Uncovering the Modern Side of Jaipur: An Insider’s Guide

India’s Jaipur serves up plenty of tourist trysts, but travelers can dig beyond to discover the city’s modern arts-and-culture riches

By Vinita Kanwar
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IN MANY WAYS, Jaipur delivers on the clichéd fantasies first-timers to India have mentally replayed: flat players presiding over onion domes and elephants, women in colorful saris, men in turbans. But lately, the Rajasthani capital has been dispelling clichés as a new hub of contemporary Indian arts and culture. The Jaipur Literature Festival draws half a million people each January, while February ushered in an international photography festival. The Jantar Mantar Kala Soudha arts complex, a symphony of geometry by architect Charles Correa, just unveiled its renovation. A modern sculpture park, reopening in December, starts in the wistful arches and courtyards of the 17th-century Nahargarh Fort. And Jaipur’s reputation as India’s shopping mecca is undiminished. We asked four expert locals to help navigate the way.

Bar Palladio This bejeweled bar on the grounds of the Neemrana Nwar Palace hotel has dramatic East meets West interiors by Made-Ann Oehlen. Think Italian-style marble nestled amid arches awash in electric shades of blue. Khana Bar, Alwar. Stag Road. bar
palladio.com / Rajmahal Palace A palace hotel for the 21st century, with art deco accents and quirky, bold wallpaper. Samode Bagh. Marg. C Scheme. rajmahal.com. mid-mahal doubles from 4,000 rupees / Baradari A restaurant tucked away in the courtyard of the 300-year-old City Palace, with fusion fare far better than one expects from a museum restaurant—Royal Lil Masala made with pastas, apple jalebi with rose petal ice cream. A great spot for a late-night drink as well. Aash Choki, New Gate No 2. City Palace, facebook.com/baradarijaipur