

LOVE  
JAIPUR,  
RAJASTHAN

A HAND-BOOK FOR THE LUXURY VAGABOND

*FIONA CAULFIELD*



LOVE TRAVEL GUIDES

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# LOVE JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN

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LOVE  
JAIPUR,  
RAJASTHAN

*I believe falling in love with a city is just as exciting as falling in love with a person. Your senses become engaged and you simply feel more alive...*

***Author's Note***

The intention of this guide is to introduce you to the most authentic experiences in Jaipur so you can fall in Love with this city. I have also added a limited selection of recommendations throughout Rajasthan, and I hope that this will lead to a 'Love Rajasthan' in the not too distant future.

The selection criteria was easy – does the place help one fall in Love with Jaipur? If yes, it was in; if not, it was out. For every entry that made it, many did not. All entries are based strictly on merit, with no payments or incentives involved.

Special thanks to all of the 'Jaipurians' and 'Jaipurwallahs' who generously shared their Love stories with me so I could include the many special experiences you will find in these pages.

Change is inevitable; please let me know if you come across any outdated information. I really welcome your suggestions for additions and even, deletions. Please contact me at [fiona@lovetravelguides.com](mailto:fiona@lovetravelguides.com)

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Happy Journey,  
***Fiona Caulfield***

November 2009.



**JAIPUR  
FROM  
ABOVE,**  
by Giles  
Tillotson

*Jaipur was made for bustle. The crowd, the commerce and the commotion were all part of the plan. Its founders always intended it to be the busy shopping destination that it remains today. The streets were made broad and straight so that as many people as possible could reach the shops as quickly as possible; and if they seem a bit overloaded these days, that is a measure of the runaway success of the founders' vision.*

So to experience the city as it was meant to be you have to go armed with a shopping list. A readiness to be distracted will help too, to allow the markets to reveal their diversity. A willingness to be importuned and jostled is also helpful.

Even so, it is pleasant once in a while to rise above the frantic melee and look down on the city from a high place of calm.

An excellent place to start is the *Surya* temple at Galta because the journey to reach it is as exhilarating as the reward. From the eastern side of the city, you take the Agra road, which passes through Ghat ki Ghooni, where spectacular galleries and hanging gardens line the road on either side. Passing in front of the *Sisodia Rani Mahal*, you drive through woodland to reach the entrance to the ashram, crowded with tea stalls and men selling gram to feed the monkeys.

Galta was the headquarters of the Ramanandi sect, a place of quiet retreat and religious learning since before the city was founded. At the lower level there is a street with what appear to be terraces of pretty painted houses. In fact they are temples, built on the haveli plan, with little courtyards animated by the play of the children of the resident priests. Further on, a flight of steps leads past three bathing pools: the lowest and largest is reserved for women only, the middle one for men and the topmost is for monkeys. What sort of hierarchy is intended here I've never been sure, but you certainly observe a crescendo in exertion and splash level as you climb.

Beyond the monkey dip, a steep and stony path leads up to the top of the hill, past a small settlement with a cowshed, and on to the *Surya* temple. Few venture as far as this and the caretaker is grateful for your visit.

More traditional in form, with a white painted tower, the shrine stands perilously perched on a terrace cut into the ridge of the hills overlooking Jaipur. And the view proves worth the climb. You can see the entire city spread out between the encircling hills, its main east-west road running straight as an arrow from below your feet to the distant horizon.

You get the same perspective but from a different side if you leave the walled city from the north and drive up to *Nahargarh*. The fort here was extended in the late 19th century when the Maharaja built a suite of apartments for his favourite concubines. Each of nine mistresses had her own gaily painted portal, quiet courtyard and servants quarters, all facing each other around a central court.

On festive holidays *Nahargarh* is a favourite resort of local families who come up by the jeep load, and when the children discover the echo in the building's corridors it is best to make an exit. From the terrace behind, you can look down on the city laid out like a map, picking out the famous landmarks – the *Hawa Mahal*, the *Jantar Mantar*, the clock tower of the City Palace – and appreciate the order of the street plan without the clamour of the traffic.

The road that leads from *Nahargarh*, winding across the top of the hills to *Jaigarh* (the fort above the Amber palace), is one of the best country walks I know. It is a lonely path with stunning views of the distant hills, pinkish and brittle in summer, covered in greenery in winter. Between overhanging branches are occasional glimpses of the *Jal Mahal*, the pleasure pavillion in the lake below. You might pass a shepherd or even another tourist, but it is hard to believe that you are three miles from a city of over a million inhabitants.

*This is Rajasthan raw and uncut – the perfect antidote to the polished perfection of the jewellery bazaar you have left behind.*

Giles Tillotson is a writer and lecturer on Indian architecture and history.

His books on Jaipur include '**Jaipur Nama**' and '**Jaipur City Palace**' (co-authored with Vibhuti Sachdev).

## I JAIPUR MUST'S

### *Briefing:*

*Jaipur is the much loved capital of India's largest and most romantic state. It is the main gateway to the splendour and magic of Rajasthan.*

*Majestic Forts and Palaces dominate the skyline and yet, it is the bazaars, within the walls of the old city, that create Jaipur's unique energy.*

*They surge with locals and villagers, not just tourists, enjoying the best shopping in India.*

*The people are colourful characters; moustached men wear splendid turbans in vibrant hues and the women wear glorious lehengas and the brightest saris in India.*

*Here's what I believe you 'Must-know' about Jaipur and what you 'Must-do'. Enjoy!*

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## Must-Know's

### Mughal Alliance

The ancestors of the people who built Jaipur ruled from Amber, a few miles to the north. The '*Kachchwaha*' dynasty, named after a mythological tortoise, rose to prominence in the 16th century as a result of a strategic alliance with the Mughals. Among the first Rajput clans to accept Mughal sovereignty, they were rewarded with offices and titles at court. The realpolitik was reinforced at a personal level, as the Mughal emperor Akbar married an Amber princess who bore his first son and successor, Jahangir.

### A New City

Built in the early 18th century to replace Amber as the '*Kachchwahas*' capital, Jaipur was founded by and named after Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II. It is often cited as a rare early example in India of a planned city, as it was built up rapidly from scratch according to a predetermined plan. The streets inside the walled city are laid out in a regular grid. The construction was overseen by the king's Bengali minister, Vidyadhar.



*Jantar Mantar*

### Star Power

Jai Singh's other great passion was astronomy, for which he consulted Indian, Arabic and European sources. Guided by a south Indian *pandit* named Jagannath, he designed and built huge astronomical instruments and founded five observatories – called Jantar Mantar – the largest being the one in his palace grounds.

### Money and Gems

The Rajputs are famous for their valour and chivalry, and for their splendid forts. But Jaipur was conceived as a departure from tradition. Its strength was built less on military might than on trade and commerce. From the time of its foundation it attracted bankers and jewellers and to this day it remains one of the most prominent centres of the gem trade in Asia. Precious stones imported from around the world are cut and traded there.

### Why Pink?

The pink paint on the facades of the shops and houses lining the main streets and on the encircling walls of the old city is one of Jaipur's most distinctive features. A local myth explains this as a gesture of welcome to the Prince of Wales who came on a royal visit in 1876. In reality the pink wash is much older and was intended to imitate the effect of Indian sandstone, since most of the buildings are actually made of rubble and plaster.

### Crafts Old and New

Apart from jewellery, the rulers and wealthy citizens of Jaipur patronised other local crafts including metal ware, pottery and textiles. The *School of Art* and the *Central Museum* were both founded in the 19th century to help promote these crafts and to establish Jaipur as a leading retail centre. Jaipur was also a base of pioneering photography thanks to the support of Maharaja Ram Singh, himself an accomplished amateur photographer.

### Revival Architecture

As the city expanded, it grew outside its old walls. Although the new suburbs were not planned with the same strict geometry, some effort was made at first to maintain a traditional style of building. Indeed in the decades around 1900 Jaipur became the centre of a '*Rajput revival*' style of architecture led by British engineer, Samuel Swinton Jacob, who worked for the royal court of Jaipur. He and his Indian colleagues designed many buildings in the city including the Albert Hall and the Rambagh Palace.

### Polo Club

Polo has a long history as a pastime among Rajputs, but it was taken up with a special zeal by the last ruling Maharaja of Jaipur, Man Singh II. In the 1930s he and his team – all fellow Rajput nobles – won countless trophies in both India and Britain. The polo club in New Delhi was built on land belonging to Jaipur. Tragically, Man Singh died while playing polo in Britain in 1970.

### Capital of Rajasthan

When India attained Independence in 1947, the rulers of the princely states gradually gave up their powers to merge their independent kingdoms with the new nation. Jaipur state joined together with its immediate neighbours to make the new state of Rajasthan. The city was selected as the capital of this much larger area and is the headquarters of the state government, or Legislative Assembly, which is housed in the *Vidhan Sabha*.

### Tourists Old and New

The '*Pink City Express*' and the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation have helped to make Jaipur into a corner of India's '*Golden Triangle*'. But the city has been a centre of tourism for a much longer time. It has proved to be a magnet especially for writers and fashion gurus, the list of famous visitors including Rudyard Kipling, Aldous Huxley, Cecil Beaton, Jacqueline Kennedy and Norman Parkinson.

### Breakfast with the birds

The journey to *Desert Trails (pg23)* through desert scrub and the Aravalli Hills is lovely and takes under an hour from the city and is just 15 kms beyond Amber. The hundred-acre property has an abundance of birds and is a great destination for early morning ornithologists. Breakfast is a simple affair, come here to taste nature. On the way back to Jaipur, explore the magnificent Amber Fort.

### Up, Up and Away

Ballooning over Rajasthan is a complete delight with *Sky Waltz (pg99)*. If you can cope with a really early start, head one hour north-west to the charming village of Samode for an early morning flight followed by breakfast at *Samode Palace Hotel (pg130)*. Or stay closer to Jaipur and take off from Amber, and feast on mouth-wateringly delicious parathas post flight at *Jagdamba Paratha (pg20)*.

### Morning Walk

Join fit Jaipurians on their early morning perambulation around the polo ground and golf course (*pg87*) or better still, head into the old city with Jaipur enthusiast Vineet Sharma of *Jaipur Walks (pg97)*. Choose from the bazaar walk, the built heritage walk, the temple walk, the cuisine walk or the craft walk. All are superb and you could do one each morning of your stay. Without a doubt the nicest way to discover the city.

### Temple Pooja

Visit the 18th century Govind Dev Ji Temple at *City Palace (pg106)* to receive a blessing from the priest and witness joyful worship and hear the chorus of 'Jai Govind'. From here explore the Palace, the Hawa Mahal and do the fabulous *Heritage Walk (pg98)*.

## Must-Do's

### MORNING

#### To Market

An early morning chai at *Sahu Chaiwalla (pg31)* on Chaura Rasta in the old city and then a fragrant stroll through the *flower market (pg79)*. Market enthusiasts may also enjoy the vegetable market near Sanganeri Gate and the bustling milk bazaar in Subhash Chowk. By then time for breakfast. For a hit of nostalgia, it is hard to beat the *Indian Coffee House (pg22)* or for luxury head to *Rambagh Palace Hotel (pg38)* to enjoy breakfast on the verandah or the lawns.

### DAY

#### An Artist's Date

The Albert Hall is a magnificent Indo-sarcanic building, which houses the central museum's superb collection of fine arts and traditional crafts from across Rajasthan. It deserves a few hours at least, or ideally multiple visits. *Alberts 1589 (pg25)* is perfect for a refreshment break. From here visit both *Neerja (pg43)* and *Kripal Kumbh (pg43)* for Blue Pottery and then head to one of the best contemporary craft shops in India, *Anantaya by AKFD (pg45)*.

#### Astronomy and Astrology

A stroll around the *Jantar Mantar (pg107)* will leave you in no doubt how important astronomy was to Maharaja Jai Singh when he founded the city of Jaipur. From here visit with one or more of the city's many astrologers and see what the future holds. The stars will indeed be aligned if you can get an appointment with Mr *Kedar Sharma (pg92)* or go high tech and visit the *Janmpratika Astrological Centre (pg93)* who has the latest software on hand.

#### Textile Touring

Explore the *Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing (pg109)* (where you can hand-print your own scarf of t-shirt) and then suitably inspired, go shopping. Just a few minutes from the museum, is the exclusive and exquisite haveli where *Brigitte Singh (pg54)* lives and works, then head back into town and visit as many of the *Block Print specialists (pgs 53 to 56)* as you can, begin with Kin Fabrics then Shyam Lal and then head to the centrally located C Scheme and Civil Lines to visit Gitto, Kilol, Rasa, Soma, Cottons and end the tour at the *Anokhi store (pg53)* and *café (pg21)*, for a well deserved rest.

#### Jewellery Pilgrimage

Jaipur offers a dazzling array of gems and jewels to satisfy all visitors and all budgets. Serious shoppers will head to MI Road to visit The *Gem Palace (pg47)*, *Amrapali (pg47)* and *Tholia's Kuber (pg48)*. However for sheer pleasure it is hard to beat the bustling bazaars packed with sparkling treasures, make sure to visit *Gopalji ka Rasta (pg51)* and also the silver market at *Chameliwala Bazaar (pg50)*. Also make time for the lac bangle lane, *Maniharon ka Rasta (pg52)* in the old city.

#### Portraits and Busts

A splendid souvenir is a photo taken by *Mr Tikam Chand (pg74)* using his grandfather's antique camera and an even more splendid experience is getting a sculpture done by Arjun Prajapati of *Arjun Arts (pg69)*, one of India's most acclaimed sculptors.

## EVENING

### Amber Evening

Start with the *Son et Lumiere* (pg105) (the sound and light show) at the majestic Amber Fort, listening to Bollywood icon, Amitabh Bachchan describing the rich history with great gusto, accompanied by magical Rajasthani music. Then head to *Mosaics Guesthouse* (pg33), which is located in a small village on the edge of Amber for supper. Dine under the stars on the rooftop and enjoy the silence.

### Fort & Haveli

Enjoy a Sundowner beer on the terrace of the *Padao* café (p38) at *Nahargarh Fort* (pg105), with panoramic views of the city. On the way back to town stop just outside of the old city wall, to enjoy dinner at a charming haveli. *Samode Haveli Hotel* (pg33) for those who want a romantic courtyard or *Saba Haveli Hotel* (pg33) for one of the best *thalis* in town.

### Night Safari

Explore the forest reserve located at the base of the Aravalli Hills on an elephant. The team at *Dera Amer* (pg101) make sure that you are well nourished and hydrated on the safari, providing drinks and snacks on torch-lit platforms and a full dinner on completion of the journey. Perfect on a full moon night.

### 'Seven Star' Night

An excuse to glam up, and live out your romantic fantasies of life as a Maharaja or Maharani. Spend the evening at the gracious *Rambagh Palace Hotel* (pg146). Sunset cocktails on the *Verandah café* (pg38) followed by a sumptuous feast at *Suvarna Mahal* (pg32). End the evening with a fine cognac or single malt nightcap at the *Polo Bar* (pg39).

### Get Real

Begin your evening with a sunset drink on the rooftop of *Bissau Palace Hotel* (pg39) in the old city, with lovely views up to Nahargarh Fort and the sounds of the city transitioning into night. Then head just out of town to the busy street side *Sharma Dhaba* (pg34) for dinner. Finish with more street side eating, go to *Pandit Kulfi* (pg37) for the best *kulfi* (ice-cream) in Jaipur.

### Palace Crawl

Undertake a moveable feast to my favourite palaces. I would start with drinks on the terrace of the charming historic *Narain Niwas Palace Hotel* (pg39) and then head to *Cinnamon* (pg34) at Jai Mahal Palace for contemporary Indian or, if in a more relaxed mood, I would go to the garden of *Diggi Palace Hotel* (pg33) and enjoy a simple honest *thali* under the leafy canopy of grand old trees.

## Planning Calendar 2010

### JANUARY

#### 14th Makar Sankranti –

The Kite Festival, Jaipur. The sky is ablaze with colourful kites.

#### 21st to 25th Jaipur Literature Festival –

Asia's leading literary event.

[jaipurliteraturefestival.org](http://jaipurliteraturefestival.org)

#### Polo Season – Jaipur (pg110).

### FEBRUARY

#### 28th Elephant Festival, Jaipur. –

Held on the eve of Holi, a grand procession of painted elephants held at the Chaugan Stadium. Elephant polo also takes place.

### MARCH

#### 1st Holi –

The Festival of Colours which marks the beginning of Spring. One of the most loved days in Jaipur and the gardens of *Diggi Palace Hotel* (pg150) are the ideal spot to play Holi. Get covered in colour and cheer Happy Holi!!

#### 18th to 20th Gangaur Festival –

Celebrating the union of Lord Shiva (Gan) and Goddess Parvati (Gauri) with a traditional procession. Unmarried women pray for good husbands, and married women pray for the good health and a long life for their husbands.

#### Cricket Season – Jaipur (pg111).

### AUGUST

#### 12th Teej Festival –

The festival of swings, which marks the advent of the monsoon and celebrates the union of Goddess Parvati with Lord Shiva. The most feminine of festivals, where flower decorated swings are hung from trees and women dress in their finest clothes.

### SEPTEMBER

#### 2nd Krishna Janmaashtami –

The birthday of Lord Krishna best celebrated at the *Govind Dev Ji Temple* (pg108).

#### 11th Ganesha Chaturthi –

The birthday of Lord Ganesha best celebrated at the *Ganesh Mandir, Moti Doongri* (pg108).

### OCTOBER

#### 17th Dussehra –

The culmination of the nine-day Navaratri and the welcoming of the winter season. In Rajasthan the festival celebrates the victory of Rama over Ravana and the safe return of Rama's wife Sita.

#### 20th – 24th Rajasthan International Folk Festival –

at Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur. [jodhpurfolkfestival.org](http://jodhpurfolkfestival.org) Mick Jagger is the patron of this outstanding musical event, a fabulous celebration of world music.

### NOVEMBER

#### 5th Diwali –

The Festival of Lights. Celebrating Rama's return to his kingdom, and the triumph of Good over Evil and the prettiest time to be in Jaipur where the city is adorned with lights. Gifts are exchanged and the whole city lights firecrackers to express their joy.

#### 13th to 21st Camel Fair –

Pushkar. Simply no better place to buy a camel.

### DECEMBER

#### Polo Season – Jodhpur (pg122).

### MORE INFORMATION

For a full listing and other years see [rajasthantourism.gov.in/Attractions/Fairs-Festivals](http://rajasthantourism.gov.in/Attractions/Fairs-Festivals)