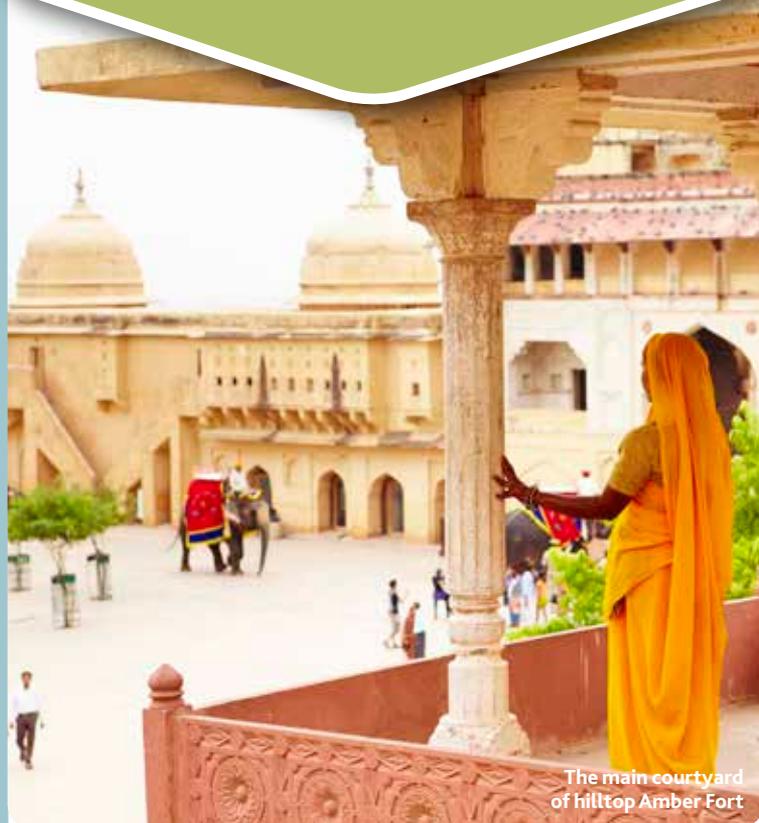


Best of Jaipur



The main courtyard of hilltop Amber Fort

Enthralling Jaipur, capital of Rajasthan, is the gateway to India's most flamboyant state. The city's colourful, chaotic streets always create a heady spectacle. Follow our suggestions to see Jaipur's top attractions.

SIGHTS Amber Fort (Amber)

This magnificent fort on Jaipur's northern outskirts comprises an extensive palace complex, built from pale yellow and pink sandstone, and white marble. It's divided into four main sections, each with its own courtyard. To reach the fort, we advise the 4WD rides or a 10-minute walk, rather than the elephant rides offered.

City Palace (royaljaipur.in; Jaleb Chowk, opposite Jantar Mantar)

An impressive complex of gardens and courtyards lies in the centre of the Old City. The palace has been enlarged and adapted over the centuries, with royal buildings from different eras making the site a striking

mixture of Rajasthani and Mughal architecture.

Hawa Mahal (hawa-mahal.com; Hawa Mahal Rd, Badi Choupad)

Jaipur's most distinctive sight is an extraordinary pink-painted, delicately honeycombed hive that rises five storeys. It was built in 1799 by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh to enable ladies of the royal household to watch the life and processions of the city. The top offers stunning views over Jantar Mantar, the City Palace and the ever-busy Sireh Deori Bazaar.

Jantar Mantar (jantarmantar.org; Malve Nagar, JDA Market)

Adjacent to the City Palace is Jantar Mantar, an observatory begun by Jai Singh II in 1728 that

resembles a collection of bizarre giant sculptures. Built to measure the heavens, its name is derived from the Sanskrit 'yanta mantr', meaning 'instrument of calculation', and it became a World Heritage site in 2010.

Royal Gaitor (Krishna Nagar, Brahmampuri)

The royal cenotaphs, just outside the city walls beneath Nahargarh, are a restful place to visit, as they feel remarkably undiscovered. The stone monuments are beautifully and intricately carved. Maharaja Jai Singh II has the most impressive marble cenotaph, with a dome supported by 20 carved pillars.

ACTIVITIES Cyclin' Jaipur (cyclinjaipur.com)

Get up early to beat the traffic and take one of six bike tours on offer, covering different aspects of the Pink City. You can explore the hidden lanes, temples, markets and food stalls of the city, and it's a fun way to learn about its workings and culture. Breakfast and refreshments are included, and helmets are provided.

Jaipur Cooking Classes (jaipurcookingclasses.com; 33 Gyan Vihar, Nirman Nagar)

Take one of the popular classes run by chef Lokesh Mathur, who has 26 years of experience working in the restaurant and hotel business. They cover both classic dishes and Rajasthani menus, and can be veg or non-veg. After a three-hour lesson, you'll eat the meal that you've prepared.

Kerala Ayurveda Kendra (keralaayurvedakendra.com; 32 Indra Colony, Bani Park)

Is Jaipur making your nerves jangle? Have an ayurvedic massage and therapy. Treatments include sirodhara, where medicated oil is steadily streamed over your forehead to reduce stress, tone the brain and help with sleep disorders.

EATING Niro's (00 91 141 2374493; 80 Ashok Nagar, Mirza Ismail Rd)

Established in 1949, Niro's is a long-standing favourite that only

improves with age. Duck into its cool, mirror-ceilinged sanctum to savour veg and non-veg Indian cuisine with quick service.

Peacock Rooftop FUSION ££ (hotelpalace.com; Hotel Pearl Palace, 51 Hathroi Fort, Hari Kishan Somani Marg, Ajmer Rd)

Hotel Pearl Palace's rooftop restaurant gets rave reviews for its excellent Indian, Chinese and varied European cuisines, plus its fun vibe. The attentive service and romantic view towards Hathroi Fort add to the charm.

Surya Mahal SOUTH INDIAN £ (00 91 141 236 9840; Mirza Ismail Rd)

Near Panch Batti, this popular spot specialises in South Indian vegetarian food. Try the masala dosa and the tasty dhal makhani (black lentils and red kidney beans). There are also Chinese and Italian dishes, ice creams, sundaes and cool drinks.

DRINKING Lassiwala

(312 Mirza Ismail Rd, Jayanti Market)

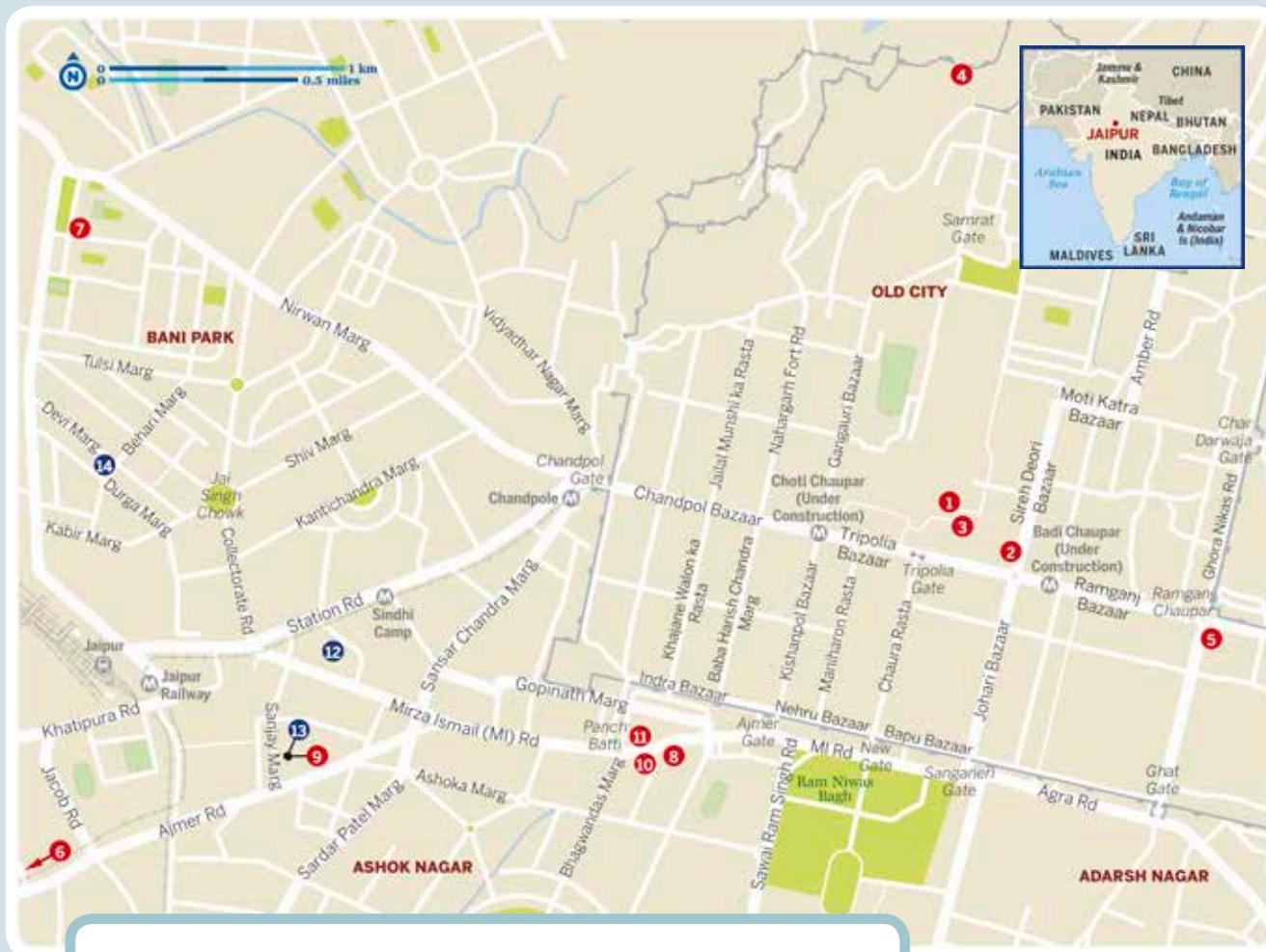
Famous and much imitated, this simple place whips up fabulous, creamy lassis in clay cups. It's the one that says 'Shop 312' and 'Since 1944' directly next to the alleyway. Copycats spread to the right as you face it.

Good to know

Kripal Kumbh is a tiny showroom in a private home, and a great place to buy Jaipur's famous blue pottery. It's made by the family of the late Kripal Singh, a leading figure in the revival of ceramic art here (kripalkumbh.com).



BEST OF JAIPUR



TOP PICKS

MAP KEY

SIGHTS

- 1 City Palace
- 2 Hawa Mahal
- 3 Jantar Mantar
- 4 Royal Gaitor
- 5 Cyclin' Jaipur
- 6 Jaipur Cooking Classes

7 Kerala Ayurveda Kendra

EATING

- 8 Niro's
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SLEEPING

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- 13 Hotel Pearl Palace
- 14 Shahpura House

Sleeping

Hotel Pearl Palace

Best for serious value for money (hotelpearlpalace.com; Hari Kishan Somani Marg)

The dependable Pearl Palace continues to surprise. Ongoing renovations mean there are many excellent rooms, and there's quite a range to choose from – small, large, some with AC or fan cooling, and all spotless. Services include currency exchange and city tours, and the hotel houses the excellent Peacock Rooftop Restaurant.

Atithi Guest House

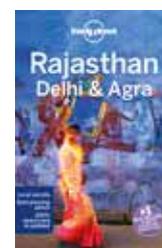
Best for a happening location (atithijaipur.com; 1 Park House Scheme Rd)

This well-presented modern brick-built guesthouse is located between Mirza Ismail and Station Roads, and offers clean, simple rooms around a quiet courtyard. It's central but peaceful, and the service is friendly and helpful. Meals are available – the thali is particularly recommended – and you can have a drink on the pretty rooftop terrace.

Shahpura House

Best for sumptuous Raj luxury (shahpura.com; D257 Devi Marg)

Elaborately built and decorated in traditional style, this heritage hotel offers immaculate rooms, some with balconies, featuring murals, coloured-glass lamps, flatscreen TVs, and ceilings covered in mirrors in the suites. It's a rambling palace with a durbar (royal reception) hall, huge chandeliers, a cosy cocktail bar, inviting swimming pool and an elegant rooftop restaurant.



FURTHER READING

Our *Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra* guide (£15.99) has a section on Jaipur. It's also downloadable as an eBook (£11.19) or as separate chapters (£2.99 each).