

ANDREW HARPER'S HIDEAWAY REPORT

June, 2015

“An authentic safari camp..likely to appeal to travelers who have a deep and longstanding interest in wildlife”

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Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report

JUNE 2015 | OUR 37TH YEAR

AndrewHarper.com

TRAVELING THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF TRULY ENCHANTING PLACES

THIS MONTH

EXCITING INDIAN DISCOVERIES

Exciting new hotels and camps, cashmere, jewelry, polo, festivals and more

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New Midtown hotels, plus Theater District restaurants, shops and museums

WEB EXCLUSIVES

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IN THE NEWS

New Era on Cap Ferrat

FEW GRAND HOTELS are quite as grand as the **Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat**. Built in 1908,

it is surrounded by 17 acres of lavender and citrus trees at the tip of a pine-scented peninsula seven miles east of Nice. Gustave Eiffel designed the lobby; Pierre-Yves Rochon presided over a 2009 renovation. History, grandeur, a celebrity clientele, a Michelin-starred restaurant, an exceptional spa and a private stretch of waterfront: The Cap-Ferrat has them all. The only criticism has been that the service is a tad old-fashioned. Now this is likely to change. In May, Four Seasons took over management of the property. Henceforth, North American hospitality can be expected to augment Gallic elegance and flair. [FOURSEASONS.COM](#)

PALACES, FORTS, BAZAARS, DESERTS AND TIGERS

India: A Journey Through Rajasthan



Tranquil garden at the glamorous new Rajmahal Palace hotel, Jaipur
PHOTO BY ANDREW HARPER

THE FAMOUSLY OPULENT PALACE HOTELS OF RAJASTHAN — PLACES SUCH AS THE Rambhag Palace in Jaipur and the Lake Palace in Udaipur — remain an irresistible draw for most first-time visitors to India. But now, a new generation of sumptuous smaller properties and luxury camps offers experienced travelers a variety of alluring alternatives.

Jaipur, like much of India, has changed enormously in recent years. Today, a metropolis of more than 3 million people encircles the 18th-century core. Fortunately, the heart of the city has lost little of its magic. Elephants and camels still mingle with the cars and tuk-tuks; the gem and textile merchants continue to ply their trades in the kaleidoscopic Johari Bazaar; and the precincts of the immense City Palace are as imposing and exotic as ever.

By Indian standards, Jaipur is not especially ancient. In 1727, at the instigation of Maharaja Jai Singh II, a new planned city was laid out on a grid, a replacement for his previous capital, Amber, seven

miles away. At the same time, the Rajmahal Palace was constructed: a serene pavilion surrounded by a pleasure garden. During the colonial period from 1821 to 1947, this became the home of the British Resident political officer. Then, after independence, the flamboyant, polo-playing Maharaja Man Singh II adopted the Rajmahal as his personal residence. It soon became a kind of guesthouse for the global elite, presided over by his dazzling wife, Gayatri Devi, author of the best-selling memoir “A Princess Remembers.” The queen of England came to stay, as did Jackie Kennedy, along with an international cast of politicians, sportsmen and socialites.

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Pool terrace at Mihir Garh, Rohet
PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARPER

TIGER RESERVES

Ranthambore and Sher Bagh Camp



Bengal tiger, and our lavish tent at Sher Bagh
PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARPER

INDIA HAS 48 TIGER RESERVES, and current estimates suggest that they are now home to between 1,700 and 2,200 tigers. Although this may seem a pitifully small number, the current trend is somewhat encouraging. According to some optimistic accounts, tiger numbers have increased by 30 percent in the past five years as a result of more determined enforcement of anti-poaching laws.

India's most famous tiger reserve is Ranthambore National Park — in part because of its location, just three hours' drive from Jaipur. Otherwise, the best-known reserves are Kanha and Bandhavgarh (in both of which I recommend luxury camps). New names will soon become familiar. For example, Pench, Panna and Tadoba national parks are all attracting more visitors, and the first two already have excellent lodges — Baghvan and Pashan Garh — run by Taj Hotels. During Indian public holidays and on weekends, well-known parks can be overrun with noisy trippers.

Despite the crowds, Ranthambore remains a park of extraordinary beauty, with lakes, forests, meadows and the romantic ruins of a 10th-century fort surrounded by ridges of hazy hills. On this occasion, I opted to stay at SUJÁN's **Sher Bagh**, a peaceful camp of 12 air-conditioned white-canvas tents. Each is appointed with a large double bed, sisal matting, hunting prints and dark wood-and-leather Edwardian “campaign” furniture. The en suite bath seems more suited to a luxury hotel than to a tent, with a stone floor, marble surfaces and a powerful walk-in shower. Public areas include a congenial library/bar (where Wi-Fi is available) and are decorated with large black-and-white photographs of tigers, taken in Ranthambore over the past 40 years. Western-style lunches are followed by traditional Indian dinners cooked using clay ovens. Overall, Sher Bagh feels less like a resort and more like an authentic safari camp, therefore, it is likely to appeal to travelers who have a deep and longstanding interest in wildlife.

📄 Read more about India's tiger reserves and our visit to Sher Bagh online.

architect walked out, and he and his wife were obliged to design and construct the new building themselves, with the help of around 100 local laborers and craftsmen.

Our suite proved to be spacious, colorful and supremely comfortable, with hand-stenciled walls, an ornate fireplace, inlaid furniture, bright local fabrics and carpets, and intricate wrought iron. Double doors opened onto a small terrace with a plunge pool. The outside bath came with twin vanities, a walk-in shower and a soaking tub adjacent to windows with a view of the desert. The public areas at Mihir Garh are similarly expansive and have a wonderful sense of place, thanks to traditional textiles, paintings and artifacts. Everything about the property is distinctive. Meals are taken outside next to the horizon pool, and there, we enjoyed refined Indian cuisine, accompanied at dinner by local musicians.

Activities include Jeep excursions to nearby villages, especially those inhabited by the Bishnoi, a group whose belief system not only precludes the taking of animal life, but also the felling of trees. In addition to the blackbuck and nilgai, birdlife in the region is prolific, and I was able to renew my acquaintance with the demioselle cranes. The property also has around 15 Marwari horses — a breed once favored by Rajasthan's Rajput warrior caste — and it is possible to ride out into the desert for picnics, or even to spend the night in a fly camp.

Mihir Garh is comparatively remote, and the pace of life there is leisurely. It will not appeal to everyone, but if you want to unwind in an unusual and evocative setting, the property has much to recommend it. Thakur Sidharth Rohet Singh is a solicitous host, and his staff are similarly charming.

JAWAI BANDH

Seventy miles south of Rohet, the flat, sandy landscape of the Thar Desert is replaced by plains punctuated by enigmatic granite outcrops, some up to 1,500 feet high, overlooked by the hills of the Aravalli Range. Set in front of two such outcrops near the remote village of Jawai Bandh, **JAWAI** camp enjoys a setting that seems almost primeval. Another new SUJÁN property, it opened in December 2013 and comprises 10 spacious air-conditioned tents, plus dining and library tents, a small spa and a plunge pool. Decorated in white, black and red, the accommodations have an exceptionally imaginative aesthetic that successfully combines traditional