

INDIA UNFOLDED · CITY EDITION

JAIPUR

The Pink City

No. 01 — RAJASTHAN COLLECTION · 32 PAGES

IN 60 SECONDS

In 1727 an astronomer king left his hilltop fort to build something almost nobody in the world was building: a planned city, drawn on a grid — and it still works.

Jaipur is the gateway to Rajasthan and its living capital: an eighteenth-century diagram that trades, honks and celebrates exactly where its architect put everything. Gems in Johari Bazaar, bangles in their own lane, a stone observatory that still tells time — and one famous con to sidestep. Give it two or three days and start with the grid itself.

FOUNDED

1727

by Sawai Jai Singh II, the astronomer king

BEST TIME

Oct – Mar

the Literature Festival lights up January

GIVE IT

2 – 3 days

two for the city, three with Amber done slowly

GETTING IN

JAI

direct flights across India & the Gulf; trains from Delhi in 4–5 hrs

01 The Story, in Five Acts

I THE ASTRONOMER KING · 1727

Jai Singh II ruled from hilltop Amber but dreamed in straight lines. In 1727 he moved his capital to the plain and built a planned city, gridded and geometric, its proportions drawn from ancient Indian treatises on architecture — the reason UNESCO inscribed the walled city in 2019, citing a grid that departs from the medieval pattern of its neighbours. He also built observatories of stone — his Jantar Mantar here still measures the sky.

II THE GRID

The architect Vidyadhar Bhattacharya laid out nine great blocks, streets wide enough for processions, and bazaars assigned by trade — jewellers here, dyers there, bangle-makers in their own lane. Three centuries later, the trades are largely still where he put them. Walk the walled city and you are inside an eighteenth-century diagram that works.

III THE PINK · 1876

The city wasn't born pink. In 1876, Maharaja Ram Singh II had the walled city washed in rose-terracotta to welcome the Prince of Wales, and the look held: residents were required to keep it, and the rule survives — by law, the old city's facades stay pink to this day.

Stand here. Look for this.

Five things almost everyone walks straight past — where to stand, and what you're actually seeing.

1 The single-flame trick

Sheesh Mahal — ask a guide to cup one flame beneath the mirrored ceiling and watch a thousand stars ignite. Never use your phone torch; the flame is the point.

2 The painted gate

Ganesh Pol — stop BEFORE walking through. The fresco work above the arch is the fort's finest painting, and everyone hurries under it.

3 The lattice gallery

Look up from Ganesh Pol's courtyard: the screened windows above let the royal women watch the whole court unseen.

4 The oldest courtyard

Keep walking to the deepest courtyard — Man Singh I's palace, 16th-century and plainer. This small pavilion is where Amber began.

5 The walls on the hills

From the ramparts, trace the fortification lines climbing every surrounding ridge. Amber was never one building — it was a system.

One more thing

Arrive for opening and walk up rather than riding — the elephants' welfare record is why we don't book them. When the courtyards fill, slip downhill into Amer town, then to Panna Meena ka Kund five minutes below: Escher geometry, no ticket, and almost nobody there at 8am.

01 ARRIVAL

The Honeycomb

Café opposite Hawa Mahal · First light after sunrise · 1x · portrait

Straight-on symmetry; family at the rail; all 953 windows catching gold.

02 THE PLANNED CITY

The Pink Arcades

Tripolia or Johari Bazaar arcades · Before the shops open · 1x · portrait

Arches to a vanishing point; one small figure walking away.

03 THE GATEWAY

Through a Pink Gate

New Gate · Ajmeri Gate · Sanganeri Gate · Mid-morning · 1x · portrait

Whole arch in frame; family walking away into the light.

04 THE FORT APPROACH

The Climb to Amber

The ramp to Suraj Pol, Amber · Morning — fort opens 8:00 · 0.5x · landscape

Walls fill two-thirds; family small, walking up.

05 INSIDE AMBER

The Painted Gate

Ganesh Pol, Amber · Any open hour (8:00–17:30) · 1x · portrait

Frescoes edge to edge; a small figure beneath, looking up.

06 THE VIEW

Amber over the Lake

Amber's upper ramparts · or Jaigarh · Morning, still water · 1x · landscape

Family at the wall → lake and garden → hills.