

SHADES OF PINK

Jaipur

Words by
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Jaipur is a kaleidoscopic assault on the senses. Known as the Pink City for the colour of its stonework, the Rajasthani capital – with its pattern of palaces, lawns and bazaars – has a sense of grandeur that is unparalleled in India. Luxury is no stranger to Jaipur; swathes of heritage hotels, Raj-era museums, precious stone shops and exquisite bars make this a deservedly popular destination.

Rajasthani fare is not to be missed. Tuck into kachoris from a street vendor for breakfast, dal baati churma thali for lunch and a biryani on a happening rooftop restaurant for supper.

Home to a vast miscellany of artisans, this is the ultimate location in India to do your shopping. Get lost in the winding old streets which are filled with master goldsmiths and fine jewellers, leather crafters, block printing stores, an amazing array of unusual fabrics and massive mounds of pottery. Shop till you quite literally drop, and when you do, collapse into the comfort of a canopied chaise longue and sip on a cocktail as you watch the sun set behind a silhouette of Jaipur's spectacular panorama of palaces.





TO STAY

TAJ RAMBAGH PALACE

BHAWANI SINGH ROAD

Doubles from £634 per night

Unabashedly extravagant, this erstwhile residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur is now a hotel where guests can truly feel like royalty for the duration of their stay. Run by the Taj group, this opulent palace is set amidst expansive, ornamental gardens that include a polo pitch and a golf course, and are perfect for an evening walk. Rambagh operates with a discreet and sophisticated charm that will leave you reluctant to ever leave.

EXPLORER'S NEST

3 PUROHIT JI KA BAGH, BEHIND TANISHQUE SHOW ROOM,
OPPOSITE DARBAR SCHOOL, MI ROAD

Doubles from £10 per night

This charming little bed and breakfast is located in a quiet family-orientated colony, but is just a ten-minute walk from the bazaars of the Pink City. Run by a retired lieutenant colonel who collects antiques, the rooms are lovingly decorated and spotless. Don't expect splendour but on hand you'll find hot water, speedy wifi and very friendly staff.

PEARL PALACE HERITAGE

54 GOPAL BARI, LANE NUMBER 2, AJMER ROAD

Doubles from £65 per night

While each room represents the heritage of a different city of India, Pearl Palace is traditionally Rajasthani in its vibrancy, service and grandeur. Most notable here are the phenomenally friendly staff for whom there is no request too challenging. Breakfast is served in bed – Indian cosmopolitanism at its best.

EDITOR'S PICK

OBEROI RAJVILAS

GONER ROAD, PALDI MEENA

Rooms from £350 per night

Luxury worthy of a honeymoon, The Oberoi is the closest you'll get to the India of your imagination. Escape the dusty, loud streets of the Pink City and relax with unparalleled service – staff to guest ratio is five to one – and a fresh watermelon juice. You can choose to stay in spacious tents, rooms or villas. Don't be surprised if you see peacocks strolling around the grounds, they may even venture into your room if you feed them the peanuts on your coffee table. The Oberoi has also been credited with serving the best Indian food in the city.

TO EAT

ANOKHI CAFÉ

2ND FLOOR, KK SQUARE, C-11 PRITHVIRAJ ROAD

More of a place for fresh leaf tea and cake than a meal, this quaint little café serves the best cheesecake in Rajasthan. Their delicious organic coffee will give you the energy to take on the vast range of traditional Jaipuri textiles, clothing and homeware in their shop across the street.

SHRI THAAL VILLAGE RESTAURANT

3 RATHORE NAGAR, QUEENS ROAD, VAISHALI NAGAR

Be sure to visit this rustic restaurant on an empty stomach and prepare to eat in the traditional Rajasthani way, sitting on the floor. Their specialty is thali, a platter of rice which is replenished throughout the meal and surrounded by small dishes of curds, vegetables and curry. The dal baati churma, a dish of lentils and hard wheat rolls, and the jalebi, a deep-fried sweet, are among the best in Jaipur.

PEACOCK RESTAURANT

HOTEL PEARL PALACE, 51 HATHROI FORT, HARI KISHAN
SOMANI MARG, AJMER ROAD

This rooftop hangout used to have a decidedly hippie vibe, but in recent years has been given a fresh coat of paint and some TLC. It's now a sleek, efficient restaurant serving good food to a big cross-section of travellers. Order a chicken biryani and gaze out at the panoramic view of the Pink City.



THALI AT PEARL PALACE HERITAGE

TO DO

CHAND BAORI STEPWELL

CHAND BAOLI STEP WELL, ABHANERI, JAIPUR-AGRA HIGHWAY, BANDIKUI

Featured in the British film *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, the Chand Baori stepwell in Abhaneri Village is definitely worth the hour-long drive out of the city. Despite being on the popular route between Jaipur and Agra, this little historical site receives few visitors, and exploring the romantic and magnificent stepwell offers a delightful glimpse of Rajasthani village life.

ANOKHI MUSEUM FOR PRINTS AND TEXTILES

ANOKHI HAVELI, NEAR BADRINATH TEMPLE, KHERI GATE, AMBER

Jaipur is world famous for block printed fabrics. There are numerous places in this city to watch the process and to have a go at doing it yourself, but far and away the best place to experience hand printing is the Anokhi Museum. Situated in a converted haveli in the shadows of the Amber Fort, the museum aims to share the knowledge and ancient expertise of the artisans and preserve this fast-fading practice.

JANTAR MANTAR OBSERVATORY

JANTAR MANTAR

The home of Indian astronomy was built in the early 18th century, and this tourist destination is at first a perplexing assembly of curiously shaped stone and marble. A thorough and knowledgeable guide is the only way to make sense of India's oldest observatory and its riveting history. The cosmological measuring systems here are still used to this day by Jaipuri families to determine an auspicious date for a marriage.



RIDE AN ELEPHANT UP TO THE AMBER FORT

AMER

The zig-zagging ascent to the Amber Fort is best traversed in the grand manner of the royals, atop an elephant palanquin, with a magnificent view over the lakes and gardens beneath this 16th-century creation. The Fort itself is majestic, with a complicated and chequered history, and is a stunning place for a quiet wander with your camera. Each archway reveals another intricately decorated courtyard with vast frescoes, pools and pillared pavilions. Prepare to be polite, patient and firm with the numerous touts and hawkers who can be pretty belligerent.

EDITOR'S PICK

GEM PALACE

348 MIRZA ISMAIL ROAD

Walk through the doors and it'll take a minute for your eyes to adjust to this sparkling kingdom. Every little and big girl's dream, inside the shop you will bear witness to the legacy of eight generations of jewellers who have designed for everyone from the maharajas of India to Hollywood stars. While a lot of the jewellery is for very special occasions, including royal weddings and museum exhibitions, there are things at every price point and it is worth going even just to take a look. An unmissable Jaipuri experience.

TO SHOP

EMMA CHAPMAN JEWELS

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY - EMMACHAPMANJEWELS.COM

British-born Emma Chapman has been working with master goldsmiths and stonecutters in the city for years, and is a firm believer in supporting and sharing their ancient techniques. The finished products are her unique and exotic designs which incorporate some of the rarest of stones. Head here for Indian-style jewellery that you will be able to wear anywhere.

SOMA

A 5 - JAMNALAL BAJAJ MARG C'SHEME

Soma create all of their homeware, clothing and accessories using the ancient Rajasthani technique of block printing, and the result is summery, stylish products that capture the unique style of Jaipur. Their bed linen, cushion covers and quilts are particularly pretty.

EDITOR'S PICK

HOT PINK

NARAIN NIWAS PALACE, KANOTHA BAGH, NARAYAN SINGH ROAD

Set in two beautiful locations – the tranquil gardens of Narain Niwas and the Amber Fort – Hot Pink is Jaipur's excellent answer to a concept store. The boutique stocks an array of local designers and clothes in a wide range of vibrant colours. Girls, don't leave without purchasing a pair of pyjamas or a hand-embroidered piece from Sophia203. There are also traditional Nehru jackets and slippers for the boys.



TO DRINK + DANCE



STEAM BAR

TAJ RAMBAGH PALACE, BHAWANI SINGH ROAD

One of the most unusual drinking experiences in the city, this bar gets its name from a restored steam engine which has been transformed into a bar, sitting on top of a terrace designed to emulate a Victorian station. This coupled with its exclusive backdrop – the resplendent, softly lit Rambagh palace – make it quite the favourite with Jaipur's barflies, and a very special place to sip on a sunset G&T. The cocktails are sublime; staff will go out of their way to ensure that you are happy with everything you have ordered, but do not expect Indian cuisine – their speciality is mutton pizza.

BAR PALLADIO

NARAIN NIWAS PALACE HOTEL, KANOTA BAGH, NARAIN SINGH ROAD

With its stunning shades of blue and white, Palladio is the trendy new kid on the Jaipur block. Always full and always fun, Palladio has the best wine list in the city, and the Italian food has a spicy, Indian edge. The lawn has a spattering of cosy banquettes with tented awnings, imbuing this absolute gem of a drinking spot with a true air of elegance.

AZA

FAIRMONT JAIPUR HOTEL, 2 RIICO KUKAS

Aza have described themselves as a venue for those who enjoy the finer things in life, and the impressive collection of vintage cognacs and rare single malts certainly help. The delicate interiors are a beautiful confluence of Rajasthani palace and Raj-era hunting lodge, and the bar extends out onto the rolling palace lawns where bonfires are lit and fireflies dart in the sky. You will never want to leave.

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