



Jaipur

Rajasthan's magical capital captivates visitors by its unique atmosphere. Jaipur is a real treasure where the glorious old world charm is still present in a heart-warming way.

The North Indian city of Jaipur, surrounded by the desert sands of Rajasthan, is famous for its remarkable town planning and architecture. All the majestic forts and palaces, elegant mansions and beautiful gardens have their own historical stories to tell. In 1883 the city was painted with a lime-based red colour to welcome Prince Albert of England. This colour has remained as a trademark of Jaipur, still today known as the *Pink City*.

The ornamental facade of the five-storied **Hawa Mahal**, *Palace of Winds*, stands in the very heart of Jaipur. The shape of this architectural beauty, built in 1799, imitates the crown of Lord Krishna. Almost one thousand elaborate balconies and windows used to be places for royal ladies to observe the street life from above, without being seen. Climbing to the top of the palace requires good nerves when travelling with a small child, as the concept of safety is nearly non-existent – but the view over the city is magnificent. From here one can see



Jaipur's majestic **City Palace** and the amazing **Jantar Mantar**, an observatory with huge astronomical instruments built in the early 1700's by the founder of the city Maharaja Jai Singh II.

Mountains around Jaipur are dotted with several architectural treasures. The 16th century **Amber Fort Palace** is lying on the rugged hills like a glamorous gemstone. Its unbelievably beautiful inner courtyard is surrounded by labyrinth-like corridors. On a higher mountain-top the impressive **Amer Fort** is keeping an eye on the whole spectacular scenery.



The Pink City

Another stunning construction is **Jal Mahal** or *Water Palace*, a former royal pleasure and boating spot built in the middle of the Man Sagar Lake. On the lake shore camel drivers with big mustache and huge red turbans offer tourists a swinging ride.



Perhaps the most amazing – and at the same time less touristic – atmosphere awaits in the outskirts of Jaipur in **Galtaji**. This ancient pilgrimage centre hiding between steep rock formations houses beautiful temples, pavilions and kundis (holy water tanks). The place,

also favored by large groups of monkeys, is rustic and in rather poor shape – but has mysterious and inexplicable old charm.

Also Jaipur's colourful local life offers unforgettable experiences. Shopping streets are chaotic in a delightful way – a mixture of noise, dust and smell of roasted nuts is in the air. Bargaining in one of the small shops selling traditional camel leather shoes is an adventure of its own. On the streets it feels like the whole circus has come to town as horse carriages, camels and decorated elephants walk among the traffic. Snake-charmers sit on the pavement with their round baskets and a big group of lazy cows occupy the main square. Beggar children with tangled hair walk barefoot – a heart-rending reminder of another reality in the middle of all the historical glory and elegance.

Jaipur shows wealth and poverty, chaos and harmony in a unique and touching way. It is like a powerful, multidimensional story which continues growing in the hearts of those who have once experienced it.

