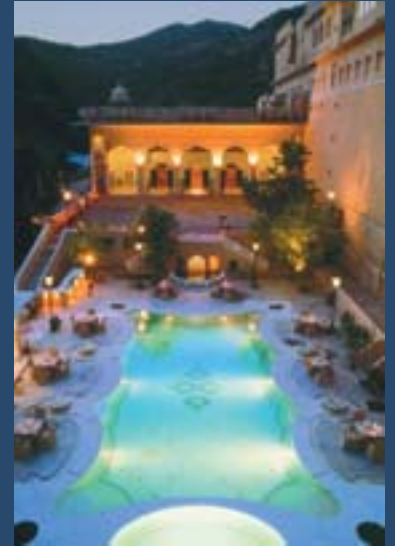


*Live like a*

# King



*Staying in a palace adds an additional dimension to a tour of Rajasthan*

## FACT FILE

The opulent examples given are just a sample of the heritage properties available in northern India – there are many more available to suit a range of budgets. A two week tailor-made tour to Rajasthan, incorporating the three palaces mentioned, costs from £2,700 per person. For details please call our North India specialist, Clare, on 01869 276 226.



*W*here better to live like a king than in Rajasthan – ‘the land of kings’. This regal state of northern India was ruled for over a thousand years by Mughal warrior clans, who called themselves the ‘Rajput’ and claimed descent from the sun and the moon. Not only did they dominate the history of Rajasthan right up until independence, but they also stamped their mark on the region in the form of extravagant palaces. When the British took control they recognised the royal status of the Rajputs and allowed them to continue to collect taxes. With this wealth the Maharajahs brought new excesses to the concept of luxurious living.

When the British withdrew the Maharajahs kept their titles and their ‘privy purses’ for another three decades but, in 1971, Indira Gandhi’s government stripped them of their privileges and they were forced to earn a living like ordinary citizens. Many struggled but others placed survival before royal pride and opened their palace doors. The once-proud warriors became hoteliers and the magnificent palaces became the cornerstones of Rajasthan’s success.

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## SAMODE PALACE

Set in the rugged Aravalli hills an hour from Jaipur, the four hundred year old palace is a fine example of the Rajput-Mughal era. If it wasn’t for this distinguished structure it would be hard to believe that the peaceful village of Samode was once among the wealthiest territories in the Amber Kingdom.

The palace started out as a rather modest fort and it was not until the early nineteenth century that the powerful Rawal Berisal began to expand the building, completing a spectacular progression of courtyards. Later in the century the awesome Durbar Hall and the Sheesh Mahal (hall of mirrors) were added. In 1987 it was opened as a hotel.

The palace has been tastefully modernized and the rooms are breathtaking with high ceilings, beautiful decorations and opulent marble bathrooms. The courtyards are filled with fountains and plants and the addition of a secluded pool and outdoor jacuzzi complete the grandiose setting.



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### THE LAKE PALACE

The region of Mewar, which encompasses Udaipur and Chittorgarh, claims to be the oldest kingdom in the world and the Maharana of Udaipur occupied the pinnacle of India's royal hierarchy as a descendent from the sun. In 1754 the Maharana built the magnificent Lake Palace – an appropriately majestic summer residence.

The huge white palace, which dominates Lake Pichola, is undoubtedly the most famous hotel in India (assisted by its appearance in James Bond's Octopussy) and was opened to the public in 1961. Maharana Sarvind Singh lives in the ancestral palace on the lakeside and has leased the Lake Palace to the highly reputable Taj Group. However, he still plays an active part and also owns a whole chain of heritage properties throughout Rajasthan.

The palace is unapologetically lavish with a timeless grandeur. The rooms are overflowing with extravagantly carved antiques and the courtyards with lotus-filled ponds and mango trees. The atmosphere is of regal splendour and romance.

### NEEMRANA PALACE AND FORT

This wonderful palace was built in 1464 by Raja Rajdeo, whose ancestors, the Chauhans, had ruled from Ajmer and Delhi until the thirteenth century. The word 'Neemrana' is derived from the brave tribal leader, Nimola Meo, who was defeated by the Chauhans but whose name was given to his lost kingdom. This attribute of courage might also be seen to be reflected in the massive restoration project that began in 1986 and has led to the creation of one of the most spectacular heritage properties in India. Set high up in the Aravalli Hills with breathtaking views from the rampart gardens, a magical maze of rooms, corridors and turrets over 10 levels and only two hours from Delhi on the national highway, this is the perfect place to begin or finish your 'royal' visit.

**Clare Lovelace**  
India Specialist

*For further information on character properties in northern India please visit [www.audleytravel.com/indiabotels](http://www.audleytravel.com/indiabotels)*

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