

BLUSHING CITY

JAIPUR GLOWS WITH A PULSING FERVOUR
FOR ART, STYLE, ARCHITECTURE AND FOOD



"Pink is the navy blue of India." So said the immortally fabulous Diana Vreeland, and she must have been talking about Jaipur, or the Pink City, as it's known. In 1876, Maharaja Ram Singh ordered the city to be painted in blushing rose tones – the colour of hospitality – in preparation for a visit by Edward, Prince of Wales, who at the time had been on a desperate bid to save his reputation as a playboy. Perhaps Jaipur was not the best place to send him. The pink glow creates a passionate backdrop for this gorgeous city.

Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan State, is the tenth most populated city in India and a major hub of commerce and the arts in the north. Architectural history buffs will be interested to know that Jai Singh II, Raja of Amer and the founder and namesake of Jaipur, designed the city on the principles of Vastu and Shipla Shastra. Vastu Shastra is a Hindu system of architecture that integrates nature with sacred geometrical patterns, symmetry and directional alignments. Shipla Shastra literally means the science of arts and crafts, for which Jaipur is globally famous.

India is one of the few places in the world where things are still made by hand and Jaipur is a centre of refined artistry in block printed fabric, gem cutting, leather making, embroidery and any number of diverse crafts. Top fashion houses send emissaries on a regular basis to Jaipur to search for that perfect artisan or piece of embroidery for their couture collections. Add rickshaw rides, glistening temples and extravagant palaces, excellent cuisine and shopping to the equation and you'll find a buzzing and beautiful city basking in that famous rosy glow.

WHEN TO GO

The best time to go to Jaipur is during the winter between November and February. It's peak tourist time so try to aim for the beginning or end of the season. Avoid the summer, from March to July, when temperatures soar to 47°C and skip the short monsoon season between July and September. Unless you really love being hot and wet, of course.

For lovers of literature...

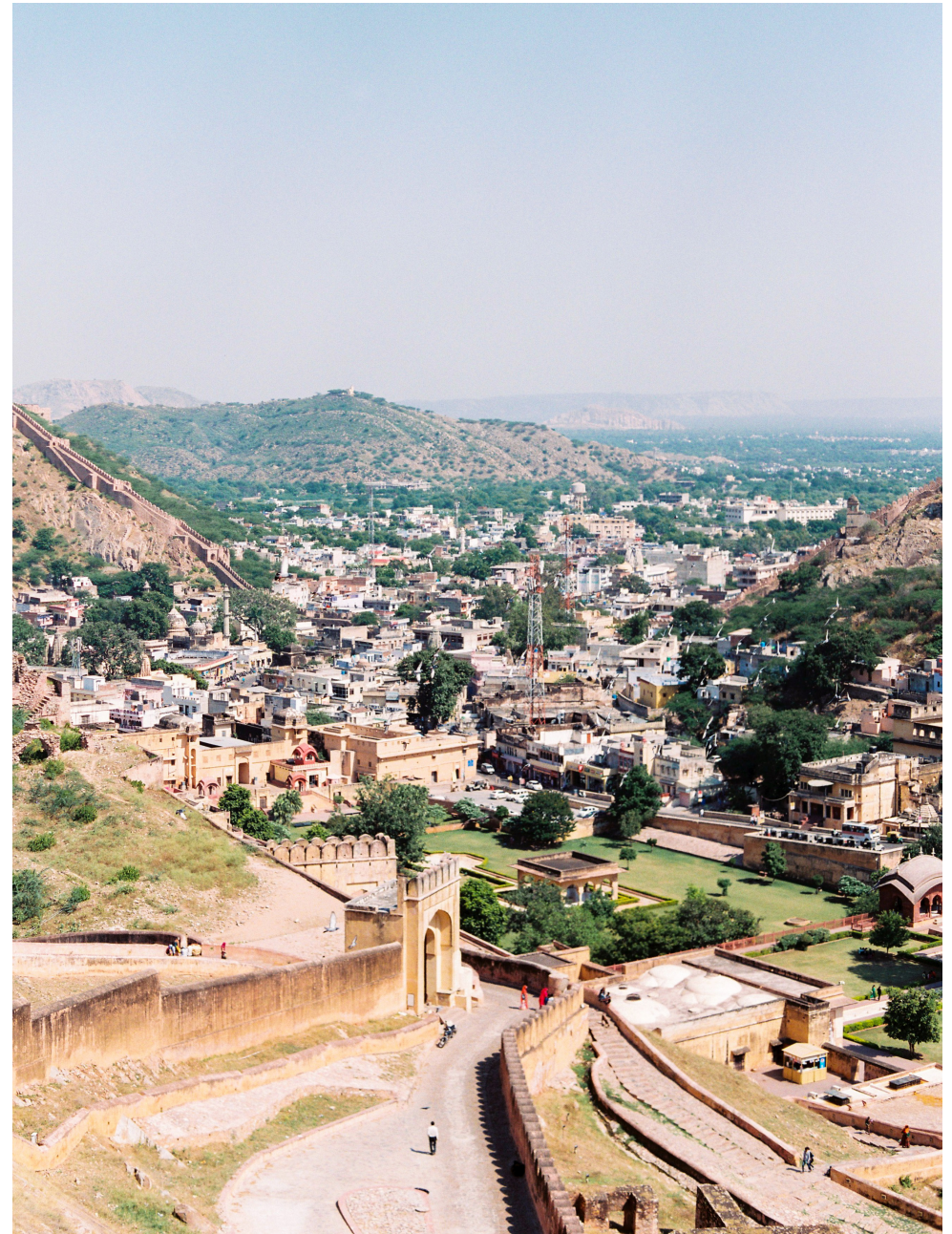
Based at the Digg Palace and supported by the scions of the Royals who still occupy part of this historic building, the Jaipur Literature Festival turned ten in 2017. The late January event includes up to 60 other venues across the city and features music, interviews and panels attracting the likes of V.S Naipal, Hanif Kureishi, the Dalai Lama, Ian McEwan, Oprah Winfrey, Salman Rushdie, Stephen Fry and more.

For lovers of polo...

India is considered the cradle of modern polo and the game is taken very seriously. There are various tournaments and competitive games from January to March run via the Rajasthan Polo Club and then again during the Jaipur Polo season from September to October. Polo season also means party season and the city lights up with its most flamboyant celebrations.

For lovers of elephants...

Hastimangala (Elephant Festival) is timed to coincide with the famously colourful festival of Holi in March. Herds of majestic beasts are beautifully dressed in bells and embroidered velvets and decorated from trunk to tail in painted designs. A parade of these beautiful creatures throughout the city culminates in an elephant polo match.





WHERE TO STAY

Jaipur is home to some of India's most exquisite hotels in the city centre and just outside the city limits are some incredibly romantic estates. One could easily spend a few days exploring Jaipur then have some luxury wind down time in the countryside.

Amanbagh

Surrounded by the ruins of an ancient empire, temples and the wildlife of the Sariska National Park, Amanbagh is majestic and magical. Nab one of the Pavilions or Terrace Suites for the ultimate royal luxury.

Samode Haveli

Set within the walls of the old city, Samode Haveli is a reformed 175-year old traditional Indian royal mansion. The vibe is one of faded grandeur with a sense of regal luxury. The leafy courtyards scattered throughout the hotel offer a cool respite from sightseeing and shopping.

Jai Mahal Palace

This opulent heritage hotel is a striking example of Indo-Saracens architecture. Set on 18 acres of Mughal gardens, it was once the official residence of the Prime Minister of Jaipur. The hotel's restaurant, Cinnamon, is highly regarded and well worth a visit.

The Farm

Calling itself an eclectic art hotel, The Farm is a sign of the younger generation starting to make a claim on Jaipur's hipster scene. Here Jaipur's cultural heritage is reclaimed, repurposed and up-cycled into a riot of colour in six rooms and eight stand-alone suites.

Tree of Life Resort and Spa

Nestled into the Aravali Hills, these 13 impeccable luxury villas are surrounded by lush countryside. Ekam, the resort's wellness centre, uses 100-percent natural products including such delicacies as turmeric, marigold, basil, black pepper, honey and lime.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Street food vendors rely on their good reputations to make a living, meaning they make sure their product is of high quality and cleanliness. A simple test is to look for the long line of locals and you will be well rewarded. Jaipur is also full of excellent restaurants, many located inside hotels.

Lassiwalla

The kefir stand on M. I. Road serves up the best lassi you will ever have.

Masala Tea at Gulab Ji Chai Waala

Set opposite Ganpati Plaza on MI Road, this is chai tea as it was meant to be. The original and the best.

Pandit Kulfi

On Bhagwan Das Road you'll find India's sweet and cool answer to ice cream: kulfi. The perfect pick me up.

Survana Mahal

For the ultimate in fine dining take a table at Survana Mahal at the Rambagh Palace Hotel for authentic Rajasthani royal cuisine.

The Verandah, Rambagh Palace

Harking back to the days of the Raj the Verandah invokes a sense of colonial chic with its arches and panoramic views. Enjoy a high tea service complete with a towering stand of petit fours or opt for a classic pre-dinner gin.

Chokhi Dhani

This is a Jaipur institution and a must-do. With a village atmosphere, Chokhi Dhani delivers all the flavours of traditional Rajasthan. Occasionally there will be folk singers and dancers to accompany your meal.

Bar Palladio

Reminiscent of a Mogul era dreamscape, this gorgeous blue tinged bar is a picturesque place for a cooling Pimms or G&T. The menu at the newly minted cafe is a mix of excellent Italian, Lebanese and Turkish fare.

WHAT TO DO

Obviously there are the major historical points to take in including the Amber Fort, Hawa Mahal Palace, the City Palace, Jantar Mantar park and the Jal Mahal, not to mention the sheer headiness of just walking the streets. But you can find out about those in any guidebook or from your hotel concierge. Here are a few off-piste things to do in the Pink City.

Learn from an artisan

Bertie and Victoria Dyer, long time Jaipur residents, facilitate workshops with local artisans. Spend the day with a family who have practiced their craft over generations. Learn how to block print your own design onto cotton silk cloth using traditional carved wood blocks then take home a unique gift.

Take in the art

Jaipur is a centre for traditional and modern Indian art and hosts a plethora of galleries. Stop by Artchill to check out established and emerging artists. Smanvai Art Gallery hosts some excellent shows and is great place for investors and artists to meet. Kanchan Art Gallery is good for modern and traditional art while the Jawahar Kala Kendra centre is a visual and performing arts paradise.

Get your rev on a motorbike tour

Jump on India's favoured mode of transport and get your easy rider joy on the way to the Smanbhar Salt Lake for an overnight stay then onto Sawarda Fort before heading back to Jaipur.

WHERE TO SHOP

Jaipur was founded as a centre for commerce and craft and with that in mind you may want to tack on a day or two just to go shopping.

The Gem Palace

This sparkling jewel in Jaipur's shopping crown is a must visit, everyone's been there: Jackie, Mick, Gwyneth, Diana...

Trunks Company

This luxurious leatherware company crafts handmade luggage and their motto is 'An ode to the regal traveller'. Enough said.

Bazaars

There are several bazaars worth a visit for their bright colour and crazy prices. Try Johari for jewellery, Bapu for textiles, Sireh Deori for leather and Chaura Rasta for stationery.

Andraab

It is hard to leave Jaipur without investing in a shawl or scarf or several. Andraab designs and stocks the finest handwoven cashmere including throws, wall hangings and bedspreads.

Dhora

The brainchild of Jaipur native Aavriti R Jain, this is where to come when you want all the colours of Jaipur with the volume turned down somewhat.

Tokree

This emporium of impeccably curated Indian handicrafts has beautiful clothing plus a gorgeous selection of art, rugs, bedding and homewares. It's tucked inside the Hotel Alsisar Haveli, the perfect spot for a mid-shop pot of tea.

