.30pm

**Crystal Gallery**

The Crystal Gallery has an extravagant display of wealth. In a shopping binge, Rana Sajjan Singh ordered an assortment of crystal objects from F&C Osler & Co in England in 1877. He died before the crystal chairs, beds, sofas, glasses, dinner sets and flywhisks arrived in Udaipur. Successors thought this was a bad omen and the extraordinary bequest stayed packed in boxes for 110 years before somebody thought of making money from this misadventure. The rather overpriced admission fee includes the entry fee to the Durbar Hall of the Fateh Prakash Palace.

**Location** Fateh Prakash Palace

**Entry fee**

- Adult ₹700, child ₹500 (plus entry fee to palace premises; audio guide) Camera Not allowed

**Timings** 9am-6.30pm, daily

**Vintage cars**

Located about 2km away from the City Palace complex. About two dozen vehicles are on display in garages here. There's a 1934 Rolls
Royce Phantom II and a 1939 Cadillac convertible that transported Jackie Kennedy when she visited Udaipur.  
**Entry fee** Adult ₹400; child ₹250  
**Timings** 9am-8.30pm, daily

### Jagdish Temple

Built in 1651 in the Indo-Aryan style, the temple is located high above the streets, on a crossroad. The outer walls have carvings typical of Mewar temples, and Vishnu, as Jagannath, is the chief deity.  
**Sanctum timings** 5am-1pm, 4pm-8pm, daily

### Bagore ki Haveli

The residence of a former prime minister of the state, Amarchand Badwa, the haveli sits right on Lake Pichola. This 18th-century haveli has been diligently restored. The 138 rooms around courtyards are set up to evoke the past and exhibit the traditional arts and crafts of the region.  
**Entry fee** Indians ₹60, children ₹30; foreigners ₹120, children ₹60  
**Haveli timings** 10am-5pm, daily

### Ahar

Now known as the cremation site of the royal family of Mewar, Ahar has an array of cenotaphs of 19 Mewar rulers, built over four centuries. The first and the most striking cenotaph is that of Maharana Amar Singh who, after abdicating his throne, spent his last days in a haveli here. Ahar is also an ancient site with a history going back to 2000 BC.  
**Museum Entry fee** Indians ₹20, foreigners ₹100  
**Museum timings** 10am-4.30pm; Mondays closed.

### Monsoon Palace

Originally called Sajjan Garh and built by Sajjan Singh this 19th century palace was supposed to be an astronomical centre, but became a hunting lodge. Perched atop Banswara Hill, this building has a fairy-tale quality about it.  
**Location** 8km west of city centre  
**Entry fee** Indians ₹70, foreigners ₹330  
**Timings** 8am-6pm, **Forest Jeep ₹220 pp, daily**

### Sahelion Ki Bari

Translated as the Garden for Maidens, this leisure garden created for the womenfolk by Maharana Sangram Singh II, this is a beautiful place to relax and enjoy nature. There are pretty fountains, a lotus pond and even a small museum here to explore.  
**Entry** Indian ₹10; foreigners ₹50  
**Timings** 7.30am-6.00pm

### Shilpgram

One can watch artisans at work and even buy souvenirs directly from them. Shilpgram also serves as a platform for cultural performances. An annual Shilpgram Utsav is organized here in December and showcases a wide range of artisans at work. At night, performances by folk artists are organised.  
**Entry fee** Adult ₹160 (includes Sound and Light and Statue viewing; child ₹110  
**Timings** 9-30am-6pm  
[pratapgauravkendra.org/contact-us](http://pratapgauravkendra.org/contact-us)

### Pratap Gaurav Kendra Museum

A fairly recent introduction to Udaipur’s tourist circuit, this elaborate museum is dedicated to the legendary warrior-king Maharana Pratap. Located on Tiger Hill, on the outskirts of the city, the complex is dominated by a massive 17m high statue of the Rana. The dioramas of various events in Udaipur’s history include a 3-D presentation of the battle of Haldighati.  
**Entry fee** Adult ₹160 (includes Sound and Light and Statue viewing; child ₹110  
**Timings** 9-30am-6pm

### Mewar Bio Diversity Park

Visitors should definitely stop by at the Mewar Biodiversity Park, which falls along the route to Nathdwara, is just 15km away from Udaipur city. The Gamdhari forest area is a part of Amberi reserved forest block. It is a huge attraction for tourists, environmentalists, research scholars and students.  
**Entry** Indians ₹30; foreigners ₹100  
**Timings** 9am-5pm
Although its name means ‘the backyard’, Lake Pichola is the centre of attraction in Udaipur. The town sprawls across the shores of Pichola. Palaces and hills hug its contours. Havelis and houses and hotels find sustenance in its waters. When the lake is full, people bathe in it, swim and take boat rides, or simply gaze at it. The lake’s waters are entwined with the lifestyle of the people of Udaipur.

**Mewar/Gangaur Festival**

One of Udaipur’s best celebrated festivals is the Mewar Festival, which is, in fact, a very unique form of the Gangaur festival celebrated all over Rajasthan, a day after Holi, usually in March. Gangaur has always been special for married women and even the unmarried ones. The Mewar Festival finds women from different communities come together from all parts of Udaipur to show their love and reverence for Isar/Lord Shiva and his consort Gauri. A colourful procession, starting from the Clock Tower proceeds to Pichola Lake, where they board gaily festooned boats for the grand immersion ceremony for the idols at Gangaur Ghat. Traditionally, the colourful procession is led by the Shahi boat (Gangaur boat) of the Mewar royals. Hundreds of these boats sailing gently on the calm waters of Lake Pichola are truly a sight to behold.

Enjoy the changing colours of the lake and its environs from the rooftop restaurants on Lal Ghat, Gangaur Ghat and Hanuman Ghat. Or take a boat ride from the City Palace jetty on Bansi Ghat and enjoy views of the lake’s shores and its elegant buildings.

**Bhartiya Lok Kala Mandal**

Culture buffs will enjoy the wonderful showcase of the folk art, culture, songs and festivals of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Bharatiya Lok Kala Mandal also features a museum that exhibits musical instruments, masks, puppets, costumes, paintings, dolls etc.

**AROUND UDAIPUR**

**Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary** (8km)

If you plan to visit the monsoon

**WHERE TO STAY**

Though there’s a wide range of stay options, it is advisable to come here with advanced booking in the high season.

**Heritage**

The 18th-century summer palace of the erstwhile rulers, Taj Lake Palace Hotel (Tel: 0294-2428800), on the Jagniwas Island in Lake Pichola, is the traditional, dream stay option. Shiv Niwas Palace (Tel: 2528016-19) and Taj Fateh Prakash Palace (Tel: 2628800) are famously part of the City Palace complex.

**Jagat Niwas Palace** (Tel: 2422860), located in the Lal Ghat area, in two renovated 17th century havelis, is a good option. Amet Haveli (Cell: 07414044009), another restored haveli, has an enchanting location on Hanuman Ghat.

**Others**

The Oberoi Udaivilas (Tel: 2433300) promises you the experience of staying in your own palace with your own piece of Lake Pichola. Udai Kothi (Tel: 2432810) is a replica of a haveli on Hanuman Ghat.

Among the budget hotels, try RTDC’s Hotel Kajri (Tel: 2410501), perched on a hilltop 3km from the lakefront.

*For more hotels and details, see Udaipur Listings on page 364*
palace of Sajjangarh, do budget some time for a quick visit to this beautiful and lush green wildlife haven. Known for its wide variety of animal and plant species, the prime attraction of the sanctuary are the nests built by the Indian Long-billed Vulture. Right outside the sanctuary, lies the Sajjangarh Biological Park.

Nagda (22km)
Approached by a country road a little before Eklingji, the ancient town of Nagda was once the capital of Rawal Nagaditya. Now it is a quiet hamlet, famous for 11th century temples called Saas-Bahu temples, their names a strange distortion of Sahastrabahu (1,000-armed).

Eklingji (23km)
The Eklingji shrine is located in Kailashpuri Village. A form of Shiva, Eklingji is considered to be the real ruler of Mewar and the kings ruled as the deity's representatives. It is believed that Bappa Rawal originally built the shrine in the 8th century; it was subsequently destroyed and rebuilt. The present structure is attributed to Maharana Raimal (15th century), according to a plaque on the south gate of the temple. There are hourly buses to Eklingji from town.

Mavli (26km)
A significant commercial and administrative hub, it was wrested by Maharaja Udai Singh in the battle with Banbir (during the Mughal period). He saved the Sisodia clan and went on to later establish the city of Udaipur as his bastion. Mavli is remarkable too for its Baiji Raj ki Baori, which was built in marble by the mother and sister of Rana Bhim Singh between 1772 and 1780. Other attractions here are the Laxmi Narayan, Adra Bavji, Radaji Bawji and Chamunda Mata Temple, the Shriramji- Seetamata- Laxmanji Akhada and the Jain Thirthankar Chanda Prabhu Swami shrine. Mavli is also famous for the dessert, rabri, which is quite different from other parts of Rajasthan. Back in the day, Mavli rabri used to be sent out to various Rajmahals by bullock carts.

Gogunda (40km)
While touring the many tourist spots of Udaipur and dipping into the history of the ‘City of Lakes’ do try and visit Gogunda, which is just 40 km northeast of town. This is where the coronation of Maharana Pratap was conducted on the death of his father Maharana Udai Singh II in 1572. Gogunda served as temporary capital for Maharana Udai Singh, when he shifted here after the siege of Chittorgarh by Mughal Emperor Akbar. Maharana Pratap used Gogunda as a base for the guerrilla warfare against the Mughals. He also held his final war council here before the battle of Haldighati. Amongst the historical monuments to be seen here is Rajilak Sthal of Maharana Pratap, the cenotaph of Maharana Udaisingh and the palace.

Jaisamand Lake (48km)
Said to be the largest artificial lake in the country, Jaisamand's circumference measures 88 sq. km. Maharana Jaisingh had the lake built in the late-17th century. Two of the hills have palaces on top. One of these is Hawa Mahal, a stroll of less than a kilometre from the embankment. The other palace, Roothi Rani ka Mahal, is a more serious hike of about 4km. There are wonderful views of the lake and the countryside from the palaces.

If you are looking for a usual hotel with the usual modern facilities, Jaisamand Island Resort (Cell: 09928098555; 09928240555), situated on one of the islands, is a good bet.

Chavand (60km)
Located about 15km from Jaisamand Chavand is steeped in historical importance. It served as the capital of Maharana Pratap, who lived here for 12 years before he died here in 1597 after a hunting accident. The Rana got a lot of support in his military endeavours from the Bhil tribe who are settled in the area. Of note here is the statue of Rana Pratap surrounded by four ayes. The Chamunda Devi Temple here was built by the Rana. About 2km away at Bandoli you can visit the cenotaph constructed as a memorial for the Rana. It is located on a landscaped island on Khejad Lake.
RAJASAMAND

SERENE RETREAT

Location In the watershed of the Banas River and its tributaries at the South Western corner of Rajasthan sharing the boundary with the Aravalli Range

Distances 47 km SE of Kumbalgarh, 60 km NE of Udaipur, 91 km SW of Bhilwara, 123 km SE of Pali, 123 km NW of Chittorgarh, 205 km SW of Ajmer

Journey time By road 1½ hrs from Kumbalgarh, 1hr from Udaipur, 1½ hrs from Bhilwara, 2½ hrs from Chittorgarh, 1½ hrs from Deogarh (63 km), 4 hrs from Ajmer, 6 hrs from Jaipur (352 kms)

Route from Udaipur via NH58 from Udaipur on 100 Feet Road and Sukher Road, follow NH58 to take Nathdwara Road Exit from NH758. Drive to Nathdwara Road in Mahadev Colony via Piparda - to Rajsamand

Constituted on April 10, 1991 as a separate district from Udaipur, Rajsamand takes its name from Rajsamand Lake, the famous artificial water body built by Maharana Raj Singh in the 17th century. Rich in history, religion, culture and industry Rajsamand offers visitors a diverting range of activities to fill in leisurely days in this pretty region.

Rajsamand district is Rajasthan’s biggest producer of marble. The picture-postcard-perfect Rajsamand town is a rewarding melange of serenity, heritage, and spirituality. You will simply love the alluring prospects served up by the serene Rajsamand Lake with its stepped embankments. It is located between the towns of Rajnagar and Kankroli. Created by damming the Gomti, Kelwa and Tali rivers, it’s a popular picnic spot. In World War II, the lake also served as a seaplane base for the Imperial Airways. Towards the Kankroli-end, lies Nauchchoki, an immense white stone embankment adorned by ornamental arches and pavilions. The Nauchchoki embankment is made up of 25 carved stone ‘Raj Prashashti’—believed to be the longest stone inscription in Sanskrit in the world. These 24 granite slabs narrate the narrative of Mewar. The approach to the water’s edge is by marble terraces and an intricate network of stairs. Standing by the lakeshore is Dwarkadheesh Temple, which is dedicated to Lord
Dewair (50 km)
Dewair lies in the lap of the Aravalis in proximity of Kumbhalgarh and Madaria. In ancient times it was dominated by a variety of tribes. Many of Maharana Pratap’s military campaigns were defined by guerrilla warfare tactics against the Mughals. The victory of Dewair was a crowning glory for him. Col. James Tod in his Annals and Antiquities of Rajputana described Dewair as “Marathon of Mewar”. The beautiful Victory Memorial to Maharana Pratap was inaugurated by the then President of India, Pratibha Devisingh Patil in 2012.

Haldighati
The historic pass, about 40 km from Udaipur, links the districts of Rajsamand and Pali. Its name is inspired by yellow soil of the region and the site is remembered for the battle of Haldighati, which took place in 1576 between the kingdom of Mewar and the Mughal army led by Raja Man Singh. Maharana Pratap led the armed forces of Mewar against the Mughals who fought under the command of emperor Akbar’s general Man Singh I of Amer. Check out the Maharana Pratap Museum here. Haldighati is also renowned for the mud art of Molela which is being vigorously promoted as a local cottage industry.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Hotel Shreenath Tel 02952-224705 (Cell: 08561834165, 09460866719) on TVS Chowrai, Nathdwara Road, offers Semi Deluxe, Deluxe, Super Deluxe rooms and restaurant. The Rajsamand Lake View Hotel (Cell: 09636774253) on NH48, Sewali, Rajnagar offers AC and AC Deluxe rooms, a veg restaurant, parking and Wi-Fi

AROUND RAJSAMAND

Nathdwara (47km)
The temple of Srinathji at Nathdwara is among the most sacred places of worship for adherents of the Pushtimarg sect, many of whom travel from Gujarat. The Vishnu idol is said to have been brought from Mathura in 1669 to protect it from Aurangzeb. Nathdwara is famous for Pichhwai paintings done on hand-spun fabric.

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Maharana Pratap Museum Entry Fee Indians Adult Rs 100; Child Rs 50; foreigners Adult ₹ 200 Timings 7.30am-6.30pm Open daily Cell 09799003405 maharanapratapmuseum.com

GETTING THERE

Air Nearest airport: Maharana Pratap Airport, Udaipur (67 km/ 1.5 hrs) is connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur and Jodhpur. Taxi to Rajsamand costs ₹3,000.

Rail Nearest railheads: Mavli JN (35 km/1 hr); Taxi charges ₹2,200-2,500. Catch a bus to Nathdwara Rs 25; Nathdwara to Rajsamand ₹30. Udaipur (65 km/ 1 hr), which is equally convenient, offers speedier connections from Delhi (Mewar Express which runs from the Nizamuddin Railway Station). Taxi fare: ₹2,500.

Road Via NH58 From Udaipur-Nathdwara- Rajsamand. BUS from Udaipur to Nathdwara ₹80 and from Nathdwara to Rajsamand ₹30.

The town of Nathdwara is associated with Pichwai paintings

Silhouette of the bronze statue of medieval king Maharana Pratap astride his horse Chetak-- a reminder of the iconic Battle of Haldighati

Maharana Pratap Museum Entry Fee Indians Adult Rs 100; Child Rs 50; foreigners Adult ₹ 200 Timings 7.30am-6.30pm Open daily Cell 09799003405 maharanapratapmuseum.com

Getting There
provenance, in the annals of
Rajasthan's history before you
venture out, will reveal that Deogarh
served as a feudal state in Mewar.
And the ‘Rawat’, or the raja of
Deogarh, who controlled as many as
210 villages, was one of sixteen
feudal barons (umraos) who was
entitled to wait on the Maharana of
Udaipur, the capital of the kingdom
of Mewar, legendary for its warrior
kings like Rana Kumbha, Rana Sanga
and Rana Pratap.

Deogarh, formerly Devgarh,
located in Rajsamand district, was
the former estate of the Chundawat
Rajputs (who hailed from the
Mewar's House of Sisodia) and had
210 villages in their control. Gokul
Garh Fort is one of the many defence
forts that the Chundawats built to
protect their jagir, at one time
Rajasthan's fourth largest. To the
west falls the Kali Ghati of the
Aravali Range, while the Nathdwara
Ghats are to the south and Ajmer in
the north.

The city's altitude allows Deogarh
to be a popular destination all year
round, even when much of
Rajasthan is burning up under the
untrammelled gaze of the summer
sun. The expansive fort palace
complex, temples, miniature
paintings, jeep and train safaris,
birding and wildlife spotting make
for excellent weekend distractions.

The other attraction of course is it's
not as crowded, unlike Udaipur,
Jodhpur even Bikaner. The area is
noted for its granite polishing, a
very old occupation on account of
the region’s mining activities
because of the great reserves of
costly stones, such as marble etc,
serving the construction business.

Bird watching at Fort Seengh Sagar
A fortified hunting lodge, converted
into a luxury villa, stands on an
island in the middle of a small lake

Passengers at Kamli ghat station

The single gauge train safari here is great fun

DEOGARH

GREENER PASTURES

District Rajsamand Division Udaipur
Location In southern Rajasthan in the Aravalli region of Rajsamand District on NH8
Distances 146km SW of Ajmer, 133km N of Udaipur, 277km SW of Jaipur
Route from Udaipur NH48 to Kamli Ghat via Nagda, Eklingji, Devi Garh, Nathdwara and
Gomti; state road to Deogarh Route from Jaipur NH48 to Kamli Ghat via Dudu, Kishangarh,
Ajmer and Beawar; state road to Deogarh

The 133km drive from Udaipur
to the little town of Deogarh,
straddling the border of
Rajasthan’s Mewar and Marwar
region passes quite pleasantly as the
monsoon plenty has etched in its
wake a delightful verdant landscape
that leaves you quite spellbound.

Every pond, every little water body
glistens gem-like against this
emerald setting. The higher ranges
of the forested Aravallis beckon with
their bewitching allurements, but
you will only have Deogarh on your
minds and refuse to be besieged by
longings to go exploring in the hills,
exciting as that prospect might be.

A quick once-over of its
### Deogarh School of Miniature Painting

The Deogarh School was a breakaway from the major Mewar School in Udaipur. The late Rawat Nahar Singhji II, used to be an avid collector and could wax lyrical over this specialised art form. The work of the artists was dominated by scenes from the private lives and court ceremonies of the ruling Rawats, with occasional sorties into territory such as the Krishna Leela for light relief. Inscriptions on the back of many of the Deogarh paintings have enabled the majority to be identified with one particular family of artists—Bagta who painted the miniature of Anop Singh (active in Deogarh around 1769-1820); his son, Chokha to whom the miniature of Gokuldas II is attributed (1770-1830) and Chokha’s son, Boijnath (1800-1845). Stylistic evidence suggests that the same artists may also have worked on some of the wall paintings outside and inside Rooms 210 and 228 in the palace.

Close to the silent ruins of the deserted village of Manpura, just 5km away from Deogarh Mahal. The spot comes into its own after the monsoon when the lake is abrim with water and birdlife—popular visitors being the Saras crane, white throated kingfisher, pied kingfisher, black-headed ibis, et al. This once densely forested patch of land was inhabited by lions (sinh) from which it gets its name. Its organic structure has been created by members of the legendary ‘Sompuras’, the clan of architects of Gujarat revered for their brilliant temples and palaces.

### Temple trail

The popular Anjaneshwar Mahadev Temple is located a few kilometers outside the city outside town. The Dashavatara Temple dedicated to Vishnu is said to date from the Gupta period. Manastambha Jain Temple Complex which dates back to the 17th century houses 31 shrines marked by images of the Tirthankara images, Manasthamba (votive pillars), Ayagpattas (votive tablets), Sarvatobhadra Pratimas or Jain images visible from all sides and Sahasrakutas or (carved pillars).

### Train safari

Sign up for this unique journey from Goram Ghat to Phulod (17km/2hrs) at the hotel which arranges delightful exploration of rural Rajasthan by meter gauge train on a 1930s British track. The track consists of 17 U-shape bridges and two tunnels with lots of monkeys popping up to watch you go by.

### Temple trail

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### Shopping

The three ‘Ms’ — mojaris, metal craft and miniature paintings — should be on top of your list as far as souvenirs go. The region is famed for its leather and metal work (both in brass and silver) and there are a number of shops in the Rajputon ka Mohalla where you can lay your hands on sturdy jootis, intricate metal toy carts and locks in the shape of camels, birds and scorpions, besides beautiful old and new silver jewellery. Check out Navrattan Jewellers for its excellent and evenly priced variety at the Kotwali Chabutra outside the palace gates.

A few shops away is the Royal Art Palace that sells bric-a-brac but its traditionally bound leather diaries and old wooden photo-frames are worth browsing through. If you are looking to pick up some miniature paintings, head for Rijhavan, the palace shop that besides silver jewellery, silk shawls, garments and bedcovers, also sells Deogarh miniature paintings.

### Where to Stay and Eat

**Deogarh Mahal** (Tel: 02904-252777, 253333) is reputed for the excellent personalised service; you may even get to dine with Rawat Nahar Singh’s family (who continue to reside in one wing) over a cultural evening on the beautifully mashal-lit terrace. Close to the Raghhav Sagar Lake, Dev Shree (Cell: 0992917200), has 7 guestrooms with gorgeous views, a swimming pool, homely meals that are organic and nutritious. They also do jeep safaris into the nearby countryside.

*With Inputs from Charu Soni*
KUMBHALGARH WLS

**PANTHER ON THE PROWL**

**Districts** Rajsamand Division Udaipur  
**Location** In southern Rajasthan, near the formidable Kumbhalgarh Fort. The famous 15th-century Jain temples at Ranakpur lie to the west of the sanctuary  
**Distances** 84km N of Udaipur, 372km SW of Jaipur  
**Journey time** By road 2.5hrs from Udaipur, 8.5hrs from Jaipur  
**Route from Udaipur** NH76 to Iswal; district roads to Kumbhalgarh WLS via Losingh Crossing, Auda and Kelwara  
**Route from Jaipur** NH48 to Gomti Crossing via Ajmer; state highway to Charbhuja; district road to Kumbhalgarh

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It is six in the morning. As the sun begins its slow climb up the sky, the tall grass on the side of the road glimmers in the first light of the day. The sanctuary is a field of gold but none of its residents are out basking in the sun. Then a crested hawk eagle comes into view, its prominent crest bobbing up and down. The view is spectacular from Mahuti Khet, which flaunts a dense cluster of mahua trees, clearly a favourite with langurs. You can also espy Kumbhalgarh Fort, from which the sanctuary takes its name. The fort rises above the forest, a picture of formidable isolation.

Your ride brings you to Choti Aodhi, once a hunting ground for the then rulers of Ghanerao, now a waterhole where animals and wildlife enthusiasts alike break journey. At Thandi Beri, visitors sometimes swap notes about sightings from those on

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**FAST FACTS**

- **When to go** December to March is a good time to spot animals
- **Wildlife/Forest Dept Offices**
  - DFO (Wildlife) Rajsamand
    - CCF, Chetak Circle, Udaipur  
    - Cell: 09414268138
  - DCF, Sajjangarh, Udaipur  
    - Cell: 09410992675
  - ACF, Kelwara, Kumbhalgarh  
    - Cell: 09414352737
- **Assistant Conservator of Forests**
  - Kumbhalgarh WLS, Sadri  
    - Cell: 09442828096
- **Tourist Office**
  - Regional Tourist Office & Tourist Reception Centre
    - Fateh Memorial, Suraj Pol, Udaipur  
    - Tel: 0294-2411535, 2521971/1364
    - STD code Rajsamand 02952, Udaipur 0294
their way back from safari. Grey jungle fowl run zigzag on the path for a while and for no apparent reason dart off into the bushes. They add to the forest atmosphere with some spirited screeching. The morning sightings may be poor but you can always opt for the afternoon safari when you might get lucky in this ancient jungle.

Suddenly there's a charged air. There's much excitement in the jeep ahead as it quietly stops less than a 100 yards from a parapet skirting the jungle. A huge leopard is sprawled on it, happily soaking in the winter sun. But in a second, it leaps off and vanishes in the jungle as another jeep arrives noisily along aside. Much excitement all around on this chance encounter—and that too before one has driven into the sanctuary proper. Moments in the wild are made of such memories—and are so worth it.

Kumbhalgarh WLS will always be as much loved for these solitary sightings as for its enormous botanical wealth and tranquil vistas.

**ABOUT KUMBHALGARH WLS**

The Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary will come as a surprise to those who see Rajasthan only as a desert state. These green tracts form the dividing line between the former states of Mewar and Marwar. Once the hunting preserve of royals, this area was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1971. The diverse topography of the sanctuary adds to its charms. In its eastern part are ranges that loom over 3,478 ft, as well as the source of the River Banas. The Marwar plains are to the north-west of the sanctuary. The rainwater on the western slopes flows as small rivers such as Sukdi, Mithdi, Sumer and Kot, all of which are the tributaries of River Luni that ultimately merges into the Arabian Sea. The sanctuary is known to be home to chausinghas (four-horned antelopes), leopards, panthers and sloth bears.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

Kumbhalgarh WLS has many options for tourists—apart from jeep safaris, you can also go trekking here. There are points of historic interest in the sanctuary too.

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*Kumbhalgarh Fort*

Kumbhalgarh Fort is now a **UNESCO-acclaimed heritage site** known for its tourist attractions, among them its 35km-long massive wall. Wide enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast, it is said to be the second longest in the world after the Great Wall of China. The much-visited renovated fortress, rings with the sights and sounds of the annual **Kumbhalgarh Festival**. The **Heritage Walk** has become a popular event now. Visitors can enjoy the fort’s history recounted in a **sound-and-light show**.

About 2km from the sanctuary, the Kumbhalgarh Fort is considered the second most impressive fort in Mewar, after Chittorgarh. Built in 1448 by King Rana Kumbha of Mewar (after whom the fort gets his name), at a height of 3,600 ft, it was also the birthplace of King Rana Pratap. The fortress was the base of Maharana Hameer, who went on to establish the rule of the Sisodia dynasty after the end of the rule of the Rawals in Mewar. The fort is inextricably linked to Rana Kumbha since 1448 when he put the stamp of his fantastic military genius by shoring up this fortress into a second line of defense to his fortified capital—Chittorgarh.

- **Entry fee**
  - Indians ₹40, foreigners ₹600
- **Video camera** for personal use (handheld) ₹25
- **Sound & Light Show**
  - Adults: Indian ₹118, foreigners ₹236; Children ₹59
- **Show Timings** 6.45 pm

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One of the residents of the sanctuary
The 15-km-long drive from Kumbhalgarh WLS to Thandi Beri is the most popular jeep journey in the sanctuary. In the roughly 3.5hrs that will take you to get to Thandi Beri and back, you can see leopards, bears, sambar—if you are fortunate. You can also visit the famous 15th-century Jain temples at Ranakpur, located at one end of the sanctuary. Jeeps can be hired from Kumbhalgarh town or Kelwara (about 6km before Kumbhalgarh).

**Gypsy safari**
Indians ₹3,000, foreigners ₹5,000 (6 pax; + entry fee)
**Camera** still: free, video: Indians ₹500-600, foreigners ₹900

**Sanctuary timings**
6am-9am, 3pm-4pm

**Trekking**
Trekking is allowed in the sanctuary, and the hilly terrain is ideal for it. Ask your travel agent to arrange a guide for you. Popular walking trails are Kumbhalgarh to Thandi Beri (14km), Roopnagar to Sumer (98km), Ranakpur to Ranakankar (15km), Ranakpur to Kumbhalgarh (25km), Malgarh to Magga (8km), Roopanmata to Ranakpur (30km) and Ranakpur to Thandi Beri (15km). Your entry permit to the sanctuary is the only document required.

**Horse safari**
This is not a regular feature but the staff at some of the hotels might agree to arrange a horse safari in the sanctuary. Popular routes in the sanctuary include Kumbhalgarh to Ghanerao, Ranakpur to Thandi Beri and Thandi Beri to Sumer.

**Tirthankar Nature Trail**
Located opposite the Ranakpur temples, this 3.7km-long trail is an ode to the Jain tirthankaras and is also representative of an ideal Aravalli ecosystem. Along this trail are planted the species of various kinds of trees under which the 24 Jain tirthankaras supposedly achieved enlightenment.

**Joba Wolf Point**
Situated about 7km from Sadri near Joba Village, this is a wolf habitat. Set at the foothills near the Muchhala Mahaveer Temple, 500 hectares of the forest here are home to the Indian wolf.

**Muchhala Mahaveer Temple**
This Jain temple near Ghanerao is devoted to Lord Mahaveer. The unique feature of this temple is that Lord Mahaveer sports a moustache—hence the name Muchhala.

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**
Tourists visiting Kumbhalgarh have the option of staying either within the sanctuary or outside. As people visit Kumbhalgarh for both the sanctuary and the fort, peak season is usually very busy—so do make your bookings in advance.

**In the sanctuary**
The Forest Rest Houses in the sanctuary are located at Thandi Beri, Ranakankar, Sumer and Sadri. For bookings, contact the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Kumbhalgarh WLS, Sadri, or the DFO Wildlife’s office in Rajsamand.(see Fast Facts on page 309).

**Outside the sanctuary**
The Aodhi (Cell: 8003722333), is a luxury hotel with a multi-cuisine restaurant, a pool, a café and Internet. Kumbhal Castle Hotel (Cell: 08003180979), about 2km from the fort, has restaurant and AC rooms.
imperceptibly on the water surface. The sounds of Dungarpur drift indolently in the mild breeze — the daily grind of the autorickshaws, the rush of the local bazaar and the resonant bells of the temple.

Before that, as you approach Dungarpur, through the rocky, craggy terrain dotted with cacti bushes, mimosa trees and teak forest, the first sights will be typical of a small town. You will see jeeps heavy with men and boys hanging out from their doors, loud autos tumbling across the town and markets full of chemists and mechanics. You go past these, and a small dam, and reach the newer palace of erstwhile Dungarpur kings — part of which is today a hotel — and settle in their lakeside, poolside open-air restaurant. Now you notice the surroundings again, and the town is not very far but appears distant. The tract is surrounded by low hills, and the name ‘Dungarpur, the City of Hills’ now makes sense.

Later, with some difficulty, you will tear yourself away from the soothing waters of the Gaibsagar Lake and visit the old palace. Then the history of the not-so-well-known kingdom of Dungarpur will slowly emerge from the closed cupboards and the forgotten recesses, enchanting you with its colours and its stories.

**THINGS TO SEE AND DO**

One of the reasons for coming to Dungarpur can well be that you want to do nothing. In that case, book yourself a room in the Udai Bilas Palace, grab a long chair near their pool all day long and just be. But if you are in Dungarpur to absorb all that it has to offer, it has a trick or two up its sleeve. The antiquity and the hidden treasures of the Old Palace, the birdwatching opportunities and the multi-cultural dimensions here take you by surprise. Dungarpur can keep you interested for two or even three days.

**Udai Bilas Palace** is situated right on the south bank of the lake. On the west bank is the dam that created the lake, now the notional centre of the town. Across the road from the dam is the Srinathji Temple. The old palace, called Juna Mahal, is 4 km south-east of the Udai Bilas Palace, and is approached by a bumpy road. The old fort is located on a hill rising above the Juna Mahal. Below it is the old Dungarpur Town.

Your hotel is the best place to ask...
for a taxi. In good weather, a taxi in good condition can manage the steep half a kilometre climb up to the fort.

**Juna Mahal**

Literally the Old Palace, the Juna Mahal is well and truly old. Some claim, with justifiable reasons, that it is the oldest existing royal palace complex in India, perhaps in the world. The construction of the palace was started sometime in the 13th century and for about 650 years it was occupied by a single royal dynasty — the Guhilot Rajputs. At the same time, the palace was expanded, usually vertically. Now it is a wonderful edifice, nine storeys high, with two levels underground. The structure has suffered in the few decades of non-occupancy.

**Birdwatching**

**Gaibsagar is fun**

The Juna Mahal enjoyed a strategic location on a 1,476-foot high hill overlooking the old township of Dungarpur; its towering chhatris and engraved balconies are eye-catching even from a distance. The palace is made of a beautiful bluish grey local stone called pareva stone and is an example of temple architecture being introduced into royal residences. The decorative elements include pillars, brackets and arches; the carvings depict warriors, dancers and musicians. The interiors of the palace are a veritable museum — its various chambers are tastefully decorated with ornamental mirror work, stone inlays and glass inlays.

However, the most impressive are the paintings. There are depictions of gods, with Krishna and his playful stories being the favourite. There are court scenes and hunting expeditions. On the walls you will see G Langar Festival being celebrated, the Bhils of Dungarpur being defeated in a battle by the Rajputs and a portrait of Queen Victoria. You can spend over two hours at the palace.

- **Entry fee** ₹250  
  **Timings** 9am-5pm

**Temple Trail**

Some of the temples and shrines worth exploring here are the Deo Somnath Temple, Beneshwar Dham, the Galisayakot Dargah, Bhuvaneshwar Temple, Boreshwar Temple, Kshetrapal Ji Temple, Nagphani and Ashapura Temple.

**Government Archaeological Museum**

Spend some time browsing through the collection of statues recovered from the Vagad region. Of note are the statues of various deities, stone inscriptions, coins and paintings dating back to the 6th century.

**Birdwatching**

**Gaibsagar Lake** and the adjoining woodlands are great places to observe birdlife. November to February is the time for migratory birds and the monsoon months, from July to October, is the nesting season for local birds. Painted storks, pond herons, egrets and coots can be seen here. The woods are home to grey partridge, the paradise flycatcher and the golden-backed woodpecker. In the marshy area between Udaipur Palace and the Juna Mahal, you can spot the sarus crane and other birds.

**WHERE TO STAY AND EAT**

The Udaipur Palace (Cell: 09314653967) is the place to stay in Dungarpur, and in fact one of the reasons to visit the town. Although quite close to the centre of the town, Udai Bilas Palace occupies a secluded location flanked by the Gaibsagar Lake on one side and a small forest on the other. A part of the palace is still the royal residence.

- **Entry Fee** ₹200  
  **Timings** 9-12.30; 3.30pm-5pm

**Vintage Car Entry**

**Entry Fee** ₹200  
**Timings** 9-12.30; 3.30pm-5pm

**Tips** The museum is open only to in-house guests of Udaipur Palace.
udaipur district

worship the icon as their Kala Deo, the Black Lord. The temple is also famous as Kesariya Temple because kesar (saffron) is the chief offering made to the god here.

**Timings** 6 am-9.30 pm

**Khadagada (47km)**
The curiously named village of Khadagada is home to the 200-year-old temple dedicated to the guardian deity Kshetrapala (son of Lord Shiva, literally meaning protector of the land). The idol installed inside is said to be from the 11th or the 12th century, and the premises house other smaller temples dedicated to Lord Ganesha, Lord Shiva, Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Hanuman. A huge two-day fair is organised on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti (usually in April).

**Beneshwar (70km)**
Beneshwar means the ‘master of the delta’, the local name that has been given to a shivling at the Mahadeo Temple in Dungarpur. Tribal communities in the neighbouring states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh also hold Beneshwar sacred. Celebrated at the end of January or the first week of February in Dungarpur, the Beneshwar Fair sees a huge gathering of tribal communities. On the occasion of the fair, thousands of devotees gather at the confluence of Som and Mahi rivers, where the fair is held. They sing folk songs, sometimes around bonfires at night, and there are all the other ingredients of a village fair: dances, acrobatics and demonstration of magic.

**Udaipur (100km)**
See page 289

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**AROUND DUNGARPUR**

**Bhuvneshwar (12km)**
The town of Bhuvneshwar is well-known for the annual two-day fair on the occasion of Rangpanchmi, an event where visitors come from far and wide to witness the famous Gair dance performed by the Bhils. It is also known for the Bhuvneshwar Mahadev Temple (9km), dedicated to Lord Shiva, which is quite a hidden gem. The temple is perched over a hilltop and built around a naturally carved Shivling, now a part of the sanctum sanctorum. The weathered pillars still retain some of the old grandeur. Further up on the hill are a forest and an ancient monastery.

**Rishabdeo (41km)**
An important pilgrimage site just off NH48, Rishabdeo is a captivating place. The origins of the temple here are unknown but there is evidence of some repairs having been done in the 15th century. The temple is built of grey pareva stone with beautiful marble carvings. The multi-pillared hall has an extraordinary intensity about it. In the centre is a big idol of black marble. Interestingly, Jains, Hindus and Bhils worship the deity in their own ways. For Jains, the deity is Rishabdeo, also called Adinath, their first Tirthankara. For Hindus, the deity is Kesariyaji, a reincarnation of Vishnu. Bhils

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**ABOUT DUNGARPUR**

**Getting There**

- **Air** Maharana Pratap Airport, Dabok, Udaipur (125 km/2 hrs), which is connected to Jaipur, Jodhpur, Aurangabad, Delhi and Mumbai. Taxi will cost ₹2,500 approx
- **Rail** Dungarpur Station on the Udaipur-Ahmedabad metre gauge line. But Udaipur (100 km/2 hrs) is a more convenient railhead as the road journey to Dungarpur is shorter by 2 hrs
- **Road** Dungarpur lies 21 km east of NH 48, which links Delhi and Mumbai via Jaipur and Ahmedabad.  **BUS** From Udaipur, there are frequent buses to Dungarpur.
ruled in the 14th century. His brother Kshemkarn was expelled over dispute, forcing him to relocate himself and his family in the Aravallis. His son Surajmal in 1514 went on to rule from his capital of ‘Kanthal-Desh’ at Dewaliya (Devgarh), a small town just 10 km in the west from present Pratapgarh town. As the environs of Devgarh were found unsuitable because of the paucity of water, a descendant Rajkumar Pratapsingh started to build a new town near Devgarh in 1698 and named it Pratapgarh.

The city, throbbing with the fast-developing populace and the thriving tribal communities, is also known for its fine quality hing (asafoetida) and jirawan.

Gautameshwar Temple
About 3km away from Arnod tehsil is a unique Shiva shrine, reputed to provide salvation to all sinners. Having taken a purification dip in a reservoir in premises you will be handed a certificate attesting to it by the temple’s pujari himself. The sarovar is said to be the very one where the rishi Gautama is said to have freed himself of the sin of killing a cow — hence the name Gautameshwar.

Bhanwar Mata Temple
This 5th-century temple is said to have been built by a king Gori and is a Shakti Peeth. About 3km away from Chhoti Sadri tehsil, the temple makes for a popular tourist spot owing to the fact that

The Art of Thewa Jewellery
One of Pratapgarh’s most unique contributions to Rajasthani crafts is the over 400-year-old tradition of thewa jewellery. For long it was thought of as a form of enamelling, but it is in fact a traditional art of fusing 23K gold with multi-coloured glass. The most common colours of glass used are red, blue and green. As thewa became a royal fetish, the themes used reflected the taste and concerns of royalty. The most exquisite examples of thewa work are housed in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. Amongst Queen Elizabeth’s personal belongings is an intricate casket, with extremely narrative panels.
Jakham Reservoir is located at village Anuppura of Pratapgarh Tehsil of Pratapgarh District. It was completed in the year 1986. It is constructed on river Jakham, which is a tributary of river Mahi. The project provides irrigation benefits to tribal people.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT
Fort Dhariyawad Heritage Hotel (Cell: 07016662593) at Dhariyawad has 12 rooms, a restaurant and arranges horse/jeep safaris, village tours. Hotel Celebration (Tel: 01478-22133 Cell: 09413362661) at Zero Miles Circle, Mandsaur Road has 18 rooms and a veg restaurant.

Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary

Spread across the Pratapgarh and Chittorgarh districts in SE Rajasthan, the Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary stretches for 423 sq km, witnessing an evocative confluence of the Aravallis, the Vindhyachal hills and the Malwa plateau—a truly scenic expanse that blends the charms of mythology and geological fortuitousness.

Believed to have been the spot where Valmiki Ashram of the Ramayana was located, the WLS, which was recognised in 1979, is named after Sita, wife of Lord Rama. Of interest here for archaeology and art buffs are the Prehistoric rock carvings.

Of the over hundred reported medicinal plants identified here, as many as 17 are among the 32 endangered species listed by the National Medicinal Plant Board of New Delhi. Trees, considered best for timber wood, too, are also found in abundance here, amongst them costly timbers such as teak, sandalwood, sheesham, kadamb, and sagwan.

These lush environs, embroidered with many waterbodies, are a haven for 325 species of avifauna, including migratory guests such as the little cormorant and the white-browed fantail flycatcher. Wildlife sightings include those of leopard and flying squirrels. The ideal habitat for biodiversity existing here owes itself to the convergence of three different geological formations, resulting in a uniquely hilly terrain with altitude levels spanning 280 to 600 metres above sea level. The WLS is drained by the rivers Sitamata, Budho, Jakham, Tankiya and Karmoi.

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The adventurous traveller can enjoy great wildlife sightings.

**Tip** Enjoy the Baisakhi Mela in April.

- **Entry Fee** Indians ₹75, Child ₹40; Foreigners ₹410
- **Timings** 9am-5pm

### GETTING THERE

**Air** Nearest airport: Dabok Airport (Udaipur) 145 km from Pratapgarh is well connected to Jaipur, Jodhpur, Delhi and Mumbai. Taxi fare approx. ₹4,100-4,500. Negotiate a rate for the WLS.

**Rail** Nearest railhead: Chittorgarh (110km).

**Road** Pratapgarh is well connected with major cities in Rajasthan. Negotiate a rate with a local car for the WLS.

**Bus** State and private bus services are available to Pratapgarh from Chittorgarh, Banswara (85 km), Udaipur etc.

it has a waterfall close by.
BANSWARA

THE POETRY OF BAMBOO AND WATER

District Banswara Division Udaipur
Location Situated amidst the Aravalli valley, Banswara lies in the southernmost part of Rajasthan
Distances 102km SE of Dungarpur, 88km SW of Pratapgarh, 165km SE of Udaipur, 302km SE of Mount Abu
Journey time By road 2.5hrs from Dungarpur, 1.5hrs from Pratapgarh, 3hrs from Udaipur
Route from Udaipur Udaipur-Banswara Highway and Salumbar-Banswara Road via Kotra-Jaisamand-Veerpura- Devgaon-Kholadi-Munged and Sabla

- RANEE SAHANEY

A gem, largely undiscovered by the great throngs of travellers who hit the popular tourist trails of Rajasthan, Banswara—‘the City of a Hundred Islands’ is certainly worth writing home about. This picturesquely sited little town, is easily accessible from that flamboyant city with its fairy-tale palaces and tranquil lakes—Udaipur.

Located between Udaipur and Chittorgarh, the area around Banswara has long been the home of the Bhil tribesmen. History reveals that Banswara was ruled by a Bhil ruler named Bansia (Wasna), who was defeated by Jagmal Singh who then went on to crown himself Banswara’s first Maharaval.

Two high points of Banswara’s natural beauty were the abundance of its bamboo groves and the numerous water bodies. And though the bamboo has been sacrificed in the run for developing the town, you can still enjoy exploring the lakes and pretty islands set amidst its backwaters.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Mahi Dam
Drained by the Mahi River, Banswara has capitalised on the damming of its waters, particularly when in the rainy season the sluice gates of the Mahi Dam are opened and the water comes roiling out in its hurry to sweep through the verdant landscape. Picnickers at the dam site make merry, revelling over this bounty. This is the biggest water reservoir in the Udaipur division. The hilltop Raj Mandir or City Palace offers spectacular views.

Banswara Kagdi Pick Up Garden
Embroidering the edges of the Kagdi Lake, this lovely green lung attracts a bounty of avifauna, making it a must-visit for avid birders and nature lovers.

River Mahi comes gushing out
Anand Sagar Lake
Also referred to as the Bai Talab, the Anand Sagar Lake in the eastern enclave of Banswara, was commissioned by Lanchi Bai, the Rani of Maharaval Jagmal Singh. It is popular for the ‘Kalpa Vriksha’ trees – believed to be holy and have wish-fulfilling powers – found in great numbers here. There a few cenotaphs scattered around this verdant space.

Raj Mandir
The City Palace, mostly referred to as Raj Mandir, from its hilltop perch yields splendid views of Banswara and its verdant surrounds. Dating back to the 16th century, it’s built along the lines of traditional Rajput palace architecture. The summer retreat is located on the shoreline of Diablak Lake, a lotus-filled tranquil water body. Don’t miss the clock on the wall of the Tripolia Gate.

Mangarh Dham
For the local Bhil community, Govind Guru, a personage of high reverence, has been their saint who ensured the veneration of Mangarh Hill as the centre of his faith. He was inspirational in invoking the spirit of patriotism and 1,500 of his disciples (gurubhakts) sacrificed their lives while fighting against the British army. It is also known as the Jallianwala Bagh of Rajasthan.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

Located at the Nakshatra Mall on the Udaipur-Dungarpur Link Road Hotel Nakshatra (Tel: 02962-250909) offers clean rooms and a veg restaurant. On Dungarpur Road, opposite the Coco Petrol Pump, Hotel Landmark (Cell: 09928209333) has neat rooms and a veg restaurant while Hotel Ganpati Plaza (Cell: 09460246612) opposite the Hero Showroom, Shyam Colony, Udaipur Road, has 20 rooms and a dining area.

AROUND BANSWARA

Waterfalls and Monsoon Magic
Banswara has long been loved by the local people for its picturesque waterfalls, perfect for leisurely picnics. Many of these come into their full glory during a good monsoon. Singpura Fall which drops from a height of 150 ft is also locally known as Wagad Ka Niagara. Jholla Falls in Naugama village, is around 30 km from Banswara city. What adds to its beauty is the lush verdure of its setting. Jua Falls is powered by an exuberant monsoon. Scores of revellers cut through the forested trails to enjoy the thunder and glory of this sparkling outburst of nature. Kadeliya Fall offers lots of fun to local picnickers who can enjoy the shallow pool created by the falls. But in the monsoon it is inadvisable to take a dip as the current becomes quite strong. Jagmeru Hill Station, located just
12km from Banswara becomes a bower of verdant splendour in the monsoons. A steep road leads to the Hanuman temple which attracts many devotees.

**Samai Mata – Bhandariya (4km)**
Nestled in the verdant hills around Banswara, the Samai Mata Mandir is also a popular picnic spot for locals. The temple itself is accessed by about 400 steps.

**Chacha Kota Backwater (14km)**
The hinterland of the dam, some 14km away from Banswara, is studded with hundreds of richly forested little islands (originally small hillocks which got submerged in the dam waters) spread across the Chacha Kota backwater; the low hills are alive with the sound of dozens of small waterfalls streaking down the forested hillsides.

**Tripura Sundri, Village Umrai (20km)**
Located 5km ahead of Talwara, and famous for its many temples and stone-carving artisans of the Sompura community, this Shaktipeeth shrines invokes great reverence and is a major pilgrim hub. The Goddess, who features 18 hands and straddles a tiger made of black stone, is the tutelary deity of the region. The Shri Yantra resting at her feet is believed to be imbued with mystic powers. A massive Dandia performance is hosted every year during the October Navaratri festivities.

**Ghotia Amba (35km)**
Located in the hills near Banswara, it is believed to have been visited by Pandavas during their exile. Local legend has it that the mango (amba) trees were planted by them. In the Hindu month of Chaitra, a fair here attracts a large number of pilgrims from Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Kela Pani, another sacred spot nearby, is also associated with the Pandavas. It is believed that Pandavas had served food in banana leaves to the rishis and sages. The shrine here is taken care of by the Devasthan Department of the government of Rajasthan.

**Arthuna Temple (55km)**
This complex of ancient temples, accessed by the Banswara - Dungarpur Road, is said to have been raised in the 11th and 13th centuries; today, it is an important archaeological site. Believed to be the ancient capital of the Parmar rulers, the site has yielded many temples that reveal the glorious past of the region's rich heritage. The principal temple in the complex, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is the Mandleshwar Shiva Temple, constructed in 1080.

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**GETTING THERE**

- **Air** Nearest airport: Maharana Pratap Airport, Udaipur (185km/3hrs). Taxi fare approx ₹3,600 (return)
- **Rail** Nearest Railhead: Banswara does not have a train station, and the nearest station is Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh (80km/2hrs) which is connected to major cities like Delhi, Mumbai etc or Dungarpur
- **Road** Banswara is well connected to cities and towns of Rajasthan, Gujarat and MP by State Highways/National Highways. **BUS** State and private buses connect it to major cities like Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Mount Abu, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Bhopal, Ujjain, Mumbai and Delhi
primarily the story of its 700-acre fort. Built by the Mauryas between the 5th and the 8th centuries, it fell in 734 to the Gehlot founder Bappa Rawal and was occupied for the next eight centuries by a succession of Rajputs and Gurjar-Parthirahas, with intermittent Muslim assaults. Having housed 70,000 people in its heyday, the fort is today more a 500-foot high colony than a monument. As a testimony to its origins and its many rulers, it's littered with Hindu, Jain and Muslim construction, sometimes merged in one building.

Chittor was the Sisodia capital of Mewar from the early-13th century until the Mughal Emperor Akbar's conquest of 1567, at which point Rana Udai Singh decamped to the hills. History, as warfare later comes to be glamorously known, having moved on, the beauty of this windswept swathe of eastern Mewar today lies in its quietude.

**Things to see and do**

Some people visit Chittorgarh as a day-trip from Udaipur, but this is not recommended as you then spend half the day on the road. It's best to base yourself in a resort in the countryside and then visit the fort, the villages, woodlands and temples nearby. From the city, you can drive up to the fort yourself or hire an auto in the main market.

**Chittorgarh Fort**

Many battles were fought in and around this strategic bastion. The uphill road to the fort passes through various gateways, some with recognisably Gujarati elements. The tour begins with Rana Kumbha's Palace, one of the fort's most evocative sections and a model of Rajput architecture. Though Rana Kumbha didn’t establish the complex, during his long rule (1433-68), he renovated and added to it considerably. Just inside the entrance, you can see where he used to sit and watch the sun rise and pray to Surya, to the tunes of musicians who were seated in the chhatri opposite.

**Memories of a queen**

Within the Zenana Mahal of the Kumbha Palace, the upper floors were knocked out by invaders—the better to view the lovely ceiling preferred to dishonour and swords clashed with alarming regularity. A magnificent fort watches over the town, defying the every-dayness of the landscape with stories so incredible that only a thin line seems to separate fact from fiction.

Indeed, the story of Chittor is

**FAST FACTS**

*When to go* Mid-October and mid-March. The rainy season has one advantage: only then does Menal’s waterfall come into its full glory.

*Tourist office*

- Tourist Reception Centre
  - Janata Avas Grih, Station Road,
  - Tel: 01472-241089
  - STD code 01472

*Entry fee*

- Indian ₹40, foreigner ₹600
- Camera Free
- Videography ₹25
dome today. Around these chambers is an endless array of ruined maidservants’ quarters, with stairways leading up to nowhere. Outside, there are faint traces of pink and blue paint on the walls and, when the sky is pure blue, you can imagine how stunning this place must have been.

**Secular strains**

Wander on to see where Mirabai spent much of her life as the widow of the young Sisodia prince Bhoj Raj. Little of this atmospheric building remains, but the view of the city of Chittor, all periwinkle-blue houses with teal-green doors, is worth checking out. The Diwan-i-Aam (the Hall of Public Audience) is essentially a tree-dappled lawn, at the end of which stands the Rana Sangha’s elephant chamber.

The fort’s Jain population comprised accountants and bankers who worked for the Ranas, and they left their mark architecturally. Across the road from Rana Kumbha’s palace is a 15th century Jain temple, Shanti Nath, built by the Rana’s accountant. It now represents an astonishing duality—a neat square, elaborately carved on all sides, capped with a simple Islamic dome. Nearby, in the 19th-century Fateh Prakash Palace, a museum houses weapons, sculptures, artefacts and some folk art pieces.

- **Entry fee** Indian ₹20, foreigner ₹100
- **Timings** 9.45am-4.45pm, Mondays closed

Continuing south, the 15th-century **Kumbhashyam Temple** keeps the **Mirabai Temple** company. The queen is famed for her deep devotion to Lord Krishna after her marriage. Sadly she became a widow quite early. She recommenced singing and declined being in purdah. Life wasn’t easy for her, especially because of the attempts of her brother-in-law to poison her. This is a memorial temple, not an actual place where Mirabai spent her time.

Beyond the next patch of custard-apple trees is the tower you can see from afar, the **Vijay Stambh**. Built by Rana Kumbha to celebrate his 1437 routing of the Sultan of Malwa (Manu), it rises nine storeys and is covered head to toe with Hindu deities. In a nod to secularism, Allah’s name is inscribed in Arabic on the third and eighth storeys, but that didn’t stop later Muslim invaders from taking shots at this amazing structure.

South of the tower is the site of the second great saka, in 1534, this one is owed to Bahadur Shah of Gujarat.

On the road to Padmini’s Palace, you’ll pass the **Kalika Mata Temple**, dedicated to Surya in the 8th century CE, but spruced up and rededicated in the 14th.

Padmini’s own portion of the palace, the Zenana Mahal, was built in the middle of a lotus pond, the better to keep her cool in the blistering summer.

In 1567, when it was clear that Mewar would not join the Mughal army as Amber had done, Akbar attacked. This would be Chittor’s third and final saka. In 1559 Maharana Udai Singh established a new Mewar capital, called Udaipur in the fertile circular valley—called Girwa,south-west of Nagda. His son Maharana Pratap was to keep the Sisodia flame alive.

**Corner of the rising sun**

Drive up the fort’s eastern side for your last spectacular treat—a landscape of sandstone scree, wildflowers and custard-apple trees culminating in the Suraj Pol (gate), which faces east above a 5th-century Maurya-built portion of the fort’s wall. The plains, almost 600ft below, are simply immense. On the way back north you’ll pass the **Kirti Stambh**, a 12th-century Digambar Jain tower honouring Adinath, the 1st Tirthankara. The modern city of Chittor, based on the cement and marble industries, does not beckon with any great attraction. The one exception is the **Dargah Sharif Hazrat Kazichalphil Shah**, a white-

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**The iconic Vijay Stambh**

Fateh Prakash Palace in Chittor Fort houses an excellent museum
marble confection on the chowk in the main bazaar. It’s a beautiful space, with intimate, clean chambers and a potted garden.

**SHOPPING**

The only indigenous crafts are the painted wooden toys of Bassi village. Enter Bassi’s cheerful old quarter, known simply as Sheher (town), and wander into the workshops. Dancers, musicians, soldiers and animals are all charmingly rendered, as is Parvati (Gauri) a particular favourite. The most elaborate speciality is the kavadh, a sort of miniature altar painted with scenes from the epics and hinged so that it can be folded up like a book.

Chittorgarh is also famous for its custard apples. You must not miss the chance of picking some for the rest of your trip.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Being in proximity to Udaipur, Chittorgarh offers great lodging facilities. To best experience the flavour and peace of this region, spend a few hundred extra bucks and stay in heritage resorts in Bassi (20km/30min) or Bijaipur (40km/1hr) on the Bundi Road.

**Heritage**

The oldest wing of the Bassi Fort Palace (Tel: 01472-225606) was built in the 16th century by a cousin of Maharana Pratap, after he wrested the area from the Mughals. Every ‘room’ is a suite with faux-antique furniture, pretty floor tiles and jharokha, and the bar is wonderfully old-world.

One hesitates to use the word ‘enchanting’ for Castle Bijaipur (Tel: 276351), as it appears in the hotel’s brochure, but this place is a romantic fantasy. The rooms are tiny, but with antique furniture and display niches and original jharokhas, you may not feel like going out anywhere at all.

Fort Begu (Cell 09460920444, 09413316328), located in the Raj Mahal of Fort Begu, 67km from Chittorgarh, 7km off NH 76 offers a nice dining area. The highlight of the stay here is a guided tour of Fort Begu, which also includes a visit to the host family’s Rajgarh Lake Summer Palace.

**Others**

In Chittorgarh itself, try Castle Bijaipur’s sister concern, Hotel Pratap Palace (Tel: 240099), a quirky home kitted out with a mixture of antique, kitschy and shabby furnishings. The place once served as a guest house for the Rana of Udaipur. RTDC’s Panna (Tel: 241238) is your best bet in town if you are looking for a pocket friendly accommodation.

Haveli Gokul Niwas (Cell: 09784780146, 09950392701), located in Village Talawada, Post Bilot can be reached via Dungla, 20 km from Sita Mata Wildlife Sanctuary. It offers basic facilities including a restaurant.

juSTa Lake Nahargarh Palace (Reservations Cell: 09590777000) is a picturesque property, where one has to reach by a beautiful boat ride.

Located in Village Parsoli, the hotel has 40 rooms and offers a restaurant, swimming pool, and gym. You can also indulge in some horse-riding, while kids can have fun at the gaming zone. Also on offer are boating and trekking.

For more hotels and details, see Chittorgarh Listings on page 365

**AROUND CHITTORGARH**

Nagri (18 km)
Called Madhyamika in its prime, Nagri is now an excavation site where discoveries have included Hindu and Buddhist temple remnants and earthenware from the Maurya to the Gupta periods. The coins discovered here can today be seen at the museums in Chittorgarh and Udaipur. Nagri is connected to Chittorgarh by bus.

Bassi (25km)
The cheerful village of Bassi is a jewel like no other. Wander through the main bazaar to the old quarter, Sheher, where houses lining the medieval lane are sky-blue, mint-green, purple and yellow. Down by the lake, there’s a stepwell between the Laxmi Nath Temple and the Shiva Temple, the
interior of the latter are beautifully painted by the toy-makers.

The Bassi Wildlife Sanctuary offers incredible sightings of panther, wild boar, antelope, mongoose and migratory birds. The best way to see it is to stay in Bassi Fort Palace or Castle Bijaipur or Hotel Pratap Palace in Chittorgarh. With advance notice, you can even tour the sanctuary on horseback. Alas, animals are not in evidence during or after the rainy season, as over-grown grass obscures them. Bassi is a half-hour drive down the Bundi Road from Chittorgarh.

Menal (78km)
Though not at first sight the ‘little Khajuraho’ it’s billed as, Menal is a great experience—a medieval Shiva Temple with erotic carvings, other poetic ruins and an enormous gorge that turns into a waterfall after the rains. Drive down the Bundi Road via Bassi, Parsoli and Ladpura to Menal. It’s best to hire a taxi (₹2,700/ return, approx.)

Baroli Temple Complex
The Baroli (Badoli) temples are a lesson in architectural brilliance. According to Col. James Tod’s *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, the temples of Baroli were built by the Huns in the 9th century CE. Another school of thought believes they were commissioned during the Gurjara-Pratihara era during the 10th-11th centuries. The beauty of the temples lies in their exquisite stone carvings and great detailing. The eight temples in the complex are dedicated to Lord Shiva, Goddess Durga Lord Ganesha and the holy trinity. The temples are a fusion of Nagara and Pratihara styles of architecture. The complex is just 15km from Bhainsrorgarh fort.

Bhainsrorgarh Wildlife Sanctuary
Nestled in the verdant surrounds of the Aravallis, it was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1983. Major sightings here include those of chinkara, foxes, hyenas, deer, jackal, wild boar, turtles, lizards among others. The area also offers great birding opportunities for viewings of flamingos, sarus cranes, darters, owls, pochards and black-bellied terns.

Saddle Dam Rawatbhata
The Indira Gandhi Watch Tower Saddle Dam at Rawatbhata is a popular amusement park which attracts hordes of families. The small but attraction dam site is also offers possibilities of sightings of crocodiles. Saddle Dam is a non-gated stone and mud dam to direct the water towards the main Rana Pratap Sagar Dam.
TOURIST OFFICES

INFORMATION & BOOKING

JAIPUR
Department of Tourism (DOT)
Paryatan Bhawan, Khasa Kothi Hotel
Campus, MI Road, Opp Vidayak Puri Police
Station, Jaipur
Tel 0141-2822800, 2822863
W tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Rajasthan Tourism Development
Corporation (RTDC)
Paryatan Bhawan, 3rd Floor
Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station,
MI Road, Jaipur
Tel 0141-2371141, 2371142
Cell 09351101350, 09928311999
W rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in
Toll Free 18001033500

DOT
AJMER DIVISION

Regional Tourist Office & Tourist
Reception Centre
RTDC Hotel Khadim
Savitri Girl's College Road
Civil Lines, Ajmer
Tel 0145-2627426

Tourist Information Counter
Ajmer Railway Station Tel 0145-2627426

BHARATPUR DIVISION

Regional Tourist Office & Tourist
Reception Centre
Saras Circle, Agra Road, Bharatpur
Tel 05644-222542

SAWAI MADHOPUR

Tourist Reception Centre
Railway Station, Platform No1, Sawai
Madhopur Tel 07462-220808

Tourist Information Centre
RTDC Hotel Vinayak, Ranthambore
Road, Next to Fateh Public School,
Sawai Madhopur
Tel 07462-221333

BIKANER DIVISION

Regional Tourist Office & Tourist
Reception Centre
Hotel Dholamaru
Civil Lines, Near Major Puran Singh
Circle, Bikaner
Tel 0151-2226701
Cell 09214333433

JAIPUR DIVISION

Regional Tourist Office & Tourist
Reception Centre
Paryatan Bhawan, Khasa Kothi Hotel
Campus, MI Road, Opp Vidayak
Puri Police Station, Jaipur
Tel 0141-2822863

ALWAR

Tourist Reception Centre
Opp. Railway Station, Alwar
Tel 0144-2347348 Cell 09887139926

JHUNJHUNU

Tourist Reception Centre
Mandawa Circle, Churu By-Pass Road,
Jhunjhunu
Tel 01592-232909

SIKAR STD 01572

Tourist Reception Centre
Government Museum Campus,
Rani Sati Road, Sikar
Tel 01572-257473
Cell 09783829100
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<tr>
<td>Tourist Reception Centre</td>
<td>Tourist Reception Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near Gadisar Lake, Jaisalmer</td>
<td>Janta Avas Grih, Station Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel 02992-252406</td>
<td>Chittorgarh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOUNT ABU</strong></td>
<td>Tel 01472-241089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Reception Centre</td>
<td><strong>METRO OFFICES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opp Bus Stand, Mt Abu</td>
<td><strong>AHMEDABAD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel 02974-235151</td>
<td><strong>RTDC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell 09636276496</td>
<td>A-1, Divyo Apartment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Near Mitha Khali</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Railway Underbridge,</td>
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<td>Navaranpur</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel 079-26469580</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cell 07412086051</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KOTA DIVISION</strong></td>
<td><strong>KOLKATA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KOTA</strong></td>
<td><strong>RTDC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Reception Centre</td>
<td>2, Ganesh Chandra Avenue,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Chambal Complex</td>
<td>Ground Floor, R.No. G2,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near Chatra Vilas Garden,</td>
<td>Commerce House,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayapura, Kota</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel 0744-2327695</td>
<td>Tel 033-22132740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cell 07412086059</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BUNDI</strong></td>
<td><strong>NEW DELHI</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Information Bureau</td>
<td>DOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Circuit House</td>
<td>Tourist Reception Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kota Road, Bundi</td>
<td>Bikaner House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 0747-2443697</td>
<td>Shahjahan Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Delhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel 011-23389525, 23072320</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JHALAWAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>RTDC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Reception Centre</td>
<td>Ground Floor, Bikaner House,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTDC Hotel Chandravati Campus,</td>
<td>Pandara Road, New Delhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH52, Khandiya Circle, Jhalawar</td>
<td>Tel 011-23381884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel 07432-230081</td>
<td>Cell 0986894744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell 09414489598</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UDAIPUR DIVISION</strong></td>
<td><strong>UDAIPUR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UDAIPUR</strong></td>
<td>Regional Tourist Office &amp; Tourist Reception Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Tourist Office &amp; Tourist Reception Centre</strong></td>
<td>Fateh Memorial, Suraj Pol,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Udaipur Tel 0294-2411535,</td>
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<td>2521971/ 1364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRANSPORT DIRECTORY

AIR

JAIPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
Sanganer (13kms from Jaipur) airport is the closest airlink to Sambhar Salt Lake Sanctuary, Kuchaman Fort, Pushkar, Ranthambhore, Kota, Bundi and Jhalawar

HELPLINES
Airport Director
Airports Authority of India
Sanganer, Jaipur
Tel 0141-2550623, 2721585
W aai.aero

AIR ASIA INDIA
Customer Care 080-46662222, 67662222
W airasia.com
Origin Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, Pune

AIR INDIA
Toll Free 18602331407
W airindia.in
Origin Delhi, Mumbai

ALLIANCE AIR
Toll Free 18602331407
W airindia.in/alliance-air
Origin Agra, Bhopal, Delhi, Udaipur, Lucknow

GO FIRST
Customer Care Tel 022-68968300
Toll Free 18602100999
W flygofirst.com
Origin Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai

INDIGO
Customer Care Tel 0124-6173838, 4973838
W goindigo.in
Origin Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Surat

SPICEJET
Customer Care Tel 0124-4983410
W spicejet.com

Origin Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Chennai, Dehradun, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaisalmer, Mumbai, Pune, Surat, Udaipur, Varanasi

AIRPORT TRANSFERS
Prepaid Taxis available at the Airport
Ola
W olacabs.com
Uber
W uber.com
Zoomcar
W zoomcar.com

CAR RENTALS
Jaipur Taxi Services
Cell 09166497735 W jaipurtaxiservices.com
Rajputana Cabs
Cell 09928399846 W rajputanacabs.in

MAHARANA PRATAP AIRPORT, DABOK, UDAIPUR
Udaipur’s Dabok Airport serves a vast region including Mewar. Udaipur City is well connected by road/ rail with Chittaurgarh, Dungarpur, Kumbhalgarh, Ranakpur and Mt Abu.

HELPLINE
Airport Director
Airports Authority of India
Maharana Pratap Airport, Dabok, Udaipur
Tel 0294-2655950
W aai.aero

AIR ASIA INDIA
Toll Free 18602331407
W airasia.in
Origin Aurangabad, Delhi, Mumbai

ALLIANCE AIR
Toll Free 18602331407
W airindia.in/alliance-air
Origin Jaipur

RAJASTHAN 339
AIR INDIA
Toll Free 1860231407
W airindia.in
Origin Delhi, Mumbai

INDIGO
Customer Care Tel 0124-6173838, 4973838
W goindigo.in
Origin Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai

SPICE JET
Customer Care Tel 0124-4983410
W spicejet.com
Origin Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Jaipur, Mumbai, Surat

VISTARA
Cell 09289288888
W airvistara.com
Origin Delhi, Mumbai

AIRPORT TRANSFERS
Prepaid Taxis available at the airport
Ola
W olacabs.com
Uber
W uber.com

JODHPUR AIRPORT
Jodhpur Airport is the closest airport to Nagaur which is connected by road and rail.

HELPLINE
Airport Director
Airports Authority of India, Civil Airport, Jodhpur
Tel 0291-2595201
W aai.aero

AIRLINE OFFICES
SPICE JET
Customer Care Tel 0124-4983410
W spicejet.com
Origin Ahmedabad, Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai, Surat

TRUJET
Customer Care Tel 040-40904090
W trujet.com
Origin Ahmedabad

AIRPORT TRANSFERS
No Prepaid Taxis available here; however they have a taxi counter

Ajmer Taxi Service
Cell 09982316735
W ajmertaxiservices.com

Bikaner Airport, Nal
HELPLINES
Airport Director
Airports Authority of India, Civil Airport, Bikaner
Tel 0151-2886444
W aai.aero

RAIL
Enquiry – 139
Online information and reservation – indiarail.gov.in; irctc.co.in

AJMER JUNCTION
Ajmer Jn is served by Swarna Jayanti Rajdhani Express, Chetak Express, Bandra Terminus-Ajmer SF Express, Kolkata-Madar (Ajmer) Express, Dadar Western-Ajmer SF Express, Amritsar-Ajmer Express, etc along with other passenger trains

ALWAR JUNCTION
Alwar Jn is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and other important cities in the country.

BANASHTALI NEWAI RAILWAY STATION
Banashthali Newai Railway Station is connected to Jaipur, Kota, Secunderabad, Bhopal, Jodhpur & Indore. Dayodaya Express, Jaipur-Bandra Terminus Express, Bhagat Ki Kothi-Jodhpur Bilaspur Express, are a few important trains

BARMER RAILWAY STATION
Barmer Railway Station is well connected to Bengaluru, Delhi, Uttarakhand etc by Yesvantpur-Barmer AC Express, Malani Express, Kalka-Barmer Express etc

BHARATPUR JUNCTION
Bharatpur Jn is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala etc as well as other major cities in the state. Jaipur-Lucknow Jn Express, Kota-Hazrat Nizamuddin SF Express, Pratap SF Express, Bandra Terminus-Gorakhpur Antyodaya Express, Dehradun-Mumbai Bandra Terminus Express, Hazrat Nizamuddin – Thiruvananthapuram Central SF Express etc along with other passenger trains are some of the important trains

BHILWARA RAILWAY STATION
Bhilwara Railway Station is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Haryana, Ajmer, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Indore, Ujjain etc. Ananya Express, Ajmer-Bandra SF
Express, Hyderabad-Ajmer SF Express are some of the important trains

**BIKANER JUNCTION**
Bikaner Junction is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Odisha as well as other major cities. Bikaner-Guwahati Link Express, Bikaner-Bilaspur Express, Jammu Tawi-Ahmedabad Express, Kota-Shri Ganganagar Express, Pratap SF Express, Bikaner-Delhi Sarai Rohilla SF Express, Bikaner-Dadar Western SF Express, etc along with other passenger trains are a few important trains

**CHITTORGARH JUNCTION**
Chittorgarh Junction is served by Udaipur City-Khajuraho Express, Yesvantpur-Jaipur Suvidha Express, Kolkata-Madad (Ajmer) Express, Ajmer-Rameswaram Humsafar Express, Veer Bhumi Chittorgarh Express, etc along with other passenger trains

**CHURU JUNCTION**
Churu Jn lies in the North Western Zone under the Bikaner Division of the Indian Railways. It is well connected to Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Tamil Nadu, Jammu; important trains include Jodhpur-Delhi Sarai Rohilla SF Express, Bikaner-Hardwar (Gita Ganga) Express, etc

**DAUSA RAILWAY STATION**
Dausa Railway Station is well connected to New Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad. A few trains serving this station are Mandore Express, Ashram Express, Pooja Express, Delhi-Ahmedabad Express etc

**DHALPUR JUNCTION**
Dhalpur Jn is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Bhopal, Amritsar, Jammu Tawi, Pune etc. Amritsar-Mumbai CSMT Pathankot Express, Grand Trunk Express, Ujjain Express, Indore-Dehradun Express, Agra Canntt-Howrah Chambal Express, New Delhi-Habibganj Shatabdi Express, Jhelum Express, are a few important trains

**GANGPUR CITY RAILWAY STATION**
Gangpur City is well-connected to Delhi and Mumbai by the Golden Temple Mail and the Paschim Express, and to Kolkata by the Howrah-Jodhpur Express

**HANUMANGARH JUNCTION**
Hanumangarh Jn is well connected to Jalore, Agra, Delhi, Jaipur and Guwahati. Avadh Assam Express, Sikar Jn-Sri Ganganagar Express, Kalka-Barer Express are few trains serving this station

**JAIPUR JUNCTION**
Jaipur Jn is well connected to major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh etc. Rajasthan Sampark Kranti Express, Swarna Jayanti Rajdhani Express, Howrah-Jodhpur SF Express, Bandra Terminus-Ajmer SP Fare, Agra Cantt-Ahmedabad SF Express, Gwalior-Ahmedabad SF Express, Zijarat Express, Mandore Express, Pooja SF Express, etc. along with other passenger trains are some of the important trains

**JALORE**
Jalore Railway Station is connected to Jodhpur, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru etc by Yesvantpur-Barmer AC Express, Bikaner-Dadar SF Express, Gandhidham-Jodhpur Express, etc

**JAIALMER RAILWAY STATION**
Jaisalmer Railway Station is served by Ranikhet Express, Jaisalmer-Howrah SF Express, Jodhpur-Chennai Express, etc along with other passenger trains

**JODHPUR JUNCTION**
Jodhpur Jn is served by Jammu Tawi-Bandra Terminus Vivek Express, Jodhpur-KSR Bengaluru Express, Rajasthan Sampark Kranti Express, Ranikhet Express, Jodhpur-Bhopal Express, Jodhpur-Chennai Egmore Express, etc along with other passenger trains

**JHALAWAR RAILWAY STATION**
Jhalawar Railway Station is well connected to Kota, Jaipur, Nagaur, Bikaner and Sri Ganganagar. Two passenger trains run between Kota and Jhalawar and one super fast train also plies between these stations

**KOTA JUNCTION**
Kota Jn is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune etc. Jaipur-Bandra Terminus SF Express, MGR Chennai Central-Jaipur SF Express, Paschim SF Express, Darshan Express etc along with other passenger trains serve this station

**MARWAR JUNCTION**
Marwar Jn is well connected to Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Mysuru, Guwahati, Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner. Bikaner-Yesvantpur Express, Suryanagari Express, Hindupur Express, Rananpur Express are few of the important trains

**SAAV AN MADHOPUR JUNCTION**
Sawai Madhopur Jn is served by Bikaner-Puri Express, Mumbai Central-Firozpur Janta Express, MGR Chennai Central-Jaipur SF Express, Hazrat Nizamuddin-Thiruvananthapuram Express, August Kranti Rajdhani Express, etc along with other passenger trains

**SIKAR JUNCTION**
Sikar is connected to Delhi by Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Sikar InterCity Express. Sainik Express, Hisar-Kota Express, Bikaner-Indore Mahamana Express etc are few important trains serving this station

**BUS**
Over 5,000 RSRTC buses offer over 13,000 services to major towns and cities in Rajasthan and the adjoining states of Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. RSRTC operates regular AC and super deluxe coaches between Jaipur, Ajmer, Udaipur, Kota, Nagaur, Alwar and Delhi.

**RESERVATIONS**
Reservation facilities are available for RSRTC’s express, super-deluxe and air-conditioned bus services at ISBT Kashmere Gate and Bikaner House in Delhi, Sindi Camp Bus Stand in Jaipur and ST Bus Terminal in Ahmedabad (see below) and other bus depots in Rajasthan. You can also call individual bus terminal Enquiry Numbers For more information on RSRTC bus services including schedules, fares and destinations, you can also log on to the RSRTC Website rsrtc.rajasthan.gov.in; rsrtconline.rajasthan.gov.in

**PRIVATE COACH OPERATORS**
Many private operators also run deluxe and super-deluxe coaches to Jaipur
ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS

Zostel Location 1st Floor, 85-A, Rajmal ka talab, ICICI Bank Building, Chandi Ki Takshai, w/zostel.com Rooms Deluxe private room, dorm beds (approx 40-50) Facilities Common kitchen where guests can prepare meals, buffet breakfast at extra cost, Mumbai Reservations Tel 022-48962267

THE LOLL Location 2B & 2C, Jagatpura Road, Near Jawahir Circle Tel 6647777, 5197777 w/theoll.com Rooms 28 Facilities Restaurant

Sampria Location 93, The Park, Near Jaipur Bus Depot Tel 4222020, 09827710206 w/sampria.com Rooms 10 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

The Oberoi Rajvillas Location Outskirts, Near Agra Road, Baboji ka Moh, Goner Road Tel 2680101 w/oberoihotels.com Rooms 71 Facilities Restaurants, bar, gym, spa

IN JAMWA RAMGARH STD 01426 Ramgarh Lodge, Jaipur – IHCL SeleQtions Location Lakeside, Jamwa Ramgarh Cell 09116688091, 09521214026 w/seleqtionshotels.com Rooms 14 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

IN SAMODE STD 01423 Samode Bagh Garden Resort Location Village Fatehpura Banso w/samode.com Rooms 44 cottages Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, croquet, crafts for children, birdwatching, Jaipur Reservations Tel 0141-2632407, 2632370

Sambhar Heritage Resort Circuit House Location Shashkambhari Temple Road, Jhapok, Sambhar Lake Tel 228218 Cell 07073901555 w/sambharheritage.com Rooms 4 Kothi Location 100 mtrs away Rooms 8 Suites; Resort: Location 8kms away, near the lake Rooms 18 Swiss tents Facilities Restaurant, library, salt spa, salt production train tour, bird watching, adventure sports

IN SANJHARIA Savista Retreat Location Village Tijara, PO Badke Balaji, Ajmer Road, 45 kms/ 1hr from Sambhar Salt Lake Cell 09928964564, 09829124453 w/savista.com Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, organise cooking/pottery/ block printing workshops

ALWAR DISTRICT

Hotel Aravali Heights Location Motidoongr, Near Railway Station, Alwar Tel 2332883 Cell 07339949355 w/bharathotelsgroup.com Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym

Hotel Burj Haveli Location Rajsar Road, 7th Mile Stone, Burja, Alwar Tel 2888390 Cell 0992841428, 09928026521 w/burjahaveli.com Rooms 19 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, indoor/outdoor games, open gym

The Sambhar Lake Palace Location Sakambhari Temple Road, Kochya Ki Dhani Cell 09928026521, 07728040082 w/thesambharlakelake.in Rooms 2 Facilities Restaurant

Hotel Grand Ashoka Location Rajsar Road, 7th Mile Stone, Burja, Alwar Tel 2888390 Cell 0992841428, 09928026521 w/burjahaveli.com Rooms 19 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, indoor/outdoor games, open gym

IN AJABGARH STD 01465 Hotel Amanbagh Location Dosa Road, Ajabgarh, Near Thanagazi Tel 223333/34 Cell 09828166737, 07665343020 w/amans.com Rooms 37 Facilities Restaurant, bar, Ayurveda spa, gym, camel polo safari at Sariska, village visit with tea n coffee, spa, excursions to Bhangarh, Neelkanth, Mansorovar, Pratapgarh Fort, Somsagar Lake

Disclaimer Only a representative listing of hotels in each area has been given. The facilities listed may not be exhaustive. Tariff indicates the approx range (lowest to highest) of the rates prevailing at the time of going to press. The listings given here should not be construed as recommendations by the publisher.

Rooms 40 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, spa, snooker table
Rambagh Palace Location Near Rambagh Circle, Bhawani Singh Road Tel 2385700 w/tahotels.com Rooms 78 Facilities Restaurants, bar, gym, spa
Samode Haveli Location Samode House, Gangapal Tel 2632370/407, 2631942 w/samode.com Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gift shop, gym, spa
Shahpura House Location Near Collectorate, D-257, Devi Marg, Bani Park Tel 4089100 Cell 09828714043 w/shahpura.com Rooms 64 Facilities Restaurant
The Lalit Location 2B & 2C, Jagatpura Road, Near Jawahir Circle Tel 6647777, 5197777 w/theallit.com Rooms 28 Facilities Restaurant

Rajasthan Tourism Official App: Rajasthan Tourism Official
tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

346 RAJASTHAN

Neemrana Fort Palace Location 122nd Milestone, Delhi-Jaipur Highway, Neemrana, Alwar Cell 0958785001 Rooms 77 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym, spa

The Hill Fort Kesroli Location Near MIA Post office-Bahala, Kesroli Cell 0958785005, 0941405053, 09829499901 w/neemranahotels.com Rooms 36 Facilities Restaurant, bar, spa, gym

IN Ajabgarh STD 01455 Hotel Amanbagh Location Dosa Road, Ajabgarh, Near Thanagazi Tel 223333/34 Cell 09828166737, 07665343020 w/amans.com Rooms 37 Facilities Restaurant, bar, Ayurveda spa, gym, camel polo safari at Sariska, village visit with tea n coffee, spa, excursions to Bhangarh, Neelkanth, Mansorovar, Pratapgarh Fort, Somsagar Lake
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation Listings</th>
<th>Hotels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sariska Tiger Heaven</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Park periphery, Amra ka Bas, Thana Ghazi&lt;br&gt;Cell: 092591016312 W sariskatigerheaven.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 24, tents 16&lt;br&gt;Facilities: Restaurant, swimming pool, parking, safaris arranged on request</td>
<td><strong>Hotel Aanchal</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Near Collectorate Circle, Khan Bhankari Main Road Cell 08949224488&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 8 Facilities: Wi-Fi, room service</td>
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<td><strong>Madhuwan Hotel</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Near Central Bus Depot, Jaipur-Agra Highway Cell 09414036261 Rooms: 18 Facilities: Veg Restaurant</td>
<td><strong>IN LOTWARA</strong>&lt;br&gt;Lotwar Fort HERITAGE&lt;br&gt;Location: Village Post Lotwar Via Manpur Dist Dausa Cell 0929648512, 09460765756 W lotwarafort.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 12 Facilities: Restaurant</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IN ABHANERI</strong>&lt;br&gt;Abhaneri Resort&lt;br&gt;Location: Village &amp; PO Abhaneri, Dist Dausa Cell 09829026045, 09799739700&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 11 Facilities: Restaurant, village walks</td>
<td><strong>BHANDAREJ STD 01427</strong>&lt;br&gt;Hotel Bhandrawati Palace&lt;br&gt;HERITAGE&lt;br&gt;Location: Village Bhandarej, Dausa Tel 283351 Cell 09414065999, 09828284433&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 35 Facilities: Travel help, room service, parking</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IN KALAKHO</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dera Village&lt;br&gt;Location: Village Kalakho, Teh Sikari, Dist Dausa W theclenmentretreats.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 8 cottages Facilities: Restaurant, yoga, meditation, organic farm, hiking Reservations: 09571504000</td>
<td><strong>IN JHUNJHUNU DISTRICT</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>JHUNJHUNU STD 01592</strong>&lt;br&gt;Hotel Jamuna Resort&lt;br&gt;Location: Opp Nathji ki Tila, Delhi-Pilani Road Tel 232871 Cell 09414255035, 08955976348 W hoteljamunaresort.com&lt;br&gt;Indira Villas&lt;br&gt;Location: Alsisar, Jhunjhunu Tel 245567 Cell 09928010382 W indrivillasalsisar.com</td>
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<td><strong>Umair Lake Palace – An Organic Retreat</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Jaipur-Agra National Highway, Village Kalakho, PO Kalakho, NH 21, Kandoli, Dist Dausa Cell 09799936888 W umailakpalace.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 44 Facilities: Restaurant, swimming pool, village/cycling/jeep safari, parking</td>
<td><strong>IN BAGAR STD 01592</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Piramal Haveli&lt;br&gt;HERITAGE&lt;br&gt;Location: Village Bagar, Dist Jhunjhunu Tel 221220-21 Cell 09414050058 W neemranahotels.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 8 Facilities: Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IN DUNLOD STD 01594</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Dera Dunlod Fort HERITAGE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Dunlod, Dist Jhunjhunu&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 45 Facilities: Restaurant, lounge, bar, swimming pool, camel cart rides, villages tour (4 pax) + sand dunes, Tal Chopper Wildlife Tour</td>
<td><strong>IN BISSAU STD 01592</strong>&lt;br&gt;Vedaraanya Haveli&lt;br&gt;Location: Ghanshyam Das Ruia Marg, Ward 10, Close to Bissau Gate, Ramgarh Shekhawati Tel 241241 Cell 09810078925 W vedaraanya.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 10 Facilities: Restaurant, VHAH Festival camel safari inside the Ramgarh Shekhawati forest</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IN ALSISAR STD 01595</strong>&lt;br&gt;Alsisar Mahal Shekhawati&lt;br&gt;Location: Alsisar, Jhunjhunu&lt;br&gt;Tel 245271-2 Cell 0983439349, 07665008154 W alsisarmahal.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 43 Facilities: Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, recreation area, sand dune jeep safari, village walk</td>
<td><strong>IN MANDAVA STD 01592</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Desert Resort</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Mandawa, Dist Jhunjhunu&lt;br&gt;Cell 09829015011, 09910614531 W mandawahotels.com; thedesertresortmandawa.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 70 Facilities: Restaurant, camel cart ride, jeep safari for village visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hotel Castle Mandawa</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Mandawa, Jhunjhunu&lt;br&gt;Tel 232124, 232480/ 32&lt;br&gt;Cell 09829788331, 09929255955 W castlemandawa.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 84 Facilities: Restaurant, swimming pool, puppet show, horse/jeep safari, camel safari</td>
<td><strong>Hotel Mandawa Haveli</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Near Sonthdiya Gate, Mandawa Tel 223088 Cell 08890841088, 09413366546 W hotelmandawahaveli.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 20 Facilities: Restaurant, camel rides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hotel Shekhawati</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location: Near Mukundgarh Road, Mandawa Tel 223036 Cell 09314698079 W hotelshekhawati.com&lt;br&gt;Rooms: 25 Facilities: Restaurant, camel rides</td>
<td><strong>IN MUKUNDGARH STD 01594</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mukund Haveli Homestay&lt;br&gt;Location: Ganiwali Haveli near Gopinathji Temple, Mukundgarh&lt;br&gt;Cell 09414073689, 09414064040 Rooms: 6 Facilities: Kitchen, dining area, cooking class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In NAVALGARH STD 01594</strong>&lt;br&gt;Apar Dhani Lodge ECOFARM&lt;br&gt;Location: Jhunjhunu Road, Navalgarh Tel 222239 W</td>
<td><strong>Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan</strong>&lt;br&gt;Paryatan Bhawan, Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station, M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001&lt;br&gt;App: Rajasthan Tourism Official&lt;br&gt;tourism.rajasthan.gov.in</td>
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ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS

aapidhani.com Rooms 8 Cottages Facilities Home-made organic food, guided visits to havelsis, camel cart tours, handicraft workshops with local artisans, cycle tour, cooking class, painting with recycle Rajasthan mandana clay

Roop Niwas Kothi Location Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu, Shekhawati Cell 09929598629 roopniwaskothi.com Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, horse rides, camel ride Reservations Cell 07303885698

SIKAR DISTRICT

SIKAR STD 01572

Castle Khandela Location Chota Panna Garh, Khandela Cell 09079449494 castlekhandela.com Rooms 19, Restaurant

Hotel Kanha Location Ringus, Khatu Shamji Cell 09166374545 Rooms 30, Restaurant

Jor Ki Dhani Location Katrathal Cell 08619140467 jorjdhani.com Rooms 12, Facilities Natural products, horse-riding, camel/horse safari

Hotel Annapurna Regency Location Opp Shrinhath Petrol Pump, N.H.52, Jaipur Rd, Tel 01572-246246 Cell 7568646246 Email hotelannpurnaregencyskr@gmail.com Rooms 36, Restaurant

Hotel Mansingh Palace Location Near Ana Sagar Lake, Vaishali Nagar Tel 2425702/ 855/ 956 mansinghhotels.com Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, bar, parking

Lohiya Resort Location Near Sabhasaria College, N 52 Cell 09929077722 badnorhouse.com Rooms 5 Facilities Meals on request, travel help, parking, laundry

Bijay Niwas Palace HERITAGE Location 70 km from Ajmer, Model Farm, Bijaynagar-Bawar Road, Opp Village Suti Khera Via Bijaynagar Cell 09849259592 bijayanwaispalace.com Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, village visit in bullock cart, pottery making

Fort Barli HERITAGE Location Vill Barli, Near Bijainagar, 70 km from Ajmer fortbarli.com Rooms 26 Facilities Restaurant, travel desk

IN KISHANGARH STD 01463 Phool Mahal Palace Location Near Old Fort, Kishangarh Cell 09829996830 royalkishangarh.com Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, yoga, massages, cultural programs on request

IN ROOPANGARH FORT STD 01497 Roopangarh Fort Location Fort premises, Roopangarh Cell 09414670193 royalkishangarh.com Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, safari

Pratap Mahal, Ajmer- IHCL SeleQtions Location 13 km from Ajmer on Pushkar Bypass Road Tel 6620000 selectionshotels.com, tajhotels.com Rooms 88 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, gym, spa

Regenta Inn Embassy Hotel Location Opp City Power House, Jaipur Road Tel 2425519, 2623859, 2628591 Cell 09414005004 royalarchidhotels.com Rooms 75 Facilities Restaurant, spa, camel safari/ folk dance, garden/ private pools in villa

Ananta Resort Location 4 kms before Pushkar, Village Leela Sevri, Pushkar Road Tel 3554000 Cell 08003994448 ananta-hotels.com Rooms 88 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, gym, spa

Bhanwar Singh Palace Location Village Hokra, Ajmer-Pushkar Bypass Tel 2970301-02 Cell 08003993931/ 39 bhanwarsinghpalace.com Rooms 120 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, spa, parking

Hotel Sunset Location Chhoti Basti, Near Pushkar Lake Tel 2772725 Cell 09828172234, 09828558382 Rooms 21 Facilities Restaurant, yoga, garden, Parking, Camel/JEEP Safari

Royal Tent Pushkar Location Village Tilora, Pushkar-Merta Road Cell 09672974814, 09828060601 royaltentpushkar.jodhanheritage.com Rooms 100 Swiss tents with attached services Facilities Restaurant, camel safari, cultural programs on request Jodhpur Reservations Tel 0291- 2572321-26, 2571981 Mobile Operational during Pushkar Fair Only

PUSHKAR

Aaram Baagh, Pushkar Location Motisar, Ganganera Cell 09929597370, 09799696962 cell 09828060601 pachargroupshotels.com Rooms 75 Facilities Restaurant, spa, camel safari/ folk dance, garden/ private pools in villa

Ananta Resort Location 4 kms before Pushkar, Village Leela Sevri, Pushkar Road Tel 3554000 Cell 08003994448 ananta-hotels.com Rooms 88 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, gym, spa

IN KISHANGARH PALACE Location 01471 Pushkar Palace HERITAGE Location Chhoti Basti Tel 2773001-03 Cell 09828060601 hotelpushkarpalace.com Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, safari, parking

Pushkar Villas Resort Location Near bus stand, Panchkund Road Tel 2773640, 2772689 pushkarvillas.com Rooms 55 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, safari

Jagat Palace Location Behind Ramdwar, Ajmer Road Tel 2772953-54 Cell 09828060601 hotelpushkarpalace.com Rooms 81 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, safaris arranged, parking

Hotel Ambassadors Location 2772502-03 Cell 09672974814, 09828558382 Cell 09828060601 pachargroupshotels.com Rooms 75 Facilities Restaurant, spa, camel safari/ folk dance, garden/ private pools in villa

App: Rajasthan Tourism Official @ tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan Paryatan Bhawan, Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station, M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

RAJASTHAN 351
BHILWARA DISTRICT
BHILWARA STD 01482

Alaska Resort
Location NH79, Bhilwara, Bypass, Atoon Cell 09829553534 alaskaresort.in Rooms 118 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, parking

Hotel Ashoka Residency
Location Near Railway Station, Ashok Marg Tel 231902 Cell 09571901333 w ashokaresidencyhotel.com Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurant, coffee shop, dance floor, parking, Spa

Tulip Continental
Location Near Gayatri Ashram Mandir, Opp Sales Tax Office, Ajmer Road Tel 297200 Cell 07230025701-03 w tulipcontinental.com Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurants, disco, Wi-Fi, parking

IN SHAHPURA STD 01484

Shahpura Bagh
Location Shahpura, Dist Bhilwara 82 km from Bundi Cell 09587004999, 09982266008 w shahpurabagh.com Rooms 11 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, yoga, cycling/tribal tours, bullock cart rides, boating, parking

NAGAUR DISTRICT
NAGAUR STD 01592

Mahindra Hotel and Restaurant
Location Bikaner By Pass, Jodhpur Road NH 65, Nagraur Cell 09828455501, 09251455501 w hotelmahindranagraur.in Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, bar, parking

Royal Jodhpur Camps
(Yogtents)
Location Ajmeri Gate, Nagraur w jodhaneritage.com Rooms 100 Royal tents Facilities Dining tent, safari Reservation Tel 0291-2572321-26 Cell 08875015807 Tip Oct-March only

IN KHIMSAR STD 01585

Khimsar Fort
Location Khimsar, Nagraur Jaipur Highway Tel 263345-49 Cell 09001294161 w itchhotels.in Rooms 71 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, gym, home theatre, indoor/outdoor games, puppet and magic shows, camel, Jeep safari, parking

IN KUCHAMAN

Hotel Karni Fort
Location Bypass Circle, Station Road, Kuchaman City Cell 07737699231 Rooms 14 Facilities Restaurant, Wi-Fi (Rest), parking, room service, TV

TONK DISTRICT
TONK STD 01435/01432

Castle Awan
Location The Deoli, PO Awan, Via Duni, Dist Tonk Tel 0141-2560731 Cell 09414053164 Rooms 10 Facilities Dining Hall, sightseeing, parking

Fort Pachewar Garh
HERITAGE
Location Village Pachewar, Via Malpura, Dist Tonk Cell 09828341223 w pachewargarhfort.com Rooms 25 Facilities Restaurant, bar, parking

Hotel Durg Niwas
Location Near SBI, Ganwri House, Main Road, Deoli (Tonk) Cell 09784031222 Rooms 21 Facilities Veg Restaurant, Internet

Hotel Dwarka Palace
Location Janta Colony, Behind Bus Stand, Deoli (Tonk) Cell 09796393761 Rooms 17 Facilities Restaurant, Internet, parking

Hotel Rajmahal Palace
HERITAGE
Location Vill & PO Raj Mahal, Via Deoli, Dist Tonk w hotelrajmahalinivas.com Rooms 10 Facilities Restaurant Jaipur Reservations Tel 0141-2561291

BHARATPUR DIVISION
BHARATPUR DISTRICT
BHARATPUR STD 05644

Keoladeo Ghana National Park
Bharatpur Forest Lodge
RTDC
Location Inside the forest, 2 km from the gate Tel 222722, 222760 Cell 09024745528 w rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in Room 18 Facilities Restaurant, parking

Forest Rest Resort
Location Inside the forest, 2 kms from the gate Tel 222777 w forest.rajasthan.gov.in Rooms 5 Facilities Restaurant, bird watching with nature guide Tip On availability, no advance bookings

Hotel Chandra Mahal Haveli
Location Jaipur-Agra Road, Paharsar Nadbai, Bharatpur Tel 617839 Cell 08696919073, 09319296390 w amritara.co.in Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, tour, help, parking

Hotel RB Palace
Location Chopra Mode, Near Bus Stand, NH3, Dholpur Tel 220331 Cell 08432432007 w rbpalace.com Rooms 25 Facilities Restaurant, travel help, Wi-Fi, parking

The Birder’s Inn
Location Bird Sanctuary Road, Bharatpur Tel 227346, 297050 Cell 07297991613, 09414023340 w birdersinn.com Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, cruise, birdwatching, parking

DHOLPUR DISTRICT
DHOLPUR STD 05642

Hotel Heritage View
Location Near Gulab Bagh Chauraha Tel 223333 Cell 09549233033 w hotelheritageview.com Rooms 18 Facilities Restaurant, travel help, Wi-Fi, parking

Hotel RB Palace
Location Chopra Mode, Near Bus Stand, NH3, Dholpur Tel 220331 Cell 08432432007 w rbpalace.com Rooms 25 Facilities Restaurant, travel help, Wi-Fi, parking

Raj Nivas Palace Hotel
HERITAGE
Location Dholpur w dholpurpalace.com Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, library, boat/jEEP safari, room service, TV Delhi Reservations Tel 011-45665201-03 Cell 08860518880

KARAULI DISTRICT
KARAULI STD 07464

The Bharwan Vilas Palace
Location Karauli Cell 09929773744 w karauli.com Rooms 45 Facilities Dining area, organic farm tour, safaris arranged on request, cooking demos

SAWA MADHOPUR DISTRICT
SAWA MADHOPUR STD 07462

Ranthambore National Park
Aman-I-Khas TENTS Location Near the NP,
ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS

Sherpur Khilijpur Tel 252052, 252223-25 Cell 09413739194 W oman.com Rooms 10 tents Facilities Dining tent, stepwell, safari

TIP Operational from Oct-May

Nahargarh HERITAGE Location Near old tiger sanctuary, Ranthambore Road, Village Khilijpur Tel 252283 Cell 08290553600 W nahargarh.com Rooms 99 Facilities Dining hall, bar, swimming pool, reading café, games, Internet, laundry, massage Jaipur

Reservations Alsisar Haveli, Jaipur Tel 0141-2368290, 2364685 W alsisar.com

Sawai Madhopur Lodge-Vivanta by Taj HERITAGE Location 14 km from NP, Ranthambore Road Tel 225155 W vivantahotels.com Rooms 36 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, games, safari

Sher Bagh Location 3 km from NP, Village Sherpur, Khilijpur Tel 252119-20 W thesujanlife.com Rooms 12 Facilities Dining tent, bar, laundry, massage, safaris

Delhi Reservations Sujaan Luxuray Hotels, New Delhi Tel 011-46172700

Tiger Den Resort Location 2 km from NP, Ranthambore Road, Village

Khilijpur Tel 252070/80 Cell 07877796669 W tigerdenresort.com Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, bar, safaris, nature walks

Delhi Reservations Tel 011-2750446, 27570833

Maa Ashapura Resort Location Ranthambore Road, Kutilpara Malihan Cell 078487044212 W maashapurafarm.com Rooms 5, cottage 4, luxury machan tent 3 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, organic farm/ stud farm, jungle safari on request

The Fern Ranthambore Forest Resort Location Ranthambore Road, Sawai Madhopur Tel 221122 Cell 09001411555, 09351006071 W fernhotels.com Rooms 46 Facilities Restaurant, bar, spa, swimming pools, gift shop

Vanya Vilas Wildlife Resort Location Ranthambore Road, PO Sherpur Tel 223999 W oberoihotels.com Rooms 25 tents Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, spa, fitness centre, yoga, games, observation tower, library

TIP Mid Sept-June only

BIKANER DIVISION

BIKANER DISTRICT HERITAGE

Bhanwar Niwas Location Rampuria Street, Bikaner Tel 2529323, 220143 Cell 09682918237, 09413888823 W bhanwarbikaner.com Rooms 24 Facilities Restaurant, cooking classes, art classes, guided walk from Niwas to the city

Hotel Basant Vihar Palace Location NH15, Sri Ganganagar Road Tel 2256675, 2250669 Cell 09414604362, 09462757675 W basantviharpalace.com Rooms 34 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Karni Bhawan Palace HERITAGE Location Gandhi Colony Tel 2524701-05 W hrhotels.com Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, bar, golf club

Laxmi Niwas Palace Location Dr. Karni Singh Road, Near Roadways Bus stand, Bikaner Tel 2200088 Cell 09602555980, 08875025218 W laxminiwaspalace.com Rooms 55 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, folk dance, desert jeep/ camel safari

Lallgarh Palace Location Ganga Avenue Road Tel 2540202 Reservations Cell 09971918888 W lallgarhpalace.com Rooms 59 Facilities Restaurant, dining, massage parlour

Narendra Bhawan HERITAGE Location Karni Nagar, Gandhi Colony, Bikaner Tel 2252500 Cell 08875025230 W narendrabhawan.com Rooms 80 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, spa, gym

IN GAJNER STD 01534 Gajner Palace Location Sri Kolayat Ji, Bikaner Tel 275061-69 Cell 09414149114, 08104449990 W hrhotels.com Rooms 45 Facilities Restaurant, bar, boat ride

CHURU DISTRICT CHURU STD 01562 Hotel Shakti Palace Location NH 65 Jaipur Road Tel 250555-58 Cell 09460300333 W hotelsahkitpalace.in Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant

Molji Ka Kamra Location Behind Jain Market Cell 09168483777 W moljikakamra.com Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, sightseeing, camel/jEEP safari

The Grand Shekhawati Location Near DTO office, Jaipur Road, Churu Tel 253333 Cell 09587662000, 09983039499, 09460846923 W rooms 80 Facilities Restaurant, roof top lounge bar, gym, swimming pool

HANUMANGARH DISTRICT HANUMANGARH STD 01552 Hotel Gill Tower Location 40, Jyoti Market, Opp Bus Stand, Behind OBC Bank, Hanumangarh Junction Cell 08619135704, 09414267666, 09414877717 W rooms 12 Facilities Veg Restaurant

Hotel Grand Inn Location Town-Junction Road, Opp Ashish Cinema, Sindi Colony, Hanumangarh Cell 09529777777 W grandinn.in Rooms 42 Facilities Veg, Restaurant, Wi-Fi

Narang Hotel Location Plot No 277, Sri Ganganagar Road, Near Bus Stand, Hanumangarh Junction Cell 0925172222 W narahotel.com Rooms 44 Facilities Veg Restaurant, Forest resort, swimming pool, gym, yoga

Rajvi Palace Hotel Location Town-Junction Road, Hanumangarh Tel 231558, 231688 Cell 09413955555 W rajvipalace.com Rooms 40 Suites Facilities Restaurants, swimming pool, gym, yoga

SRI GANGANAGAR DISTRICT SRI GANGANAGAR STD 0154 Hotel Belleview Inn Location Suratgarh Road, near Railway station, Sri Ganganagar Tel 2463999, 2462999 Cell 09672463999 W hotelbelleviewin.com Rooms 17 Facilities Restaurant, parking, hot and cold water

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan Paryatan Bhawan, Opp Vidhnyak Puri Police Station, M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

App: Rajasthan Tourism Official tourism.rajasthan.gov.in
Hotel Pagoda
Location 14, Gole Bazaar, Near Railway Station, Sri Ganganagar Tel 2442364, 244436, 2443364 Cell 08560042364 W pagodahotel.in Rooms 22 Facilities Restaurant

JODHPUR DIVISION

JODHPUR DISTRIC

JODHPUR STD 0291

Ajit Bhawan Palace
HERITAGE
Location Near Circuit House, Ratanada Tel 2510410, 2513333 W ajitbhawan.com Rooms 68 Facilities Restaurants, bar, camel safari, gift & handicraft shop

Bal Samand Lake Palace
HERITAGE
Location Outskirts, Near BSF camp, Mandore Road Tel 2572321-27, 2571991 W jodhan heritage.com; welcomingheritagehotels.com Rooms 36 Facilities Restaurant, bar, cycling, horse riding Delhi Reservations Tel 011- 48035500

Bijolai Palace – A Inde Hotel
Location Radar Road, Near Kaglana Lake Cell 07240009460/45 Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurants, swimming pool, private lake

Devi Bhawan
HERITAGE
Location No 1, Defence Laboratory Road, Ratanada Circle Tel 2512215 Cell 09828035359 W devibhawan.com Rooms 24 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Indrashan Homestay
Location Near Senapati Bhavan, 593, High Court Colony Cell 09829147470 W mandore.com Rooms 21 Facilities Restaurant, cycle tours, exploring rural life in Bishnoi village, Osian village community service programs

Mapple Ayub
Location Near Rai-ka-Bagh Railway Station, Posta Circle Tel 2542980-85 Cell 09911559706 W mapplehotels.com Rooms 72 Facilities Restaurant, bar, gym, swimming pool

Pal Haveli
HERITAGE
Location Gulab Sagar, Near Clock Tower Tel 2638344 Cell 09672293328 W palhaveli.com Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, bar

Ratan Vilas Haveli
Location Near Bhaskar Circle, Loco Shed Road Tel 2614418, 2613011 W ratanvilas.com Rooms 21 Facilities Restaurant

Taj Hari Mahal
Location 5th, Residency Road Tel 2439700 W tajhotels.com Rooms 93 Facilities Restaurants, bar, gym, swimming pool

Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace
Location On a hill, Near Circuit House Tel 2510101 W tajhotels.com Rooms 70 Facilities Restaurants, bar, health club, spa, swimming pools, museum, library

IN GUDA

Bishnoi Village Camp Resort
Location Mogra Village, Pali Highway NH 62 Cell 09414129233, 09610005442 W bishnoivillage.com Rooms 12 Facilities Village tours, bird watching, jeep/camel safari

IN JHALAMAND

Jhalamand Garh
HERITAGE
Location Jodhpur-Pali Road, PO Jhalamand Cell 09351514444, 09694080596 W rooms 27 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, travel help, jeep safaris arranged

IN KHEECHAN / PHALODI STD 02925

Hotel Fort View & Restaurant
Location Sadar Bazaar Tel 222075 Cell 09549223240 Rooms 26 Facilities Restaurant, parking, hot and cold water, Wi-Fi

Khurja Resort
Location Bird View Point, Railway Station Road, Kheechen, Phalodi Cell 09649147147, 09001946457 W khurjaresort.com Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool

Lal Niwas
HERITAGE
Location Dadha Street, Phalodi Tel 223813, 222940-41, 224886 Cell 09928722277 W lalniwas.com Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, bird watching

IN LUNI STD 02931

Fort Chanwa
HERITAGE
Location VPO Luni Tel 284216, 284001 Cell 09928722277 Fortchanwa.com Rooms 64 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, horse/camel riding, gift & handicraft shop

IN OSIAN STD 02922

Camp Tar
Location Pratap Nagar Road Cell 0998282333/5555 Rooms 82 tents Facilities Restaurant, travel help, kids play area, Wi-Fi, parking, adventure activities, camel & jeep rides

Rawla Osian Camp
Location Osian Cell 06350020768, 09929818060 W osianresortcamps.com Rooms 20 tents Facilities Restaurant, parking, jeep safari, temple tour

Reggie’s Camel Camp
Location Khetosar- Osian Cell 09928009602, 09928009601 W camelcamposian.com Rooms 50 Swiss tents Facilities Dining area, camel/jeep safaris, desert excursions, temple visits

Safari Camp Osian
Location Kasra No 808, Pratap Nagar Cell 07023477221 W safari camp osian.in Rooms 20 cottages, 80 tents Facilities Dining area, camel/jeep safari

IN ROHET STD 02936

Hotel Rohet Garh
Location Village Post Rohet W houseofrohet.com Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, Wi-Fi (bar/lounge), spa, yoga on request, village safari Gurugram Reservations Tel 0124- 4654330 Tip: Closed in the month of June

IN SARDAR SAMAND STD 02960

Sardar Samand Lake Palace
Location Sardar Samand Lake Cell 08875015807, 08875004150 W sardarsamand.jodhanheritage.com Rooms 18 Facilities Restaurant, bird watching, Jodhpur Reservations Tel 0291-2572321

BARMER DISTRICT

BARMER STD 02982

Hotel Kailash International
Location Chohran Road,
ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS

HOTELS

NH 15, By Pass Road, Dangriya, Barmer Tel 222511 Cell 09928014691, 07300173001 Rooms 140
Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym

Hotel Sanchal Fort
Location Opp Kushal Vatika, NH-15, Madhaur Sand Dunes, Barmer Garden, Barmer Cell 07727007790, 07727007781 w: sanchalfort.com Rooms 27 Facilities Restaurant, Bar & Lounge, spa, swimming pool, gym, folk dance on request

The Good Hall
Location NH68, Near Kushal Vatika, Barmer Cell 09828223200, 09414294581 w: thegoodhall.com Rooms 5 Cottages, Tents 10 Facilities Good Hall Dining area, kids play area, organic farming, handicraft workshop, handicrafts store

JAISALMER DISTRICT

Desert Boys Guest House
Location Near Jain Mandir, Inside Fort, Vyasapada Tel 253901 Cell 09571600986, 09571600944 w: desertboysguesthouse.com Rooms 10 Facilities Restaurant, safari + meals

Fort Rajwada
Location Jodhpur-Barmer Link Road, Jaisalmer Tel 253233/ 533 254608-09 Cell 09828049555 w: fortroyjwada.com Rooms 99 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym, cultural activities (Oct-Mar), camel safari at Sam + camel rides, dinner, cultural programme, Khuri + camel rides, cultural programme Cell 09772209004

Hotel Jaisal Palace
Location Near Jain Mandir, Gandhi Chowk, Jaisalmer Cell 07340025200 Rooms 10 Facilities Restaurant

Hotel Killa Bhawan
Location 445, Kathri Para, Inside Jaisalmer Fort Tel 251204 Cell 09660350099, 09414495596 w: hotelkillebawan.com Rooms 8 Facilities Food on request, safari

Hotel Moonlight
Location Near Head Post Office, Hanuman Circle Cell 07340025200 w: moonlighthotelresort.com Rooms 11 Facilities Restaurant, safari

Mahadev Palace
Location H3, Jethwai Road, Rico Tel 2537895 Cell 09414149450/ 94 Rooms 31 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, safari, cultural programmes

Narayan Niwas Palace
Location Near Jain Bhavan, Malkapol, Hanuman Chowk Tel 252408 Cell 09414149497 Rooms 49 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, cultural programme on request

IN POKARAN STD 02994
The Fort Pokaran
Location Pokaran, Dist Jaisalmer Cell 09016130535 w: fortipokaran.com Rooms 19 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, gym

DESSERT NATIONAL PARK
STD 02992

IN KHURI STD 03014
Pol Rajah Resorts
Location Barana Village, Khuri Cell 09827962275, 09588223936 w: polrajahrresort.com Rooms 7 mud cottages, 20 Swiss tents Facilities Restaurant, camel safari + meals, cultural programmes Only Oct-March

Registhan Guest House
Location Village Dhoba Cell 09784840053, 09928503587 w: registhanguesthouse.com Rooms 4 mud huts, 26 Swiss tents Facilities Restaurant, camel safari

The Mama’s Resort & Camp
Location Village Khuri Cell 09414205970, 09521224455 w: themamasjaipalmer.com Rooms 10 luxury Swiss tents, 10 cottages Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, dinner on dunes

IN SAM STD 02992
Dune Safari Camp
Location Near Sand Dunes, 48km from Khuri Tel 254331 Cell 09928096254, 09414149109 w: dunesafaricampandresort.com Rooms 20 cottages, 16 Luxuy Swiss tents Facilities Restaurant, camel/ jeep safari, cultural programmes, campfire, Desert Activities

KK Resorts & Camps
Location Opp Sam Sand Dunes Cell 09414220386, 09001369788 w: kkdesertcamps.com Rooms 51 Swiss tents Facilities Dining Hall, camel safari, folk dance

The Moonlight Oasis
Camp
Location Sam Sand Dunes Cell 0992939999 w: moonlighthotelresort.com Rooms 30 Swiss tents Facilities Dining tent, camel safari, cultural programme Jaisalmer Reservation Hotel

LOHANA VILLAGE RESORT
Location Rajasthan

JALORE DISTRICT

Hotel Geetco
Location Bagoda Road, Opp New Bus Stand Tel 224011-12 Cell 07200571005 w: hotelgeetco.com Rooms 45 Facilities Veg Restaurant

Hotel Kaushal
International
Location NH15, Barmer Road, Sanchore, Dist Jalore Tel 02979-284444 Cell 09571118888, 0766500843 Rooms 54 Facilities Veg Restaurant

Hotel Ravi Bhenswara
Location Village Post Hariyal Resort

PALI DISTRICT

Ghanaero STD 02934
Hariyali Resort & Restaurant
Location 700/701 Khuras, Ranakpur Road, Desuri Cell 09828576760, 09829467316 w: hariyaliresort.com Rooms 10 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, kids play zone, jungle safari & horse riding arranged

Haveli Ashram & Resort
Location SH62, Muchaola Mahavir Road, Ghanaero Cell 08741916430, 09414299538/ 41 w: haveliashramandresort.com Rooms 11 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, parking, Wi-Fi, wild life safaris arranged

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan
Paryatan Bhawan, Opp Vidhayak Puri Police Station, M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

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358 RAJASTHAN

RAJASTHAN 359
The Ghanerao Royal Castle
Location PO Ghanerao Cell 09829784035 W ghanerao.com Rooms 15 Facilities Dining area, travel help, cooking demos on request

The Jungle Lodge
Location PO Ghanerao Cell 09829784035 W ghanerao.com Rooms 7 Facilities Dining area, trekking, jeep/horse safari arranged

IN JAWARE BANDH STD 02933
Bera Safari Lodge
Location Leopard Safari Road, Next to Liloda Temple, Kathar Village, Bera Cell 09413312133 W berasafariledge.com Rooms 5 Facilities Dining area, wilderness cycling, rural village excursions arranged

Jawai Castle Resort
Location Village Galthani, Post Jawai Bandh, Sumerpur Cell 07016662621 W jawiacastleresort.com Rooms 7 Facilities Restaurant, sightseeing arranged, birdwatching jeep safari (4 pax), leopard jeep safari (4 pax)

Jawai Greens HOMESTAY
Location Bijapur Road, Near Jiwda- Sena Gate, Teh Bari, Dist Pali Cell 08209692348 W jawagreens.com Rooms 2 Facilities Dining area, travel help, parking, sightseeing arranged, birdwatching jeep safari (6 pax), leopard jeep safari (6pax)

Jawai Jungle Camp
Location Village Boya Jawai Leopard Bera Area, Teh Bari, Dist Pali Cell 09555356669 W jawajunglesafaris.com Rooms 6 tents Facilities Dining area, activities like trekking, village excursions arranged, birdwatching jeep safari (6 pax), leopard jeep safari (6 pax)

Jawai Leopard Lodge
Location Village Duhdani-Moribera, via Jawai Bandh, Dist Pali Cell 09328903865 W jawaileopardlodge.in Rooms 5 tents, 2 Stone Cottages Facilities Restaurant, parking, temple visit/ shepherd’s home visit on request, leopard safari (4 pax), power backup

Jawai Manohar Vilas
Location Sema, Jawai Bandh Cell 09828353525 W jawaiomanoharovillas.com Rooms 3 Facilities Dining area, village temple tours arranged, leopard jeep safari (6 pax)

Sujan Life
Location Jawai Bandh, Dist Pali W sujanlife.com Rooms 10 tents Facilities Dining area, Wi-Fi, temple trails, wilderness drives Rabari village walk, treks, tent arranged Delhi Reservations Tel 011-46172700

Thour Nature Resort
Location On Varaval to Kolar Road, Village Varaval, Post Bera, Near Jawai Leopard Conservation Area, Teh Bari, Post Bari Cell 07426936663 Rooms 4 tents Facilities Dining area, bar, village safari, camel riding, birdwatching

IN RAWLA NARLAI STD 02934
Rawla Narlai
Location Village Rawla Cell 09950810813 W rawlanarlai.in Rooms 44 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, massage

SIROHI DISTRICT-
Mount Abu STD 02374
Altus – Luxury Homestay
Location Altus, Old Fateh Vilas, next to Circuit House, Kumarwada Tel 238060 Cell 09772345666, 09649036999 Rooms 6 Facilities Dining area, parking trekking arranged

Cama Rajputana Club
Location near Circuit House, Adhar Devi Road Tel 238205-06 Cell 07073403444 W camahotelsindia.com Rooms 42 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Connaught House
HERITAGE
Location Near Main Market, Rajinder Road Tel 238560, 235439 Cell 09968394262 W jodhaneritage.com Rooms 11 Facilities Restaurant, sightseeing, kids’ park

Hotel Savaire Palace
Location Sunset Road, Sirohi, Mount Abu Cell 08769618817, 07240238817 W savshanthotels.com Rooms 25 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, kids play area

Hotel Hilltop
Location Hilltop, Sunset Road, Near Nakki Lake Cell 235601, 235176, 235640 Cell 09413124984, 09928798383, 09413001088 Rooms 23 Facilities Restaurant, bar

Hotel Karnavati
Location Gaumukh Road Corner, Abu Cart Road Tel 235265, 235673, 237283 Cell 09656130180 Rooms 18 Facilities Restaurant

Hotel Lake Palace
Location Opp Nakki Lake, Nakki Lake Ring Road Cell 09784947154, 07240700154 W savshanthotels.com Rooms 13 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, kids play area, hotel, parking, sightseeing arranged, restaurant, kids’ park

Hotel Savra Resort
Location Near Circuit House, Sirohi City Cell 09784947154, 07240700154 W savshanthotels.com Rooms 13 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, kids play area

KOTA DISTRICT-
KOTA STD 0744
Brijraj Bhawan
Location Heritage Bldg., Near Collectorate, Civil Line, Nayapura, Kota-Rajasthan Tel 2450529 Cell 09414309597, 09588828097 W brijrajbhawanpalace.com Rooms 7 Facilities

KOTA DIVISION

Shri Ganesh Hotel
Location Jaipur House Road, Nakki Lake Tel 237292, 235591 Cell 094134434, 09460977064, 07073891432 Rooms 20 Facilities Restaurant, sightseeing
ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS

Restaurant, garden, outdoor games, river bank, parking

Country Inn and Suites By Radisson
Location Plot No. 4,5, Rajeev Gandhi Nagar, Opp City Mall, Jhalawar Road, Kota Tel 2666777 Cell 02730043882/7/91 w radissonhotels.com, countryinn.com/kota
Rooms 85 Facilities Restaurant, bar, spa, swimming, gym, parking

Hotel Menaal Residency
Location NH12, Bundi Road, Girdharpura, Kota-Rajasthan Tel 2371073-74 Cell 09829035205, 09829035247, 09829035206 w hotelmenaalkota.com
Rooms 80 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, parking

Maheshwari Resort
Location National highway 12K, Bundi Road, near Ganesh mandir, Kota Cell 092890353084, 09314728181, 09829035925 w maheshwariresort.com
Rooms 30 Facilities Restaurant, kids play area, boating, parking

Palkiya Haveli
Location Near Suraj Pole, Makha Para, Kota, Rajasthan Tel 2387844 Cell 09829747316 w alisar.com
Rooms 6 Facilities Restaurant, parking

Sukhdham Kothi
Location Station Road, Civil Lines, Opp Commissioner Bungalow, Near Collectorate circle, Kota Tel 2320081, 2323261 Cell 09660647756, 09759754349 w sukhdhamkothi.com, kotatrails.com
Rooms 15 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, parking

WH Umed Bhawan Palace
Location Palace Road, Opp Nehru Garden, Kota City, Kota-Rajasthan Tel 2325262-65 w welcomheritagehotels.in
Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, bar, fitness centre, parking

BARAN DISTRICT
BARAN STD 07453
Hotel Mahak
Location Near bus Stand near Railway Station, Baran Cell 09414390937, 09636062477 w hotelmahak.com
Rooms 12 Facilities lodging with basic amenities, parking

Hotel The Surya
Location Char Murti Circle Main Road, Near Railway Station and Bus Stand, Baran Tel 235737 Cell 08209497692
Rooms 33 Facilities Lodging, gym, parking

Hill View Hotel and Resort
Location Hill View Road, Hill View Colony, Chhabra, 62 km from Baran Tel 07452-223008 Cell 09680641865, 09461846059, 09511576233 w hillviewgroup.in
Rooms 42 Facilities Restaurant, Garden, outdoor activities, parking

BUNDI DISTRICT
BUNDI STD 0747
Bundi Inn – A Heritage Haveli
Location Near Elephant Memorial, Nahar ka Chotta, Bundi Palace Road Cell 09610639933, 08278604489 w bundiinn.com
Rooms 9 Facilities Restaurant, car rental, village safari, folk dance & puppet show

Bundi Haveli
Location 107, Balchand Para, Near Naval Sagar Lake Tel 2446716 Cell 09929931552 w hotelbundihaveli.com
Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, Wi-Fi, village tour, parking

Bundi Vilas
Location Opp Moti Mahal Palace, Bheru Daroja, Balchand Para Tel 2444614 Cell 07073369007 w bundivilas.com
Rooms 7 Facilities Restaurant, sightseeing Delhi
Reservations Tel 011-466041677, 40158782

Daulat Niwas
Location Dugari Haveli, Near Mahavir Swami Temple Cell 0772679108, 06262666967

Haveli Braj Bhushanjee
HERITAGE
Location Below the palace, Opp Ayurvedic Hospital Tel 2442322 Cell 09783355865-66 w kiplingsbundi.com
Rooms 18 Facilities Restaurant, private museum, sightseeing arranged

Haveli Katkoun
Location Near Gopal Mandir, Raghunandan Singh Parivar, Baichand Para Tel 2444311 Cell 09414539146 w katkounhavelibundi.com
Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, parking

Ishwari Niwas Palace
HERITAGE
Location Next to Collector’s Bungalow, 1, Civil Lines Tel 2442414 Cell 09414745388, 09414175851 w ishwariniwas.com
Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, horse/jeep safari, parking

Kasera Paradise
Location Below the palace Cell 09829170982, 09963790314 w kaseraresort.com
Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, sightseeing, Wi-Fi, parking

The Hodoti Palace
Location Opp Collectorate, Near Ranjit Talkies, Kota Road Tel 2443333 Cell 09928071111, 096675111111 w hodotipalace.com
Rooms 43 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, Ayurvedic massage on request, vintage car museum, library, parking

JHALAWAR DISTRICT
JHALAWAR STD 07432
Man Singh Resort
Location Kota Road, Near Brindavan Village Cell 07665898111, 09414193927

HOTELS

362 RAJASTHAN

Government of Rajasthan
Paryatan Bhawan, Opp Vidhnyak Puri Police Station, M.I. Road, Jaipur-302001

App: Rajasthan Tourism Official tourism.rajasthan.gov.in

363 RAJASTHAN
ACCOMMODATION LISTINGS

UDAIPUR DIVISION

UDAIPUR DISTRICT

Amet Havelli

Location Outside Chandeloe, Naga Nagri Cell 07414044009 \t\tamethaveliudaipur.com

Rooms 23 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, Wi-Fi

Jagmandir Island Resort

Location The City Palace Complex Tel 2424186-88 \t\thrhhotels.com

Rooms 7 Suites Facilities Restaurant, bar, spa, salon

JuSta Sajjangarh Resort & Spa

Location Opp Biological Park, Near Sajjangarh Main Gate Cell 09999051582, 0959077000 \tjustohotels.com

Rooms 63 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Shiv Niwas Palace

Location Lakesides, City Palace Complex Tel 2528016-19 \t\thrhhotels.com

Rooms 53 Facilities Restaurants, swimming pool, library

Taj Lake Palace

Location Jag Niwas Island, PO Box 5, Lake Pichola Tel 2428800 \t\ttajhotels.com

Rooms 83 Facilities Restaurants, bar, swimming pool, spa, gym

The Oberoi Udaivilas

Location Near Lake Pichola, Haridasji -ki-Magri Tel 2433300 \t\toberoihotels.com

Rooms 87 Facilities Restaurants, bar, spa, gym, library, swimming pool, Wi-Fi, parking

IN DEVI GARH STD 02953

Raas Devigarh Resort

Location NH48, Village Delwara, Dist Rajsamand Tel 289211 \t\traashotels.com

Rooms 39 Facilities Restaurants, swimming pool

IN JAISAMAND

Jaisaland Island Resort

Location Island 1, Jaisaland Lake, Udaipur-Banswara Road Cell 09928240555, 09928098555 \tjaisamand.co.in

Rooms 51 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym

IN RANAKPUR STD 02934

Fateh Bagh

Location Ranakpur Road Cell 07357165222, 08003190789 \thrhhotels.com

Rooms 18 Facilities Restaurant, bar

WH Maharani Bagh

Orchard Retreat

Location Sadri, Dist Puli Cell 09610085151 \welcomheritagehotels.in

Rooms 16 Facilities Restaurant, bar, swimming pool, Wi-Fi, game drive to WLS on request

DUNGAPUR STD 02964

Lake View Hotel

Location Near New Bus Stand Cell 08005902841 \t\ttakeviewhotel-dungapur.com

Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

UDIOGARH STD 02904

Deogarh Mahal

Location Deogarh Madaria, Dist Rajsamand Tel 09314420016 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

PRATAPGARH DISTRICT

Fort Dharirajwad Heritage Hotel

Location PO Dharirajwad \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 12 Facilities Restaurant, horse/jeep safari, village tour

IN DEOGARH STD 02904

Dev Shree

Location Pehla Bagh, Deogarh Madaria, Rajsamand Cell 09314653967 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 26 Facilities Meals KUMBALGARH STD 02954

Devi Palace Resort

Location Lakheho Lake, Fort Road, Kumbalgarh Cell 09829070075, 09950290245 \devipalaceresort.com

Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Hotel Aodhi

Location Near Kumbalgarh Fort, PO Kelwara Cell 0800072233, 07425962111 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 22 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

IN DEOGARH STD 02904

Deogarh Mahal

Location Deogarh Madaria, Dist Rajsamand Tel 09314420016 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

RHATANGARH

Location The Palace, PO Bhainsrorgarh Cell 08375012271

Rooms 25 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool, kids play zone, parking

RAJSAMAND DISTRICT

RAJSAMAND STD 02952

Rajasmand Lake View

Location NH48, Sewali, Ranakpur Cell 09636774253

Rooms 25 Facilities Meals

KUMBALGARH STD 02954

Devi Palace Resort

Location Lakheho Lake, Fort Road, Kumbalgarh Cell 09829070075, 09950290245 \devipalaceresort.com

Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Hotel Aodhi

Location Near Kumbalgarh Fort, PO Kelwara Cell 0800072233, 07425962111 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 22 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

IN DEOGARH STD 02904

Deogarh Mahal

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Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Dev Shree

Location Pehla Bagh, Deogarh Madaria, Rajsamand Cell 09314653967 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 26 Facilities Meals

KUMBALGARH STD 02954

Devi Palace Resort

Location Lakheho Lake, Fort Road, Kumbalgarh Cell 09829070075, 09950290245 \devipalaceresort.com

Rooms 32 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

Hotel Aodhi

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Rooms 22 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool

IN DEOGARH STD 02904

Deogarh Mahal

Location Deogarh Madaria, Dist Rajsamand Tel 09314420016 \hrhhotels.com

Rooms 50 Facilities Restaurant, swimming pool
Rajasthan

Photo Credits

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SHUTTERSTOCK Portrait of an unidentified Indian Gypsy woman on a street at Jaipur

Back Cover
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The Palace on Wheels is a luxury tourist train of RTDC to promote tourism in Rajasthan
GIREESH GV (below)
Tiger in a beautiful golden light in Ranthambore National Park in India

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SANJAY SHARMA
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