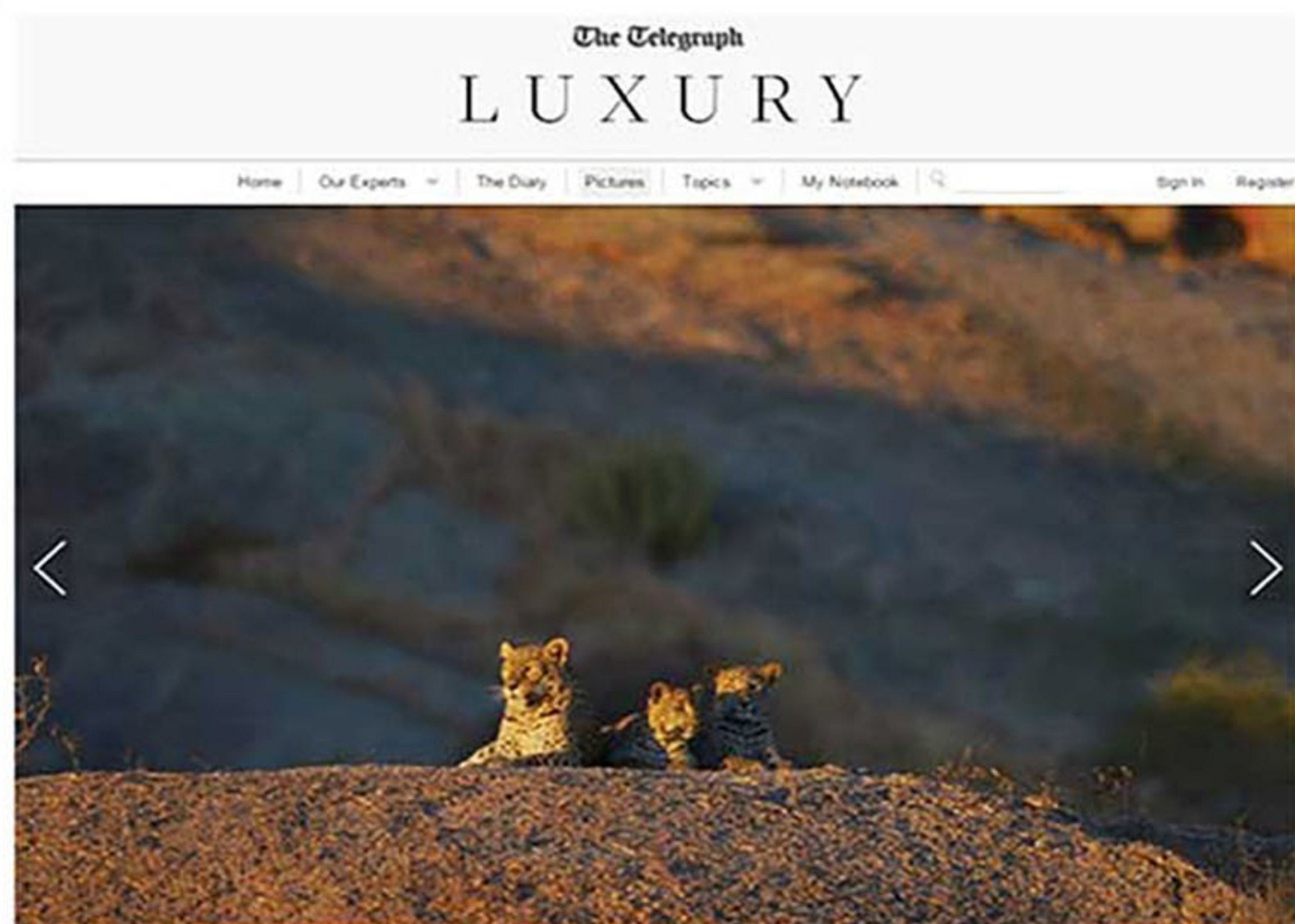


“There’s a library, a spa and a fleet of customised jeeps for the twice-daily game drives, on which you’re likely to see wolves, antelope, crocodiles and sloth bears.”



Spotting leopards in India

With the opening of Jawai Leopard Camp, big cat encounters are increasingly likely for visitors to Rajasthan



BY CLAIRE WRATHALL
DECEMBER 18, 2013 09:00

India’s reputation as a destination for watching wildlife has been hampered by the risk that at, say the Tiger Reserve at Ranthambore, you might see deer, hyenas, numerous monkeys and exotic birds, even long-eared hedgehogs, but no tigers at all.

Leopards, however, are another matter, at least according to Jaisal Singh, owner of the Jawai Leopard Camp, which has just opened on the river Jawai near Bera in the Aravilli Hills. It’s just upstream from Jawai Bandh, one of the largest reservoirs in western Rajasthan and famous for its flamingos. Guests staying the recommended three days, he says, should stand “at least a 75 per cent chance” of seeing a big cat over that time, for there are at least 30 at large

in “the immediate vicinity”. The precise figure isn’t known, but Singh is in negotiation with the state government to launch a Leopard Research Project, funded as a public-private partnership, in order to further knowledge of these majestic creatures.

The camp consists of just eight spacious air-conditioned tents, comfortably furnished in a style that slightly recalls the Bauhaus – monochrome, faintly 1930s, with lots of tubular steel and fittings wrought in the New Delhi workshops of the American-born artist and designer Michael Aram, as well as large black-and-white photographs of local wildlife. For the owners, Singh and his wife, Anjali, are not only collectors of



Jawai Leopard Camp

[Enlarge](#)

photography but keen photographers themselves, to which end they have thought to provide guests with powerful Carl Zeiss binoculars and to loan couples a semi-pro camera, “that is easy enough for an amateur to use”, such as the Nikon D7100 and Canon Eos 7D, with powerful zoom lenses. Indeed, with sufficient notice, the camp will hire whatever photographic equipment you desire.

There’s a library, a spa and a fleet of customised jeeps for the twice-daily game drives, on which you’re also likely to see wolves, antelope, crocodiles and sloth bears. And of course there’s a dining tent. All meals are included in the rate, as are soft drinks, beer, house wine and the odd glass of Chandon, the made-in-Maharashtra sparkling wine launched by Moët Hennessy in November. Guests may also find themselves offered a complimentary Cuban cigar if they order an after-dinner Armagnac. “Not a Cohiba,” Singh stresses, keen nevertheless to make the point that he is not a hotelier out to nickel-and-dime his guests.

Yet more unusually, there’s also a visiting vets’ surgery catering to local livestock farmers, part of its commitment to working with and benefitting the local community, with whom guests are encouraged to engage.

If you tire of animals, the superb Jain temples of Ranakpur, not to mention the magnificent Kumbhalgarh Fort (now a UNESCO World Heritage Site) are within an hour’s drive. Meanwhile, Udaipur and Jodhpur are, respectively, two and four hours away, making the camp an excellent place to break the journey between the two on a tour of Rajasthan’s “golden triangle”.

Introductory rates start at INR40,000 a night (about £400) including meals, drinks and game drives, sujanluxury.com. Or book through greavesindia.co.uk