



Rajasthan

Includes »

Eastern Rajasthan . . .	108
Jaipur	108
Ajmer	135
Pushkar	139
Ranthambhore National Park	145
Southern Rajasthan . .	147
Bundi	147
Udaipur	154
Mt Abu	168
Western Rajasthan . .	172
Jodhpur	172
Jaisalmer	182
Bikaner	193

Best Places to Eat

- » Niro's (p117)
- » LMB (p119)
- » Ambrai (p163)
- » Indique (p178)

Best Places to Stay

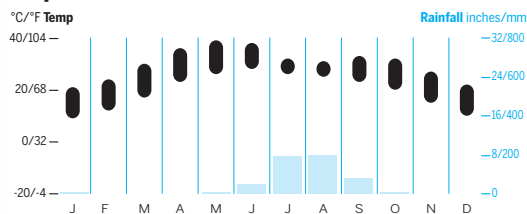
- » Hotel Pearl Palace (p115)
- » Haveli Braj Bushanjee (p149)
- » Khem Villas (p146)
- » Inn Seventh Heaven (p141)
- » Apani Dhani (p132)

Why Go?

Rajasthan, the Land of Kings, is aptly named. It is indeed a fabulous realm of maharajas and their majestic forts and lavish palaces. While its people-charged cities throb with the crowds and chaos of emerging India, the treasures of the past hold pride of place in mind and spirit. The romantic remnants of a rich and glorious past have earned Rajasthan a place on most travellers' wish lists. Yet there is much more to this iconic region of the subcontinent. It is a land of desert dunes and jungle, camel trains and tigers, glittering jewels, vivid colours and a vibrant culture. There are enough festivals here to fill a calendar and an artist's palette, and the shopping and cuisine are nothing short of spectacular. In short, Rajasthan just about has it all; it is the must-see state of India, brimming with varied, startling and incredible attractions.

When to Go

Jaipur



Oct Ranthambhore National Park reopens for tiger safaris.

Oct/Nov Don't miss the Pushkar Camel Festival, featuring camels (of course) and culture.

Mar Jaipur's famous Elephant Festival precedes the typically boisterous Holi celebrations.

Food

As with the rest of the north, Mughal-influenced curries and smoky tandoori food is extremely popular, but there are a few favourites with a regional twist that are worth hunting down. Kachori is a masala-dahl-filled, deep-fried package that hits the spot for an uncomplicated street snack. A favourite Rajasthani meal is *gatta*, gram-flour dumplings cooked in a yoghurt sauce. For refreshment you can't go past a thick and creamy *makhania* (saffron-flavoured) lassi, or a light, fragrant *kheer* (rice pudding).

DON'T MISS

In Jaipur, the **City Palace** is at the centre of a cluster of 'don't miss' sights, including the fascinating **Jantar Mantar**, **Hawa Mahal** and **Iswari Minar Swarga Sal**. For more vestiges of Maharaja high life check out Udaipur's **City Palace** and **Lake Palace**.

Nature lovers can't miss the birdlife at **Keoladeo Ghana National Park** nor the very real chance of spotting a tiger at **Ranthambhore National Park**.

Rajasthan has a surfeit of spectacular fortresses including the desert citadel of **Jaisalmer Fort** and Jodhpur's imposing **Mehrangarh**. You must also take a day trip out to spectacular **Amber Fort**.

Top State Festivals

- » Desert Festival (Feb, Jaisalmer, p182) A chance for moustache twirlers to compete in the Mr Desert contest.
- » Elephant Festival (Mar, Jaipur, p108) Parades, polo and human-versus-elephant tugs-of-war.
- » Gangaur (Mar/Apr, Jaipur, p108) A statewide festival honouring Shiva and Parvati's love, celebrated with particular fervour in Jaipur.
- » Mewar Festival (Mar/Apr, Udaipur, p160) Udaipur's version of Gangaur, with free cultural events and a colourful procession down to the lake.
- » Teej (Aug, Jaipur, p108, & Bundi, p147) Honours the arrival of the monsoon, and Shiva and Parvati's marriage.
- » Dussehra Mela (Oct, Kota, p151) Commemorates Rama's victory over Ravana (the demon king of Lanka). It's a spectacular time to visit Kota – the huge fair features 22m-tall firecracker-stuffed effigies.
- » Marwar Festival (Oct, Jodhpur, p172, & Osian, p181) Celebrates Rajasthan heroes through music and dance; one day is held in Jodhpur, the other in Osian.
- » Pushkar Camel Fair (Oct/Nov, Pushkar, p142) The Pushkar Camel Fair is the most famous festival in the state; it's a massive congregation of camels, horses and cattle, traders, pilgrims and tourists.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

Jaipur International Airport, Jaipur train station, Jaipur main bus station.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 68.6 million
- » Area: 342,239 sq km
- » Capital: Jaipur
- » Main languages: Hindi and Rajasthani
- » Sleeping prices: \$ below ₹1000, \$\$ ₹100 to ₹5000, \$\$\$ above ₹5000

Top Tips

- » Carry small denominations (below ₹50) as drivers often have a lack of change.
- » Call your hotel to confirm the day before you arrive.
- » Book train tickets for longer journeys at least a week ahead

Resources

- » Festivals of India (www.festivalsofindia.in)
- » Incredible India (www.incredibleindia.org)
- » (Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation www.rtdc.in)