



*The dining room at the Indian-meets-Italian Caffè Palladio Jaipur.*

- ▶ Going to India for the first time is like tasting *uni* for the first time: an experience guaranteed to elicit a strong reaction. Indeed, much of what makes India so addictive (or so repellent, depending on who you are) is its too much-ness—too much traffic, too much sensory stimulation, too many disparities, too many people.

But there's one town that both the India-obsessed (as I am) and the India skeptics find easy to love: Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. Although it has a population of more than 3 million, it still feels human-size: a place with all the color of Mumbai or Delhi, but easily navigable and relatively relaxed. It's also a place that, since its founding in 1727 as the seat of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II's empire, has been known for its superior metalworking, textile making, and stone carving—making it a popular destination for shoppers and designers from within India and abroad, who in turn keep it a vibrant, innovative, and ever-changing city. Development is fueled in large part by Jaipur's significant expat community. This includes Londoners and New Yorkers who've begun a new life here, people like Caroline Weller, a former designer for J.Crew and Armani whose line, Banjanan—colorfully patterned cotton dresses—sells at Barneys New York; and Bertie and Victoria Dyer, who own a travel agency called India Beat and whom I depend upon to coordinate all my trips to India. (The company has recently begun offering guests a half-day block-printing class in the nearby village of Bagru, which has been producing hand-printed cotton for centuries).

Visitors eventually make their way to Bar Palladio Jaipur, Hotel Villa Cipriani alum Barbara Miolini's highly photographable Italian restaurant. Last year, she opened a sister location, [Caffè Palladio Jaipur](#), where everyone gathers for alfresco lunches. The well-chosen menu offers old-school favorites from both the East (thick, grainy red pepper-and-walnut meze; fragrant lamb and apricot *tagine*) and West (perfect *pasta alla Norma*; fried, breaded aubergine), and the interiors, created by former Tocca

## More Is More

Jaipur is hardly a static city only meant to be “done” once. Rajasthan's capital is always evolving, managing to surprise both novices and diehards alike.

**FROM TOP:** *The front room at Andraab; 47 Jobner Bagh's leafy courtyard.*

designer Marie-Anne Oudejans, are glorious: a peach-and-mint fantasy of 1950s Italian design with a Mughal twist, complete with hand-painted walls, pistachio-and-white checkerboard marble floors, and a trompe-l'oeil tented ceiling.

From here, it's a short walk to [Narain Niwas Palace](#). Built in 1928 as a getaway for one of the maharaja's confidantes, it was later converted into a hotel. These days, it's the site of some of the town's best ateliers: In addition to the beloved decade-old boutique [Hot Pink](#), there's a new complex of shops that includes outposts of [Satayam](#), where you can find ultrafine cotton shawls hand-painted with Mughal patterns in pure gold; [Andraab](#), which sells pricey (and exquisite) cashmere scarves; and [Anantaya](#), where you'll find locally made housewares and gifts, including beaten-brass bowls and adorable toy sheep made with locally sourced wool.

An Indian restaurant is set to open across from Hot Pink later this year, but the latest new place to eat is [Baradari](#). The restaurant, in which Gem Palace jewelry scion Samir Kasliwal is a partner, is housed on the grounds of the 18th-century City Palace. The menu includes a fall-off-the-bone cardamom-scented lamb shank and rose ice cream with bits of candied rose.

Along with shops and restaurants, Jaipur's churn of design-minded visitors also ensures an outsize selection of small, stylish, affordable hotels. On the humbler end, there's the 11-room [47 Jobner Bagh](#). Located in the center of town, it has a *riad*-like feel, with a rooftop terrace and spare, sunlit, whitewashed rooms. Then there's the forthcoming 59-suite [Alila Fort Bishangarh](#), a refitted 18th-century fort perched on a hilltop about an hour's drive outside of town, with an extensive spa tucked into the dungeons. But for a truly Jaipurian home away from home, you can't do better than [28 Kothi](#), which opened last year. This five-room boutique hotel occupies a two-story home in the pretty, tree-lined Civil Lines



neighborhood and is owned by Siddharth Kasliwal, the bon vivant jewelry designer and co-owner of Gem Palace, and operated by restaurateur Abhishek Honawar. Together they've created the millennial equivalent of the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, where guests, many of them textile and jewelry designers from Brooklyn and Paris, hang out and talk in the garden over glasses of fresh-pulped beet-and-carrot juice. Not only does 28 Kothi have some of the most delicious food I've ever had in India—light, flavorful takes on Rajasthani vegetarian classics—but its sunny, cozy rooms (each named after a different gemstone) are likely to encourage that most tempting and dangerous of fantasies: that maybe you, too, could become a full-time Jaipurian.

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