“Imagine an Indian Hotel Costes. The service takes telepathic to a new level!”
Victoria Mather
INDIA files

Rajasthan, with its searing colours, dusty sunsets and gracious historic hotels, has long been India’s star attraction. VICTORIA MATHER paid a visit—at a suitably stately pace—to the hotels and camps that keep it forever burning bright.
YOU take the high road, bounding from Tijjani Bz to Firoz, Amritsar to Pink City, Fatehpur to the Golden City of Jaipur. I'll take the low road through Rajasthani, staying noble with Rajasthani families in their camps, estates, hunting lodges and palaces, with a dash of the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.

Slow down, see more too fast. Try to make the experience last. Rajasthani is considered India for beginners, with the hectic sightseeing rush ticking off Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, all with demanding drives in between. Old India hands turn to and confide about the joy of Ooty Leading to Gradually stay at the enchanting Glanshamon Taal Palace, the wonder of Calcutta (the beautiful heart of the Raj), a grand palace in the palace of a Moghul, and the ruins of Verandah, and secretly years for the colour of Rajasthani. That flash of a pink sari in the fields, the snake of beggars as the women hold the flowery goats and water buffaloes around an hour, and the tombs of village streets with stalls bustling, goldsmiths and goldsmiths and metal workers hammering bright brass pots.

Let us start in Jaipur for the colour rush of Rajmahl. It was the private home of Maharaja Jai Singh and his wife Gajpati Devi, who praised this palace with one of the most beautiful women in the world in 1727. They were star players in the cast of international society and everyone came to Jaipur. Jacqueline Kennedy stayed three weeks. Now, her daughter-in-law, Her Highness Padmavati Devi, his granddaughter Princess Diya Kumari and her daughter Princess Gayatri Kumari have turned the private palace into a luxury hotel, designed by Adil Jafar Ahmed, the creative director of The Palace Print and managed by Jindal and Angli Singh's transformation hotel group Sujan, see page 109. It is divine. Good Earth is dynamic: it's extraordinarily difficult to emerge from the lifestyle study in Delhi and Mumbai without having bought a shipping container's worth of delicious Libbey glassware and elephant-shaped charging buffalo. But it was worth it. I returned not buying the dinner service with elephants charging the camera and Adil has thrown this style into Rajmahl in spades: 37 different designs of wallpaper, chandeliers copied from the City Palace, a mammoth ceiling here, Art Deco there, nothing fibreglass. Imagine an Indian Hotel Co. And the service takes telepathic to a new level. Ravi, my butler, shimmered towards me with a smirking perversity. “I noticed you had a sore throat, this is one of my mothers used to make,” he said. I was stumped for this.

At breakfast he suggested that I try the pomegranate Damien fruit melon, a sourly-pineapple salad was magical without asking every step of my way. I was soon fresh lime soda. I packed my bags with acid-free tissue paper. I wanted him to pack himself while he was about it so I could take him home, old Lady Tang, who inherited him from me. (We may have to have words.) Go shopping and an assailant camp accompanies you. Don't rain the hotel-brat and rose-red ice cream and how can you lose a hotel where they say it. “There is an Old Mani getting here at the weekend so, of course, the Maharaja's Apartment is available for His Highness of Jodhpur? There are things as they should be.

On to Chhatra Sugar, a dear favourite and camp on a dam built in the 20th century by Thakur Chhaya Singh of Naini to harvest the monsoon waters for agriculture and host “legendary shooting parties with high tea.” All around is now green and pleasant land, wild boar and monkeys are back; there are turkeys in the lake, egrets, spoonbills and terns have found a watery haven, and the Thakur's great grandson, Harshwardhan Singh, mutes this environment, his guests and the 35 families who are dependent on his endowment. The two new-look suites will have ceiling fans and a new on the dam has been built, looking over the lake, with a wall of foliage and falling water that provides natural air conditioning. There are bed books, binoculars and a visitors' book swimming with Sardharis, Puduchre and the Mirages of Zetland. I don't know Jane and Christopher Goring from West Sussex, but they've nailed Chhaya Sugar. "Here you experience the true meaning of luxury: it is time, peace, hot water bottles and hot centres, the condition of hot hotel (under the table) to warm your feet at dinner, the charm and discretion of knowledgeable people," I'd add that I love the hotel's putting one putting down the too to show it has been cleaned—brass sheets on washable sheets that remain Americans.

I arrived with hundreds of Demons: causes having a stopover on their migration to the Thar Desert. My tent was hung with hand-blocked fabrics, the shower and dressing room huge and huge to trace the squares for the books to go with my copy of ten. This is grounded stuff. I could see the Fodder, palm or bamboo, and a few on the dam, and you keep an organic farming model. I went to the village and perceived the changing India. The only Muslim in the village has a horse peacefully opposite the Hindu temple; the peaceful afternoon, Ompiraksha, is still there, working with a primitive biostick powered by his own breath. But his granddaughter Vodouka is Hugh's face to me on the ground. "Now there's blackheads who will mend my shirt," says Harsh. "In 10 years I will have to send them to a factory." It takes 10 days for Ompiraksha to make a pair of silver shrink—a machine can make them in five hours. The village school was an inspiration to all the staff room noticeboard inscribed with three messages: "If wealth is lost, nothing is lost; if health is lost, nothing is lost; if character is lost, everything is lost." Stirring listening to phlegm. And over the school gate it says that the five steps to success are discipline, foresight, determination, hard work and strong desire.