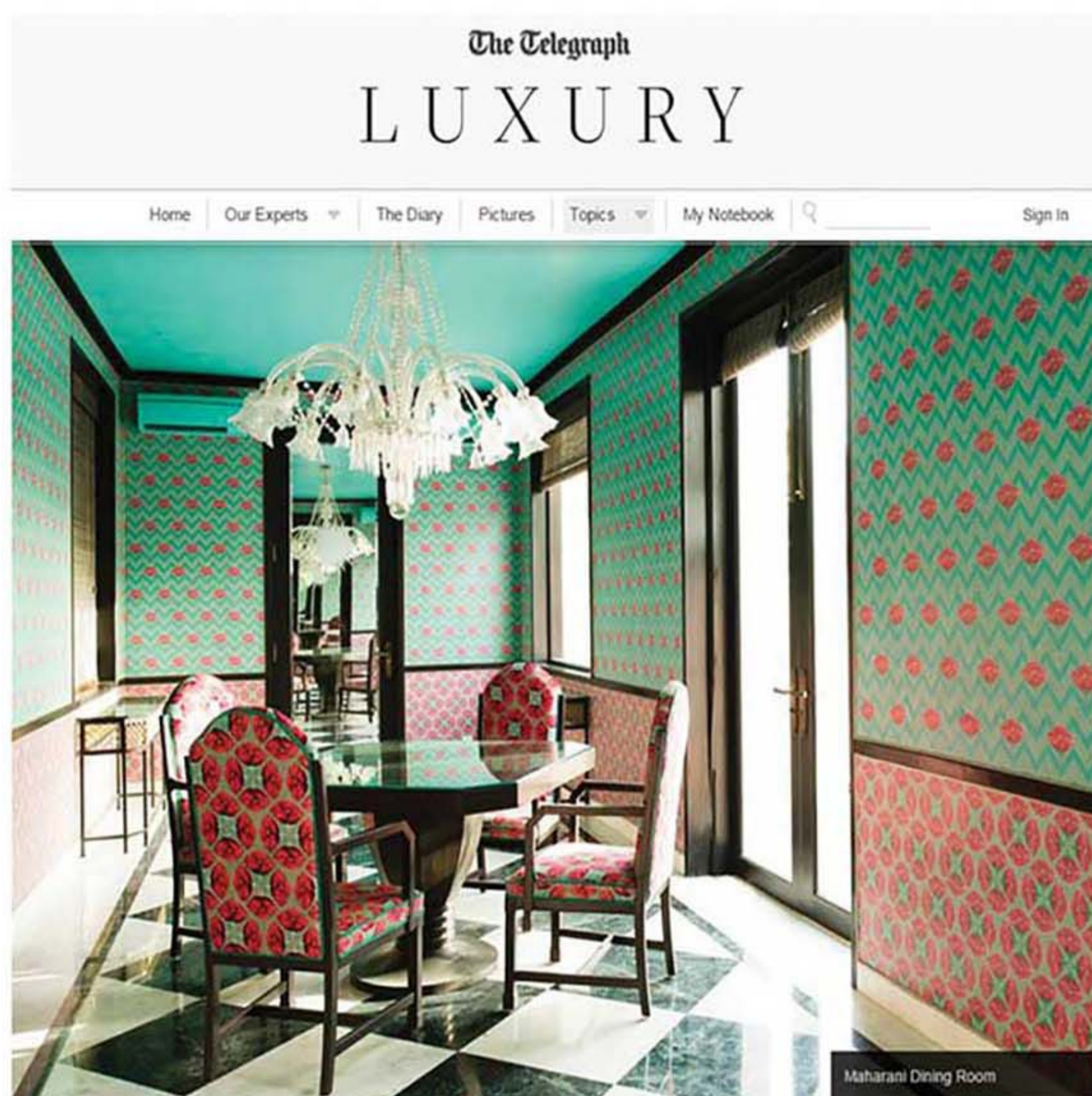


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TRAVEL

Rajmahal Palace hotel, Jaipur's royal residence renewed

The former home to Gayatri Devi, the regal Suján Rajmahal Palace looks set to be one of the best hotels in Rajasthan



BY CLAIRE WRATHALL
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Choosing a hotel in Jaipur has never been straightforward. Sure Taj's historic [Rambagh](#), formerly the royal palace, and its gardens are glorious, but the grandeur and formality can seem overwhelming. In contrast Oberoi's superslick [Rajvilas](#) feels rather too like a theme park, with its elephant rides, tourist entertainments and "new-old" architecture. At the opposite end of the scale, I have a soft spot for the charmingly faded [Samode Haveli](#), but some guests might find it a bit too historic. Hurrah then for the Rajmahal Palace, which opens formally in January, the first conventional hotel from [Suján](#), a small but supremely polished Indian brand that has hitherto specialised in safari camps.



The Suján Rajmahal Palace

[Enlarge](#)

Very close to the Rambagh Palace, in the old part of the city, the building dates back to 1729 and is one of Jaipur's most venerable royal palaces, though it was substantially remodelled in the 1930s, and the overall look now is Art Deco.

Latterly, however, its chief claim to fame is that it was the home of the remarkable and infinitely glamorous Gayatri Devi, who

having been born into royalty and married the Maharaja of Jaipur, ran for parliament in 1962, standing against Congress for the Swatantra Party and setting the record for the world's largest landslide victory yet recorded. She died in 2009, aged 90, after an adventurous and extraordinary life that took her from purdah to prison and back to her palace. As she recalled in her compelling autobiography, *A Princess Remembers*, the Rajmahal "had been the old British residency, which we had converted into a guest house and remodelled again for our own needs. It was much smaller than the Rambagh, but when the workmen had finished it had charm and character and a pleasantly informal atmosphere."



The Princes' Room

[Enlarge](#)

All of which it seems to have retained in its 15 suites (a further 15 will open by the end of 2015), though its interiors have been redesigned by Adil Ahmad, of Charbagh GoodEarth, one of India's most modish decorators, with what its distinguished proprietor, Jaisal Singh, calls "vigorous flair". You might take that to mean very bright colours. Rarely has Diana Vreeland's assertion that "pink is the navy blue of India" (by which she implied proper Schiaparelli pink) seemed so apposite, though Ahmad has a penchant for subtler eau de Nil and turquoise too.

There'll be two restaurants, a pool and a small spa. And my instinct is there'll be no better hotel in the city, perhaps in Rajasthan. Certainly it's somewhere

I cannot wait to stay.