

# Understand Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra

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# Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra Today

Rajasthan has old bones and draws great strength from its glorious history and long-held cultural and religious traditions. Conservative forces once kept the state behind when other parts of India rapidly progressed, but lately Rajasthan has been embracing modernisation with gusto. Rajasthan is an early adopter and world leader in renewable energy, yet at the same time Rajasthanis are keen to preserve the best of the past and keep the state prospering as India's premier tourist destination.

## Best on Film

**Pather Panchali** (1955) Haunting masterpiece from Satyajit Ray.  
**Fire** (1996), **Earth** (1998) and **Water** (2005) Classic trilogy of social observation by Deepa Mehta.  
**Gandhi** (1982) The classic biopic.  
**Lagaan** (2001) Raj-era cricketing epic by Ashutosh Gowariker.  
**The Darjeeling Limited** (2007) Train-journey comedy filmed around Jodhpur and Udaipur.

## Best in Print

**Desert Places** (Robyn Davidson; 1996) Travels with Rabari tribespeople through the Thar Desert.  
**Maharanis** (Lucy Moore; 2004) A delightful account of the lives and loves of three generations of Indian princesses.  
**A Princess Remembers: The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur** (Gayatri Devi and Santha Rama Rau; 1976) A life of extraordinary privilege not so much exposed as celebrated, justified and missed.  
**Rajasthan: An Oral History – Conversations with Komal Kothari** (Rustom Bharucha; 2007) The living traditions and folklore of Rajasthan as told by a leading folklorist.

## A Thriving Desert

Covering an area of 342,236 sq km, Rajasthan represents roughly 10% of the Indian landmass. Much of it embraces the vast Thar Desert, a surprisingly vibrant and populated desert that is liberally scattered with rural villages, ancient trade-route towns and several rapidly growing cities that were once capitals of princely states.

The desert supports life because of the monsoon rains that percolate through the sands into the water table, to be tapped throughout the year at the ubiquitous wells scattered across the country. In recent years, Rajasthan's life-giving monsoon has become less and less predictable, however, and the scarcity of rain and rapid drop in the water table in many areas have affected people's livelihoods as well as the greater environment.

Chronic droughts have accelerated migration from the parched agricultural lands to the already overburdened cities. Of course, a desert has two things in ample supply – sunshine and space – and so, not surprisingly, Rajasthan leads India in renewable energy generation. In 2015, Rajasthan's solar energy output eclipsed Gujarat, to become the country's number one generator.

The Rajasthan government has committed to achieve 25 gigawatts capacity in solar electricity generation by 2022. And it is well on the way, with many more solar farms being built or planned. The desert also plays host to wind farms and the Jaisalmer wind farm, a pioneering effort that showed great foresight, has grown to become one of the world's biggest such farms.

## The State of Tourism

Tourism is probably the most important industry in Rajasthan; it is certainly the most obvious and seems to touch nearly everyone's lives. It brings in valuable foreign revenue and provides much-needed employment. Tourism funds the conservation of Rajasthan's magnificent