A First-Timer’s Guide to Rajasthan, India’s Most Beautiful, Fascinating, Delicious Region

BY PETE KENYON

Aadhami

Most first-time India goes here that boasts on a cosmopolitan city, like Bombay, a backpacker’s bazaar, like Goa. But according to chef and restaurateur (and India native) Maneet Chauhan, if you really want to see the best that the country has to offer, there are few regions more fascinating and multi-dimensional than Rajasthan.

“I still remember my ﬁrst time driving from Delhi to Ajmer,” says Chauhan. “As soon as you enter Rajasthan, you are hit with others. It’s such a sensory experience: you see women in bright pink and yellow saris, narrow-pulling carts, hearty bowls—there’s so much and so many variety!” And the food? “Indian did it like you’ve never tasted it in your life,” she says, with plenty of hearty momos, garlic-globed breads, and spinach curries.

Jaipur

“Jaipur is the capital of Rajasthan and it’s no coincidence the best place to visit. It’s an amazing hub of history. It’s called the Pink City because all the architecture has a hint of pink in the stones used. It’s an amazing stop for all kinds of food but also for history and shopping. It’s a little bit of everything.”

Rajasthan is a maze of royal cities, each surrounded by temples, ornate palaces. The most famous of all (and Chauhan’s favorite) is Lake Palace, one of the dining sites for the iconic Golden Eye. In addition to its charm, but you can also walk around the beautiful and very well preserved white marble. For a “spiritual, historic Indian temple,” head out to the ancient Love Temple.

Advice from chef Maneet Chauhan on where to go, where to shop, and what to eat.