

“The whole place has been refurbished and restored to its full potential.”

FIT FOR A MAHARAJA

words by LAURA FOWLER



In Jaipur, that rose-tinted spectacle of a city, an 18th-century palace and Persian pleasure garden will reopen as a top-end hotel this November.

Owned by the royal family of Jaipur, **Suján Rajmahal Palace** is one of the city's oldest palaces. It was built in the 1720s for the Maharaja, home to Indian royalty for centuries; it has hosted the Queen and Prince Philip (one can only imagine his comments about the wiring), Jackie Onassis, Lord and Lady Mountbatten.

Since the 1980s it has been a hotel, though the kind that had never really seen better days, with iffy loos and reviews - more Exotic Marigold than Raj splendour.

But now one of the subcontinent's best hotel groups has swept aside the plastic chairs and air-con units and rechintzed it up with a contemporary take on palatial Indian style. The whole place has been



refurbished and restored to its full potential, a combination of traditional and more modern decoration in strong colours - a pink room! a green room! - and bold patterns and detailing.

The palace has had several transformations over the centuries. Original features remain from the Mughal era, but the rosy-hued exterior is now more reminiscent of English Georgian architecture (the colonial facelift) with elements of Art Deco (another overhaul in the early 20th century), relatively plain and simple in comparison with the city's Palace of the Winds.

Colonnaded porches run along front and back. The gardens are delightful: lawns and formal sections skirted by worn old shell-pink walls and stone balustrades around a swimming pool, with palms and heaps of subtropical flowers.

The hotel group behind this new incarnation is Suján, who also did the Hot List award-winning **Jawai Leopard Camp** in the hills between Udaipur and Jodhpur, and **The Serai** desert camp outside Jaisalmer.

Suján Rajmahal Palace, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India (+91 11 461 727 00; www.sujanluxury.com). Opens November 2014.