

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

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Against a backdrop of desert sands, long-pink palaces and minarets form a modern and traditional India past on the greatest desert. From elephant rides to cultural festivals, this is India at its high-definition, surreal-sound best.



Michael, Agra

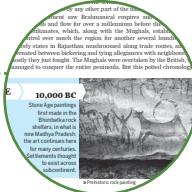


UNDERSTAND

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

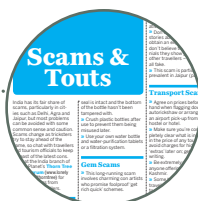
Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

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Welcome to Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra

The Golden Triangle

This book's first steps take in the famous Golden Triangle, a traveller's trigonometric survey of emblematic India. It starts at the daunting mega-metropolis of Delhi with its majestic Mughal heritage, and then directs you to Agra, where one of the world's most famous tombs, the Taj Mahal, defines a city. The third apex is the gateway to Rajasthan, Jaipur – a city painted pink with the Palace of the Winds and some of the most colourful bazaars in India. From here, the rest of Rajasthan beckons. The colours of this region are impossible to ignore and the effect of emerald green, canary yellow and fire-engine red turbans and saris is simply dazzling. Rajasthan is

India's major drawcard and once you step into a palace, stare up at a fort or see your first lac bangle being made, you will soon appreciate why this is so.

Magnificent Monuments

Most travellers to this region will arrive by air in the nation's capital. Delhi is an overwhelming, bursting-at-the-seams city that still manages to charm visitors with its magnificent heritage and heady cocktail of old and new. The former capital of Shahjahanabad, the seventh city on this ancient site, anchors the Old City with its massive Red Fort while evocative tombs of empires past are islands in the sprawl of New Delhi. A short train journey to the south, the Taj



OPEN HARVEY

Against a backdrop of desert sands, fairy-tale palaces and massive forts, modern and traditional India puts on its greatest show. From elephant rides to colourful festivals, this is India at its high-definition, surround-sound best.

(left) Jagdish Temple (p201), Udaipur
(below) Image of the goddess Parvati, Mewar Festival (p177)



KIMBERLEY COOLE

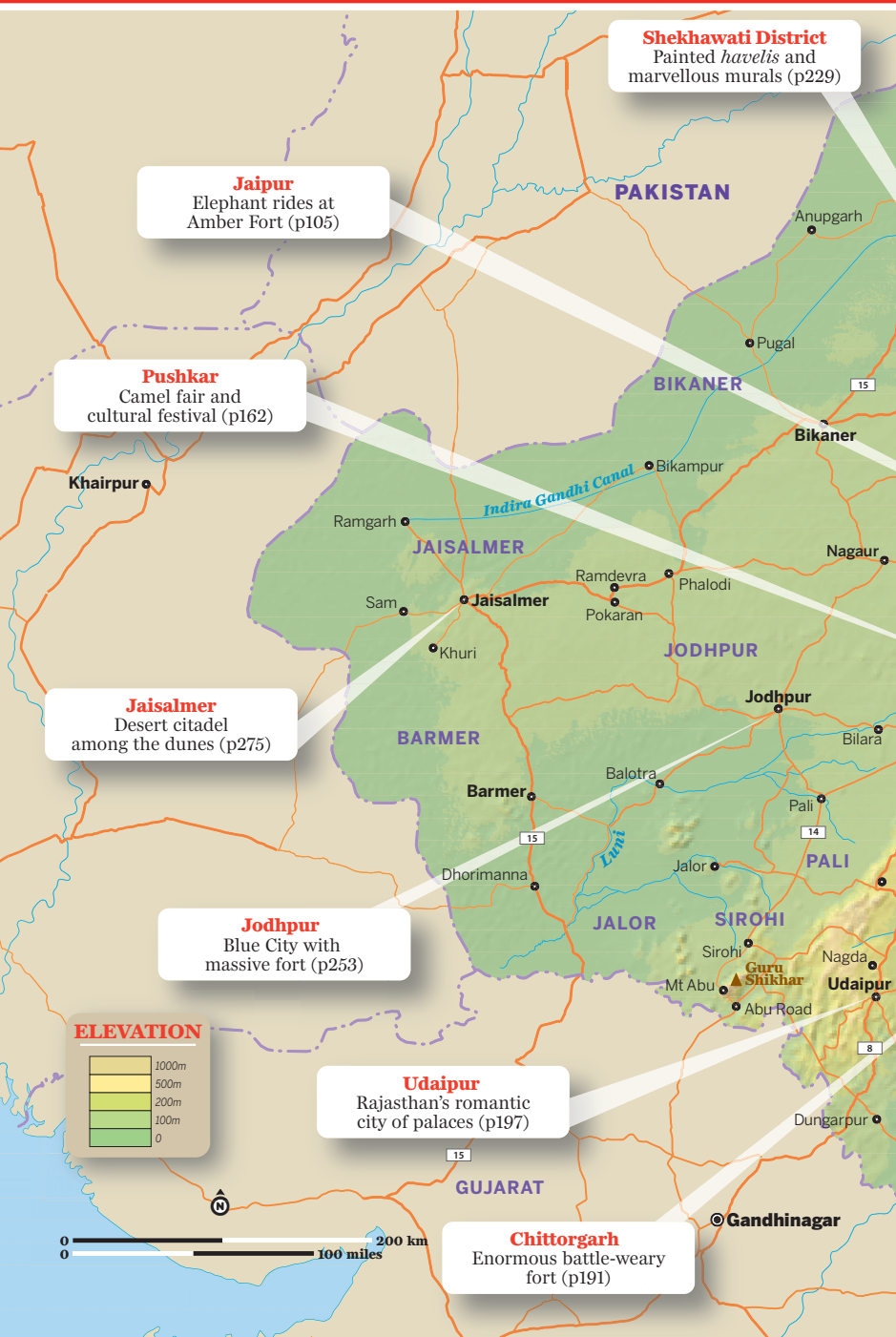
Mahal lives up to its hype with its perfect proportions and marble tones. For many, though, it's Agra's red-stone fort and its sorrowful gaze across the Yamuna River towards the Taj Mahal that captures their imagination.

Land of Kings

Rajasthan is literally the Land of the Kings. It is home to the chivalrous Rajputs, and its battle-scarred heritage has bestowed legacies of pride and tradition. The upper echelons of this medieval society built magnificent palaces and forts, many of which are now glorious hotels and museums. In addition, stunning handicrafts and fine arts were developed

and nurtured through patronage of the maharajas. At the other end, village Rajasthan is so steeped in tradition that it has been one of the slowest segments of Indian society to modernise. But, just like the rest of India, the pace of change is ever accelerating. Witnessing turbaned men bartering for decorated camels brings history to life, even if the successful deal is relayed home by a mobile phone. Snapshots of the everyday in Rajasthan capture India at its most evocative – the twirl of a moustache, a veiled glance or a puff of blue hashish smoke. It will fill your memory card many times over.

› Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra



Top Experiences >

Jama Masjid, Delhi

Old Delhi's enormous mosque (p48)

Qutb Minar, Delhi

Islam's bold proclamation of victory (p84)

Humayun's Tomb, Delhi

Mughal tomb of grand proportions (p49)

Red Fort, Delhi

Old Delhi's Mughal fort (p44)

Taj Mahal, Agra

Marble monument to love (p88)

Fatehpur Sikri

Emperor Akbar's short-lived capital (p102)

Ranthambhore National Park

Tigers in the wild (p171)

Bundi

Rajasthan for the connoisseurs (p180)



itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



One Week The Golden Triangle

One route is so well loved it even has a name: the Golden Triangle. This classic Delhi–Agra–Jaipur trip can be squeezed into a single week.

Spend a day or two in **Delhi** finding your feet and seeing the big-draw sights, such as the magnificent Mughal **Red Fort** and **Jama Masjid**, India's largest mosque. Then catch a convenient train to **Agra** to spend a day being awed by the world's most extravagant monument to love, the **Taj Mahal**, and exploring the mighty **Agra Fort**. Only an hour away is **Fatehpur Sikri**, a beautiful Mughal city dating from the apogee of Mughal power. It is amazingly well preserved and deserves a full day of exploring.

If you have time, take a rural respite at **Keoladeo Ghana National Park**, one of the world's foremost bird reserves. Having relaxed at this beautiful and rewarding place, you can then take a train to **Jaipur**. Spend a couple of days in and around Rajasthan's hectic, dusky-pink capital, seeing the **City Palace** and **Amber Fort**, and stocking up on blue pottery, dazzling jewellery and Rajasthani puppets before heading back to Delhi.



Two Weeks Royal Rajasthan

With a fortnight to spare, you can forget triangles and go all out for a multifaceted loop taking in Rajasthan's most spectacular cities, all erstwhile capitals of former princely states, boasting fairy-tale palaces and stern fortresses.

Again, you will most likely start from the nation's capital of **Delhi** to see the Mughal monuments, such as the massive **Red Fort**. No trip to India is complete with a visit to the **Taj Mahal** at **Agra**. Spend two days here viewing the Taj during the day, at night and from the maze-like **Agra Fort**. Spend a day exploring the ghost city of **Fatehpur Sikri**, before heading to the bird-watching mecca that is at **Keoladeo Ghana National Park**. Next stop is the pink city of **Jaipur** where you will want to spend two or three days exploring the palaces of Jaipur and **Amber**.

From Jaipur, take a short trip to the sacred lake of **Pushkar**, where you can release your inner hippie or attend the camel fair. Move on to the romantic lake-town of **Udaipur**, visiting the fine **City Palace** and the impressive **Jagdish Temple** as well as doing some shopping and relaxing on rooftops while peering at the lake and its famous palace. From Udaipur head towards the ex-

traordinary, bustling, blue city of **Jodhpur**. Take time to stop at the milk-white Jain temple complex of **Ranakpur** and the isolated, dramatic fortifications of **Kumbhalgarh** – as they are fairly close together, you can visit them en route to Jodhpur within a day. In Jodhpur, visit the spectacular **Mehrangarh**, a fort that towers protectively over the city like a storybook fortress.

Next take an overnight train to the Golden City, **Jaisalmer**, a giant sandcastle in the desert, with its beautiful Jain temples and exquisite merchants' *havelis* (traditional, ornately decorated mansions). Take a short camel safari through the bewitching landscape of sweeping dunes and sleep under the stars. If you have the time, break your journey back to Delhi with a stop in the desert city of **Bikaner**, home of the impregnable **Junagarh Fort**, and nearest city to the famous rat temple of **Deshnok**.



One Month A Month-Long Sojourn

After arriving in **Delhi** and exploring the city sights, take the train down to **Agra** to gaze at the picture-perfect **Taj Mahal**, explore **Agra Fort** and have a day-trip out to the abandoned Mughal city of **Fatehpur Sikri**. To experience Rajasthan's wild side, first head to the World Heritage-listed bird-watching paradise of **Keoladeo Ghana National Park**, where the sheer numbers of nesting birdlife will astound you. This can be followed by a tiger safari or three at **Ranthambhore National Park**, one of your best bets of spotting a tiger in all India.

Take a Kota-bound train southwest for a stop at the charming small town of **Bundi**, to explore the crumbling palace. From here, it is a short train ride to **Chittorgarh** where one of Rajasthan's most impressive fortresses occupies a mountain plateau. Next stop is **Udaipur**, where you can relax from your travels with a few easy days of sightseeing, elegant dining and souvenir shopping.

From Udaipur it's worth side-tripping to **Mt Abu** to see the magnificent **Dilwara Temples** before going north to **Jodhpur**. Alternatively, head north to Jodhpur, stopping on the way to see the Jain temples

of **Ranakpur** and the magnificent fort at **Kumbhalgarh**. From Jodhpur it's an easy train or bus ride to **Jaisalmer**, the desert town with a romantic picturesque fort rising from the golden sands. Here you can spend a few days exploring *havelis* and palaces, before taking an overnight camel trek into the desert. After Jaisalmer, head to **Bikaner** via **Phalodi** and **Kichan**, where you can observe the fearless flocks of the village's renowned demoiselle cranes.

Travel south from Bikaner, stopping at the fascinating rat temple of **Deshnok** and the sleepy cattle-fair town of **Nagaur** before coming to rest at the sacred pilgrimage town of **Pushkar**. At Pushkar you may be in time for the famous camel festival; otherwise, just put your feet up for a few days and soak in the serenity.

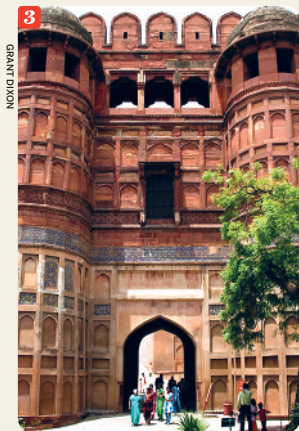
From Pushkar it's a short hop to **Jaipur** with its fabulous citadel at Amber and great shopping. Head north to **Shekhawati** for a few days, inspecting *havelis* at **Mandawa**, **Nawalgarh** and **Fatehpur**, before returning to Delhi.

Fabulous Fortresses

A Three-Week Itinerary

Water may be a problem, but fortresses that look like they're straight out of a fairy tale are not in short supply in Rajasthan. You'll definitely want to bag as many of these architectural wonders on your trip as you can.

HUI JONES



GRANT DIXON

- » Start your fort appreciation in **Delhi** (p38), with the city-centre Red Fort introducing you to massive Mughal architecture.
- » Head south to **Agra** (p86), where the red-sandstone Agra Fort has exquisite architecture and views to the Taj Mahal.
- » From Agra, it is a short day-trip to the fortified ghost city of **Fatehpur Sikri** (p102).
- » Spend a couple of days in **Jaipur** (p105) to visit the citadel of Amber and the ridge-top forts of Jaigarh and Nahargarh.
- » For something straight out of the *Jungle Book*, head to **Ranthambore National Park** (p171), where Ranthambore Fort perches on a craggy mountain, surrounded by jungle (and the odd tiger).

- » Slow down the pace at **Bundi** (p180), where Taragarh is an overgrown, crumbling fortress for a ramble.
- » Take the train to **Chittorgarh** (p178), where Rajasthan's most legendary fort covers a mountain plateau.
- » Even more evocative is **Kumbhalgarh** (p216), a remote edifice between the tourist centres of Udaipur and Jodhpur.
- » The prize for most dramatic fort goes to Mehrangarh in **Jodhpur** (p253), rising from a sheer rock above a blue-washed city.
- » Looking like an *Arabian Nights* movie set is the still-inhabited, golden-sandstone fortress in the desert city of **Jaisalmer** (p275).
- » On the way back to Delhi, drop into **Bikaner** (p292), where the never-conquered Junagarh boasts spectacular interiors.

Clockwise from top left

1. Mehrangarh, Jodhpur 2. Jaisalmer Fort, Jaisalmer
3. Agra Fort, Agra

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