“Inside Maharaja Padmanabh Singh’s palatial apartment in Jaipur”
Suján Luxury Hotels

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST
India, March-April 2018
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As with all the palaces of 18th-century Mughal and Rajput architecture, Jaipur’s coveted Rajmahal Palace is a tour de force of European palace traditions and modernity. "And they look more beautiful, in fact,” says 65-year-old Pulmanabh Singh, the 13th descendant of the erstwhile royal family of Jaipur. Behind the palace’s candy pink art deco facade are 45 royal apartments, suites and palace rooms, which served as the royal family’s primary residence until it was repurposed as an exclusive palace hotel in 1984. From the 259 rooms, the palace has many different suites. [Rajasthan Palace Hotel]’s palace room, for example, is one of the most luxurious in the hotel. It was opened by Prince Jodh, the founder and CEO of the hotel.

Today, even if in new use as a hotel, the palace remains the preferred residence of the erstwhile royals. "The family uses the palace quite casually and very frequently," he says. "They entertain their guests or spend a weekend there themselves. Princess Dilip Karnani also keeps an office here, which she uses regularly," says Jagat.

BACHELOR KING
Of special interest here is Ram Niwas, the Maharaja’s Apartment, which serves as Pulmanabh’s full-time residence when he is in Jaipur, like a good son, he also lives with his family in the City Palace. The interiors by Ahamed were designed to showcase the architectural dominance. [Rajasthan Palace Hotel]’s palace rooms are decorated with contemporary art and antiques obtained from various sources. However, in keeping with the location’s age, the 45-square-foot space has acquired a reputation as a well-known party pad in the city, and the young royals’ guests frequently converge here from all over the world.

The apartment has been home to three generations of Royal family members—Sawai Madho Singh II, Sawai Bhawani Singh and now, Pulmanabh. "It is a beautiful apartment with a massive terrace," says Pulmanabh, adding, "my grandfather (Sawai Bhawani Singh) loved entertaining and he had a particular way of doing that. He would invite Indian food, so we have Rajput food cooked in the traditional way. As you can see, he has Rajputi servants preparing his menu. It gives people a sense of what Rajput is about. When he entertains, I try to follow the same traditions." Pulmanabh—known to his friends as "Tackie"—is stylish, but also emotionally sensitive. "Growing up here has been pretty interesting for me," he says. "Well, not for me, but for my friends who used to visit. We’d spend hours running around the beautiful palaces and forts—especially at night—playing hide-and-seek.

A KINGDOM END & A HORSE
The young equestrian, who studied at Mayo College, Ajmer and Milford School in the UK, could not be seen playing football in the previous. "My biggest passion, however, has always been polo. I used to ride with my father, and my grandfather used to watch. This is probably the most prominent memory I have of Rajmahal—the past polo in the early mornings before school, or in the evenings," says Pulmanabh, who is also a member of the Windsor- based Guards Polo Club. Between entertaining friends and playing polo, family is key—an aspect of royal life that is much about novelty in its tradition. "It’s very back-to-basics here. I try to spend as much time with my family as possible, especially with my grandmother. Her stories are so interesting. We speak about all the challenging times, like the Emergency and the Partition. She says that the most important thing in life is family and the people we’re responsible for. I take these things very, very, very seriously."

Pulmanabh recently moved to New York, where he is studying liberal arts at a New York University. However, even from the lofty penthouse of Jaipur to the modern metropolis of the Big Apple doesn’t compromise him. "This is the first time I’ve spent almost a decade in a boarding school with facilities much simpler than this. I’ve just moved into a two-bedroom apartment on the 40th floor of a Third Avenue building, and that is quite comfortable too. I’ve always wanted to be as well-rounded as possible, and as independent as I can be," says Pulmanabh. "How does he become the next royal? And what future do the younger royals have?"

“From the city, a city of identity, a city of life, a city of music, a city of my hometown.”

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