

ULTRATRAVEL TELEGRAPH

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“An indian hotel unlike any other.”



A PASSAGE TO PERSIA
All aboard the first luxury train into Iran

TRANSATLANTIC TALES
Cunard celebrates its 175th anniversary in our special section

VIENNESE WHIRL
The reinvention of Austria's grande dame



INDIAN INKS
The sumptuous Rajmahal Palace, above, is the former home of the Maharaja of Jaipur. Now a boutique hotel, its interiors (left, one of) celebrate vibrant Rajasthan colours

intelligence

A LITTLE PLACE I KNOW RAJMAHAL PALACE Jaipur

There aren't many hotels in the world in which the Queen, Jackie Onassis, Lord Mountbatten and generations of Indian royalty have slept. But the Rajmahal Palace, the oldest in Jaipur, was once the private home of the Maharaja, and it was there, after a tour of his principality, that presidents and queens would rest, with a view of peacocks parading in the seven acres of Persian-inspired gardens, horse-drawn carriages sweeping through the imperial gates, and fountains gurgling amid beds of white roses.

Almost three centuries after it was built, the palace has been given an extensive make-over by Princess Dija Kumari, the Maharaja's daughter, and Adil Ahmad, the Indian designer who created the successful interiors firm Good Earth. Together, they have created an Indian boutique hotel unlike any other. It's not just the design that's bold, but the colours. Inside the double-storey art deco building the decor is as vivid as the saris that adorn the women beyond its rose-coloured walls. Kit Kemp meets Technicolor Raj. Walls have been decorated with 46 different styles of hand-blocked paper, some featuring polo horses, others the royal insignia. Chans have been upholstered in hand-painted and shocking midnight blues. The Maharaja's and Mahara's Suites have original art-deco furniture and a rich, clashing colour scheme (an acquired taste). In every room chandeliers illuminate woven carpets and 10th-high paintings of exotic birds and maharajahs.

Thankfully, many of the 14 suites have been decorated in softer, powdery hues that are cooling and calming in the dry desert heat.

The prettiest, such as the baby-blue Mountbatten, have private living spaces overlooking the gardens, high-tech music and television systems, and white-marble bathrooms stocked with products in crystal decanters, cotton wool and tissues in elegant stone jars, and a hairdryer and torch in leather pouches.

But then, management of the hotel is in the hands of Sajan, the boutique organisation owned by Jasal and Arsal Singh, so nothing is too much trouble. Meals, which can be taken in-suite, range from fruit platters at breakfast and salads, all lunch to rich Indian feasts at night, served by staff who are polished from the tops of their turbans to the royal insignias on their brass buttons. And almost any trip can be arranged: excursions by horse-drawn carriage, visits to private palaces and, of course, shopping trips to more exclusive artisans' workshops.

To complement the outdoor swimming pool, a spa suite opens this month offering Ayurvedic treatments. There are also two shops in which to buy local treasures, a Palace Collection boutique, selling items created by Ahmad, from wallpaper to glassware, and Kashmiri Loom, makers of fine embroidered cashmere shawls.

Sajan Rajmahal Palace, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India (0091 8 4697 2700); sjanrajmahal.com costs from £700 a night, Greatness India (020 7487 910); greenemedia.co.uk offers in-suits, too in India from £2,085 per person, including four nights at Sajan Rajmahal Palace and three nights in Delhi, flights with British Airways, transfers, guides and sightseeing.

edited by LISA GRAINGER

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