“The real Jaipur experience”

People are a little confused when they want to know how I became interested in Indian jewelry. My father is from Jaipur, but I was born in Oklahoma, where my mother is from. In 2005, I moved to Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. There aren’t many half Indian, half American princesses, so I think people are curious about me.

My family’s jewelry business, the Gem Palace, is located on Miras Mansol Road (people here call it M.M. Road), in central Jaipur. Our family has owned the jewelry store for nine generations, and the store hasn’t changed since it opened in 1963. People are amazed when I show them the family walnut’s signature in our gem book. But that’s nothing compared to the jewelry.

In Jaipur, the emerald- and diamond-studded, elephant-headed, lotus-flowered, gem-encrusted, swan-themed jewelry that we make. Much of it features different motifs that are characteristic of Indian design—elephants, peacocks, lotus flowers. The gems are the real standouts—everything from the rare Colombian emeralds and strands of natural pearls to diamonds from the legendary Golconda mines in Hyderabad.

I spent a lot of my childhood in the stores, though. I first started adapting to the local culture when I moved here to attend college. Jaipur is more conservative than Delhi or Mumbai, mainly because of the city’s history as the seat of exercises royal family. People here are very attached to tradition and heritage.

But over the past decade, the city has become more cosmopolitan. Jaipur International Airport is being renovated and will have direct flights to and from London. Already we have seen non-stop flights from Dubai and Bangkok. People who visited Jaipur just 10 years ago are shocked to see how rapidly it has transformed into a new metropolis with an interesting skyline. There are more modern buildings now, and a young creative community that is looking beyond the borders of India. They’re both a huge influence on the shopping scene as well as the food scene, which is improving every day.

Jaipur has always needed more places where people can spend recreational time. This is what some of the restaurants and shops, like Purandar, is aiming to provide. The first restaurant is a gallery shop that has seen it, fashion, and photography. These are places where you can shop and eat, but where you’ll also find good music and great spaces. The royal family of Jaipur is the most prominent custodians of the cultural, artistic, and architectural heritage of the city, but we’re all—residents and visitors—working together to promote the city.

As a sixth-generation heir to Jaipur’s Gem Palace, Samir Kaksitwal is responsible for keeping the family’s jewelry business in the top spot with the royal family and with other celebrity clients from all over the world.
The Gem Palace

"This store is a shop, but it's also a meeting place for friends. On a typical day, I'm either creating designs, based on the gemstones I have available, or I'm entertaining clients. You never know what's going to walk in. It could be Kendall Jenner or Oprah or Hillary Clinton," geoponikos.com.

Jantar Mantar

"I was going to this 18th-century observatory to study the way the light hits the buildings. The geometric shapes of Jantar Mantar fit their way into my designs, especially in the jewel colours work - intricate gold and silver designs on the back of our jewelry," jantarmanturnt.org.

Suján Rajmahal Palace

"This was a summer home belonging to the royal family of Jaipur before it was converted a few years ago into a boutique hotel with just 13 guest rooms. The terrace is the perfect place to enjoy an alfresco tea on a Wes Anderson-type atmosphere," sujanrajmahalpalace.com.

Paro Apartments

"Virginia, Boneva de Castro, a Colombian designer, recently opened this boutique. For her brand, Dr Castro Moda, she uses transformed fabrics and embroidered textiles from local artisans. She also stocks pieces from designers around the world," marimoda.com, fashion-bett, M I Road.