ANDREW HARPER
January 2016

GRAND AWARDS

Each year, we have the pleasure of recalling our travel experiences over the past 12 months and singling out a number of particularly memorable hotels and resorts.

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Asia Grand Awards 2016

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2016 Grand Award Winners

SUJÁN Rajmahal Palace, RAAS, Seven Terraces, Aman Tokyo
SUJÁN Rajmahal Palace, Jaipur, India

The Rajmahal Palace was constructed in the early 19th century as a summer pavilion surrounded by a pleasure garden. After Indian Independence, the flamboyant, polo-playing Maharaja Man Singh II adopted it as his personal residence. The palace soon became a kind of guesthouse for the global elite. Now, it has a new incarnation as a boutique hotel.

At present, Rajmahal offers 14 air-conditioned rooms and suites, including two magnificent Royal Apartments, but up to 15 new accommodations are planned. The two-bedroom, 3,126-square-foot Maharaja’s Apartment comes with a drawing room that opens onto a private terrace, a dining room with seating for eight, and a dedicated butler. Scavullo’s most lavish are the four Royal Suites, which include The Queen Elizabeth II Suite, built for the British monarch’s state visit to India in 1961, and The Kennedy Suite, inhabited by Jackie Kennedy during a three-month stay in 1962.

The hotel’s principal dining venue is The Orient Occident, where excellent Indian and Western cuisine is graciously served in a grand mirrored space. I particularly enjoyed taking light meals in The Colonade, an exquisite glass-fronted veranda overlooking the gardens. Nearby, The Polo Bar displays silver trophies and black-and-white photographs from the former maharaja’s polo-playing days, and provides an atmospheric venue for an early-evening martini. The property has an exquisite art deco (unheated) swimming pool and a small spa.

Rajmahal permits its guests to feel that they have been personally invited to stay in a sumptuous private residence — one with exceptionally gracious and obliging staff — rather than in a hotel.