

# Welcome to Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra

*Rajasthan is the jewel in India's crown. From fairy-tale palaces and epic forts to colourful festivals and wildlife encounters, this is India at its vibrant best.*

## The Golden Triangle

The famous Golden Triangle is a traveller's survey of Indian icons with Rajasthan's capital, Jaipur, at one of the apexes. It kicks off at the daunting megametropolis of Delhi, with its majestic Mughal heritage, and then angles to Agra, where one of the world's most famous tombs, the Taj Mahal, defines the city. The triangle is completed at Jaipur – a city painted pink with some of the most colourful bazaars in India. Moreover, Jaipur is the gateway to Rajasthan, and once you've slept in a palace, entered a medieval fort or swayed on a camel, you'll want to experience more.

## Magnificent Monuments

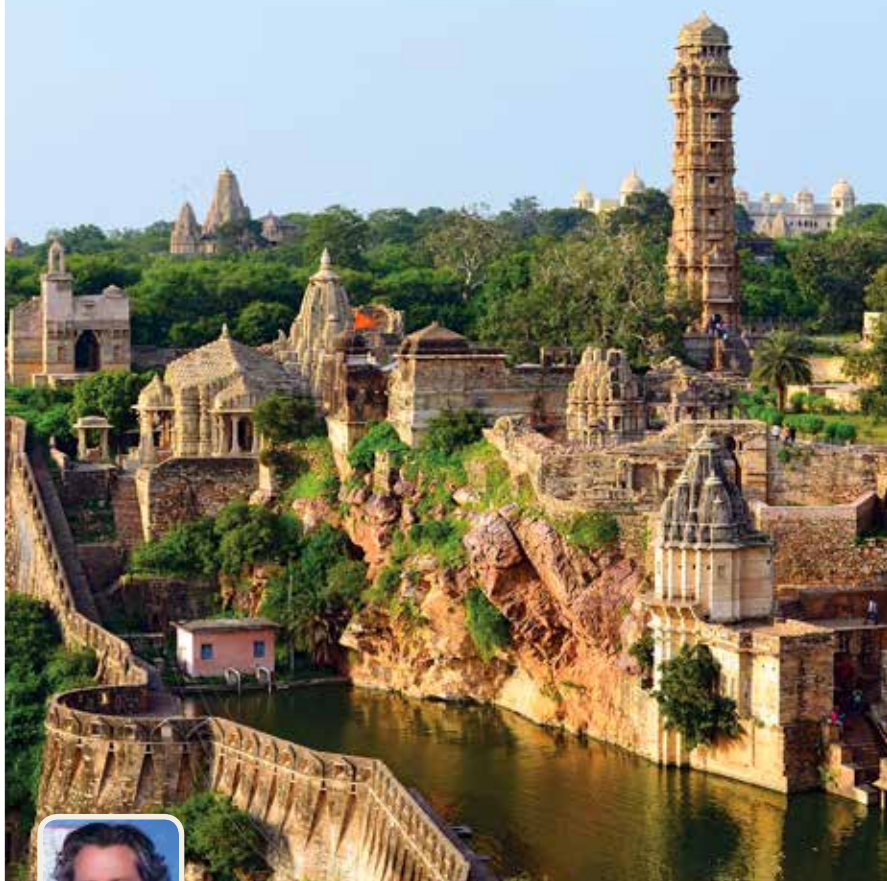
In Rajasthan, it's the forts and palaces that grab your attention. Massive forts emerge from mountain tops, their battle-scarred ramparts still defying long-dead enemies. Spiked doors that once held war elephants at bay open onto the twisting approaches to the palaces within. Austere and practical gives way to fantasy and opulence once safely inside. Carved marble and stone, fountains and coloured glass decorate the halls of business and rooms of pleasure. All across Rajasthan, there are forgotten forts and lovingly restored palaces, including Jaisalmer's fairy-tale desert outpost, Amber's honey-hued fort-palace and Jodhpur's imposing Mehrangarh, to name just a few.

## 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 by the maharajas. Village life remains steeped in tradition but, just like the rest of India, the pace of change is accelerating. Turbaned men still barter for decorated camels – they just relay the successful deal home via a smartphone.

## Celebration of Colour

The colours of Rajasthan are impossible to ignore and the effect of emerald green, canary yellow and fire-engine red turbans and saris is simply dazzling. Little wonder so many fashion designers find their inspiration and raw materials in this state. The lucky visitor might even see a flash of orange while tiger-spotting in Ranthambore National Park. Easier to collect on a camera are the bright hues of Rajasthan's many festivals: from garishly decorated mounts at the camel and elephant festivals in Pushkar and Jaipur, respectively, to the rainbow explosions of Diwali and Holi, celebrated across the region.



## Why I Love Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra

By Lindsay Brown, Writer

My first trip to Rajasthan was part of a quick Golden Triangle tour to 'warm down' after my first trek in the Himalayas. Any apprehensions about heat and dust were quickly dispelled by the desert's cool winter days. I was captivated by camel carts and distinguished, turbaned cameleers bringing produce into Jaipur's pink city. Here was a seemingly timeless world that I had only ever imagined. These glimpses are more fleeting now in the cities, but the sight of an oxen-driven water-lifting device in rural Rajasthan reignites the magic.

**For more about our writers, see p288**