

## Exploring Rajasthan Beyond Sand Dunes

Rajasthan, translated into English as the 'Land of Kings', is a picturesque north-western Indian state nestled amidst the Aravali mountain ranges. Rajasthan has a delightful habit of beating all the expectations of its visitors with its wide range of offerings — opulent palaces, timeless ancient forts, indigenous village settlements, buzzing cities, bazaars like Piccadilly Circus, and sun-kissed glistening sand dunes. Rajasthan has abundant wonders to warrant visitors from all over the world. Its expanse of architectural and cultural significance is influenced by the rulers who dwelled here in the past. Due to its rich nature and an undertone of quaint atmosphere, Rajasthan is a famous tourist place, both domestically and internationally.

Rajasthan is awash with 'places to visit' and 'things to experience' that triggers all senses beyond any doubt. Reasons to visit Rajasthan are pretty obvious, like getting lost in the spectacle of lavish palaces or experiencing how tiny you are in the boundlessness of the sand dunes. Others are lesser-known or not-so-talked-about reasons which one must understand before stepping into this breathtaking state. Let us help you create an itinerary and aid your visit to Rajasthan, something you would remember for a lifetime.

### How to Visit

Rajasthan is well-connected by three primary means of transport: air, rail and road.

#### By Air

If you want to save time, taking a flight would be your best bet. Being a state capital, Jaipur hosts the largest airport in Rajasthan. Besides, Jodhpur and Udaipur are also preferred among other domestic airports in the state. If you are coming further from the North, you would need to take a halt at Delhi.

#### By Rail

If you are the one who enjoys beholding a sight of parading scenery from the window, travelling by a train would be worthwhile. Having around 6,000 km of railway track, the state enjoys a web of railway lines connecting to the rest of India. Rajdhani and Shatabdi express are famous railways connecting to major cities of the state.

Joining hands with Rajasthan Tourism Development, Indian Railways launched a railway called 'Palace on Wheels.' It is India's first and world's fourth best-voted luxury train. This train departs from Delhi and takes you through prominent cities of Rajasthan.

#### By Road

Road trips serve the best memories when travelled with friends or family, even solo! National Highway 8 (NH8) connects the state to Delhi and Mumbai. If Mumbai would be too long for you, starting your road trip from Delhi would be a better choice. It takes about 5 hours to reach Rajasthan from Delhi.

### What to Visit

## **Amber Fort**

Adorned with winding staircases and a labyrinth of passageways, Amber fort is a stunning palace. The palace represents a perfect combination of Mughal and Hindu architecture. It was the main residence of Rajput rulers. Accompanied by audio guides, it will take about 2 to 3 hours to soak in the palace. An elephant ride to reach up to the stairs is a common activity to be relished. The palace is approximately 11 kilometres away from Jaipur.

Timing: 9 AM to 6 PM IST

Entry Fee: INR 200 for foreigners and INR 25 for Indians.

INR 200 for a two-people ride on an elephant.

## **Hawa Mahal**

Also known as the 'Palace of Winds', Hawa Mahal is a 953 windowed-palace that embodies a look of a honeycomb of a beehive. The palace welcomes you with a charming fountain at its entrance. The palace is made up of red and pink sandstones with rounded canopies and gorgeous floral patterns. Due to large numbers of windows, the palace is adequately ventilated which makes it comfortable for visitors considering the climatic conditions of the state. The palace also houses a small museum which showcases miniature paintings and other relics.

Timing: 9 AM to 4:30 PM IST

Entry Fee: INR 200 for foreigners and INR 50 for Indians.

## **Dilwara Temples**

One of the most revered temples in India, Dilwara temples is a place for worship for the Jain community. It is situated in the greenery of Mount Abu. The walls of the temples are graced by dancing female carvings. Besides, the temples are also adorned by the detailed carvings of lotus pendants and concentric ring ceilings in the inner sanctum.

Timing: 6 AM to 12 PM for the Jain community and 12 PM to 5 PM for tourists.

Entry Fee: Free of cost.

## **Fairs and Festivals**

### **Pushkar Fair**

Locally known as *Pushkar Mela*, Pushkar Fair is a kaleidoscopic event that draws in visitors from all over the world to watch colourfully dressed and painted camels with bells around the necks who amble their way among the fair attendants. The fair also involves participants engaged in activities like moustache competitions, camel sports and dancing. It lasts for about nine days in the month of November, serving the perfect dose of a riveting cultural reflection of the localities. The fair takes place near Ajmer.

### **Jaipur Literature Festival**

Book lovers and authors flock together to attend this renowned literature festival. What once started with 18 authors, the festival has now cemented its name as one of the best literature

festivals in the world. Its growing reputation has attracted literature enthusiasts to lend their ears to keynote addresses of the prominent figures. Diggi Palace, Jaipur, hosts this festival. The festival was graced by world famous authors such J.M Coetzee, Orhan Pamuk, Javed Akhtar, V.S.Naipaul, Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Anuradha Roy.

### **Ideal Time to Visit**

Situated far from the coastal region, Rajasthan is too hot during flaming summers. The temperature sways between 25 to 45 degrees during summers. Hence, visiting the state during winter (October to February) is advisable. Winter is kind in Rajasthan as it helps you conduct outdoor activities without getting drenched in sweat.