

Rajasthan Inconnu (undiscovered Rajasthan)

October 28 to November 12, 2012 (Dates in India)



Rajasthan is most often the region that one visits on the first trip to India. Many of its palaces, forts, and princely cities (like Jaipur) are justifiably famous for their history and picturesque qualities. These places are also often overcrowded, and only if visited decades ago, would have given an impression of the timeless qualities of the great subcontinent. This trip is proposed for those returning to India and for the first time visitor alike, with the goal to explore some of the less frequented, but no less historic or picturesque regions of Rajasthan.

This Western desert region of pre-independent (1947) India was known as Rajputana, the land of the Rajputs, or ‘descendents of the Rajas’. It was

governed by numerous warring kings, princes and chieftains belonging to the Kshatriya or ‘warrior’ cast and its numerous clans and sub-clans; all of whom had become woven into a loose hierarchy that paid tribute to the more powerful amongst them, that came to be known as the handful of Maharajas or ‘great’ Rajas. The Moghuls, and later, more importantly, the British, signed treaties with the Rajas and Maharajas of this region, and brought them under their rule; thus lending some sort of glamour and romance to the idea of colonial rule at that period in time, popularly known as the British Raj.

Rajasthan is the largest state in India, and is in the north just to the east of Delhi. Its name comes from *Rajput* (the groups of independent warrior clans who constitute the once independent and powerful princely states that form India today. The term *Raj* refers to the term of British colonial rule from 1858 to 1947.

Our fifteen (15) night journey will take us in a counterclockwise circle from Delhi and back again, and we will stay (all but one for at least two nights, not counting the initial and final airport hotel stays) at seven places, almost all of them former or current princely palaces or forts, that

have been carefully restored to modern standards. They have been chosen as the best available in their locations. We will travel by our own private coach, and our days of travel will be characterized by drives which constantly fascinate with the roadside pageant which is India and the constantly changing scenery. While distances are not great, the quality of roads is poor, and several of our travel days will be long. We have come to appreciate these journeys as a welcome respite from the normal pace of life, and a chance to read, observe the passing scenery, or engage in conversation with fellow travelers. Frequent stops are made to use the “facilities” (often provided by nature) and for refreshment.

This very special expedition is quite unique, and one will not find that the usual collection of cultural trips include these destinations. It has been specifically crafted for Stephen Harby and friends by Alok Chandola and Praveena Rai of Realms, and is the eighth such expedition they have created together. Realms have organized many exceptional trips for some of the most discerning museum and cultural groups and are the best at what they do!



Chattri Pavilions atop a Palace

Rajasthan Inconnu (undiscovered Rajasthan)

Map of Places to be Seen



Day 1, October 28 /Sunday
ARRIVE DELHI, India

You should arrange to arrive at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi, by an international flight on this day. (arrival flight details awaited)

After clearing Indian immigration, collecting your checked bags and passing through customs control, you will exit into the arrival hall and the meeting area outside.

START OF SERVICE

There, you will be met, welcomed and assisted by a Realms staff member at the arrival hall meeting area, and transferred to the hotel Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel (Superior Rooms)—this is an ‘airport’ hotel – ROOMS HELD FROM EARLY AFTERNOON THIS DAY

Day 2, October 29 /Monday
DELHI to JODHPUR

Checking out at the hotel in the morning, our group will be transferred to Delhi airport to board the flight for Jodhpur [Delhi/Jodhpur by Jet Airways Connect flight 9W 2631 – 10:25/11:45am] Once in Jodhpur we will be met by our local representative and transferred to the hotel, and the remainder of the day is at leisure or free for optional activities.

Raas (Luxury Rooms) <http://raasjodhpur.com/> This new hotel is located in the heart of the old town, and it is a subtle conversion of a series of old nineteenth century pavilions which served as a pleasure palace for the ruler.



Devi Garh Fort/Palace at Delwara (Harby watercolor as are others)

It is well situated for explorations on foot of the Jodhpur’s famous “blue” town—characterized by the blue tinted whitewash which served to give a cooling effect and also to keep away mosquitos!

Day 3, October 30 /Tuesday
JODHPUR

In the morning we will drive off on a village safari in open jeeps over dirt tracks to visit Bishnoi homes. Learn about their history, culture, art, traditions and lifestyles, and perhaps participate in an opium ceremony if one is in progress – also a chance to view local wildlife – the black buck and chinkara, both commonly found species of gazelle; the neelgai or ‘blue bull’, the largest antelope in Asia; and numerous migratory birds,

especially flocks of Demozel cranes, that migrate here every winter.

In the afternoon we will tour the 15th century town set on the fringe of the Thar Desert, dominated by the gigantic Mehrangarh Fort. Entering the fort through a series of impressive gateways, we will visit its museums, which exhibit an outstanding collection of the Jodhpur royal family’s memorabilia - jewelry, miniature paintings, portraits, armament, elephant saddles, royal cradles and festive tents. Time permitting also visit Jaswant Thada, the royal cenotaph.

Day 4, October 31 /Wednesday
JODHPUR to DELWARA

We will set off to drive Jodhpur-Delwara (280 km/08 hrs—including a sightseeing and lunch stop en route). On the way, we will stop at Ranakpur and visit some of the most important Jain temples in India – this extremely beautiful temple complex lies in a remote and peaceful valley of the Aravali Range. The main temple in the 15th century complex is the Chaumukha, or four-faced temple, dedicated to Adinath, the first Tirthankara. This beautifully crafted marble temple has 29 halls supported by 1444 intricately carved pillars, no two alike.

Nearby, we will have lunch at Maharani Bagh Garden Retreat [<http://www.>



Silhouette of Jodhpur’s Umaid Bhawan

welcomheritagehotels.com/hotel/maharani-bagh-orchard-retreat], continuing the drive later in the afternoon, we will arrive at Delwara village and check in to the most memorable Devi Garh, a former palace turned into stylish hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure – walk into the village, or enjoy the spa, or ride a camel into the surrounding countryside. Devi Garh (Palace Suites) [<http://www.deviresorts.in/devigarh/>]

Day 5, November 01 /Thursday
DELWARA (excursion to
UDAIPUR)

In the morning we will take an excursion to Udaipur (24 km/45 min one way) to see the Udaipur City Palace, actually a series of interconnected palaces massed into an impressive whole, with ground level and rooftop courtyards and gardens, a stunning peacock mosaic on one of the upper floors and grand views over the lake. We may also visit the Sahelion-ki-Bari, the private royal gardens of the royal ladies-in-waiting. On the return drive from Udaipur to Delwara we will stop en route to explore the archeological ruins at Nagada and the sacred shrine called Eklinji – the Nagada ruins are of three ancient Jain temples, with fine architecture and intricate carving. A little



Adinatha Temple, Ranakpur, 1439

further lies Eklinji, an interesting village with a number of ancient temples. The Shiva temple was originally built in 734 AD and then restored in 1509 AD. The walled complex includes an elaborately pillared hall under a large pyramidal roof and features a four-faced Shiva image in black marble.

Day 6, November 02 /Friday
DELWARA to DUNGARPUR

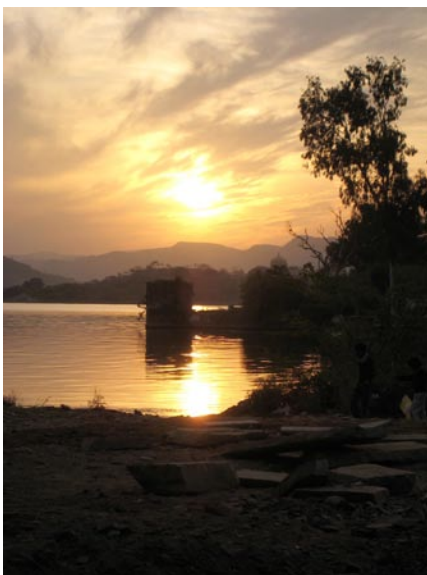
Today we will drive Delwara-Dungarpur (via Udaipur, 140 km/04 hrs), arriving in Dungarpur in time for late lunch at our hotel. Dungarpur lies in

a wild and rugged district at the foot of the Aravali hills. Founded by the tribal Bhil chieftain named ‘Dungaria’, the town is famous for its unique style of architecture. We will stay at the Udai Bilas Palace, residence of the royal family, which is renowned for its intricately sculptured pillars and panels, ornate balconies, balustrades, bracketed windows, arches and friezes that have been carved out of white marble. The remainder of the day is at leisure or free for optional activities.

Udai Bilas Palace (Suites) [<http://udaibilaspalace.com/http://udaibilaspalace.com/>]

Day 7, November 03 /Saturday
DUNGARPUR

Today will be spent in Dungarpur, visiting in the course of the day some of the private temples and shrines of the royal family. The highlight is the Juna Mahal, a remarkably preserved 13th century fort/palace built on a 1500 ft hillock. The inner areas of the fort have colorful and vibrant rooms embellished with frescos, miniature paintings and glass-mirror inlay work.



Left: Udaipur's Pichola Lake at sunset; Right: The view of our Udai Bilas Palace hotel at Dungarpur



Right, above: Juna Mahal, Dungarpur;
Right: Wall paintings at Kota



Day 8, November 04 /Sunday
DUNGARPUR to
CHATTAURGARH and PARSOLI

Set off to drive Dungarpur-Chittaurgarh (230 km/06 to 07 hrs), which we will reach in the early afternoon and visit the Chittaurgarh fort, reputed to have been raised to the ground on three different occasions. We may be able to discern the images of love and valor, the scars of battles won and lost. Capital of Mewar for over 800 years, the Chittaurgarh is possibly the most important fort in Rajasthan. Spread over 280 hectares, the 13 kilometers of battlements enclose fortresses, palaces, temples, bazaars, granaries, reservoirs and lakes; bearing testimony to the glories and tragedies of a people who preferred death to dishonor. Later in the afternoon or evening we will continue another 45 km to Parsoli, where we will spend this one single night stay on our itinerary at the Lake Nahargarh Palace (Deluxe Rooms) [<http://www.lakenahargarhpalace.com/>]

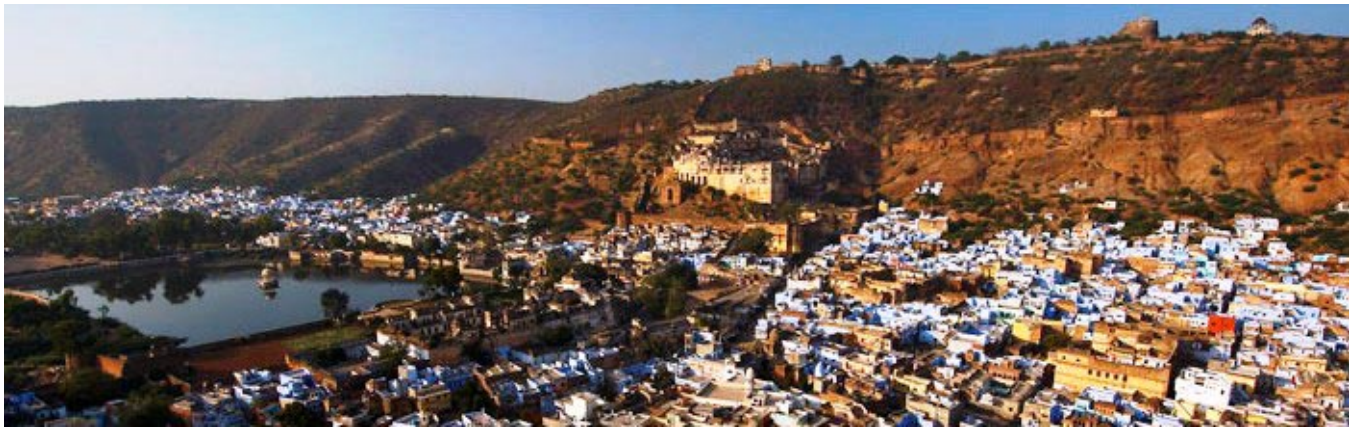
Day 9, November 05 /Monday
PARSOLI to KOTA and BUNDI

In the morning we will travel Parsoli-Kota (130 km/03 hrs), arriving in Kota to visit the fort overlooking the river Chambal – notable for its elegant ‘Durbar Hall’ adorned with paintings and mirror work, and doors of ebony inlaid with ivory. Time permitting, visit the Raj Mahal to see the collection

of murties (stone idols); the palace interiors embellished with gold stained glass work on the walls, and silver mirror work on ceilings and the marvelous wall paintings. There is also the Badal Mahal with the collection of Kota miniatures and paintings from various ‘schools’ of different periods set in glass on the walls. Continue 40 km (01 hr) beyond Kota to Bundi, arriving in the later afternoon or evening, to check in at the hotel



Chatra Mahal Palace, Bundi



Bundi

Haveli Braj Bhushanjee (Deluxe Rooms) [<http://www.kiplingsbundi.com/>]

Day 10, November 06 /Tuesday
BUNDI

Today will be devoted to seeing the sites of the picturesque town of Bundi, including the Bundi Durg (also called Taraghar, or star-shaped fort, built in 1411) and the monuments within; the Garh Palace with its Diwan-e-aam, Hathia Pol, and Naubat Khana; the Chhatra Mahal palace with its miniature style murals, and the Phool Mahal and Badal Mahal palaces to see the collection of paintings there; and the Chitrashala pavilion to see the wall paintings and

murals that adorn the interiors. In the afternoon visit the Raniji-ki-Baori step well, Sukh Mahal, the summer palace, Jait Sagar lake, Phool Sagar the residence of the erstwhile maharaja, the Kshar Bagh garden and the Eighty-Four Pillared Cenotaph.

Day 11, November 07 /Wednesday
BUNDI to BHARATPUR

We will set off early to drive Bundi-Bharatpur (370 km/08 hrs, including a sightseeing detour to Abhaneri en route). At Abhaneri we will visit Chand Baori, a step well built in 8th Century. The step-well is a most unusual building type, unique to this part of India, and

they were created to provide a welcome refuge from the inhospitable desert for travelers and their flocks. This one is about 65 feet deep, has about 3500 narrow steps going down to the water, and provides 13 intermediate landings large enough to accommodate large groups at rest taking refuge from the heat of the day. We will continue on our the drive, arriving in Bharatpur and checking into the hotel later in the day. The Bagh (Deluxe Rooms) [<http://www.thebagh.com/>]



Left, above: The palace of Fatehpur Sikri; Right: the interior of the Friday Mosque (Harby watercolor)

Day 12, November 08 /Thursday
BHARATPUR

Today will be spent in the vicinity of Bharatpur, from which we will take a day return excursion to visit the deserted city of Fatehpur Sikri (30 km/45 min one way). It is here that we will clearly be able to discern many of the interesting facets of everyday life at the Mughal court in the 16th century. Built by Emperor Akbar as the capital of his empire, the city had to be abandoned due to lack of potable water – some of the structures here still remain in a remarkable state of preservation.

Returning to the hotel in Bharatpur for lunch, in the afternoon there is time to visit the Keoladeo Ghana National Park, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This park is a manmade wetland on the flyway of migratory birds that travel south from Siberia and Central Asia each year to escape the rigors of the harsh winter months, in search of nesting habitats where they can breed and bring up their young. One is taken around on a cycle rickshaw, whose puller, usually an excellent birder, will be happy to take you into the park for an hour or more to show you all there is to see at this time of year. Though the wetlands here have dried up somewhat over the years due to the paucity of water in the catchments of the manmade canals, the shrinking habitat continues to attract a host of a resting, feeding and breeding site as it once was for the migrants that fly past every winter.

Day 13, November 09 /Friday
BHARATPUR to AGRA

After breakfast at the hotel we will set out to drive Bharatpur-Agra (60 km/02 hrs), arriving in Agra later in the morning, checking into the hotel in time for late lunch. In the afternoon we will visit the Agra Fort, a huge complex constructed out of red sandstone, and view its exquisite marble palaces;

testimony to the power and artistic sense of successive Mughal Emperors. In the late afternoon we will visit the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah, considered to be an architectural forerunner of the Taj Mahal. Our hotel is the ITC Mughal (Chamber of Emperors Rooms) [<http://www.itchotels.in/hotels/itcmughal.aspx>]

Day 14, November 10 /Saturday
AGRA

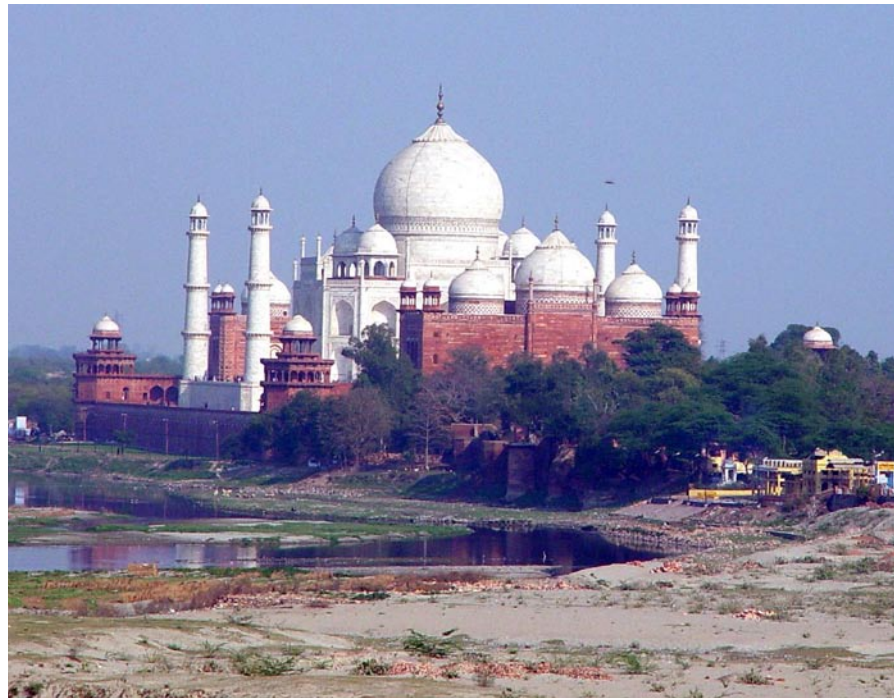
Early in the morning we will visit the Taj Mahal, the superlative expression of emperor Shah Jehan's undying love for his queen, to see and experience the monument in the soft light of sunrise. Returning to our hotel for breakfast, the larger part of the day is at leisure or free for you to enjoy the facilities at your hotel, make a shopping foray, or perhaps, later in the afternoon to revisit the Taj Mahal, extending our stay there if we please, to view the changing moods of the monument in the fading light of the setting sun.

Day 15, November 11 /Sunday
AGRA to DELHI

Checking out at the hotel in the course of the morning, latest by 12 noon; we will set off to drive Agra-Delhi (210 km / 4 hrs), direct to our hotel close to the airport, and check in for an overnight stay. Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, an 'airport' hotel, (Superior Rooms) [<http://www.radissonblu.com/hotel-newdelhi>]

Day 16, November 12 /Monday
DEPART DELHI

We will individually check out at the hotel in the course of the morning (depending on the schedule of our individual departing flights) and will be transferred to the Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi, to board the flight to your onward international destination with departure assistance and send off outside the departure terminal. END OF SERVICE You will individually clear Indian Immigration and Customs before boarding the flight. Bon voyage and welcome home!



Taj Mahal, Agra