

JAIPUR'S PALATIAL NEW PAD

This gloriously revamped palace with a colourful past is the smartest new place to stay in Jaipur

words by MICHAEL SNYDER

After founding Jaipur in 1727, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II created a pleasure palace for his wife, the Princess of Udaipur, in gardens just outside the Pink City's walls. Since then, the Raj Mahal palace housed British officers in the 19th century, became an Art Deco home for the Maharani in the 1930s and was the royal guesthouse, hosting Queen Elizabeth II and Jackie O in the 1960s. Now the family is reinventing it once more, bringing in Jaisai and Anjali Singh - the husband-and-wife team behind Suján, whose stylish tented camps include The Serai and Sher Bagh - to mastermind its transformation. 'This is one of the family's most precious spaces,' says Jaisai. 'What we've done is classic, yet there's nothing like it in Rajasthan.' Instead of creating another fantasy India of cusped arches and carved marble screens, designer Adil Ahmad took a flamboyant approach, drawing on the palace's cosmopolitan history. Each of the hotel's 15 suites (another 15 will open next year) and public spaces is unique: abstract white-and-pink roses on a teal background in the Jackie O suite; vivid paisley and floral patterns against turquoise velvet couches in the drawing room. All this is punctuated with Persian carpets, 18th-century paintings and, in the Maharani suite, the Art Deco bedroom set used by the Queen, which was taken from the royal storeroom. From travelling in one of the family's classic cars to attending a private dinner in

the City Palace - the current royal residence - the whole experience is about creating a sense of exclusive access.

www.sujanluxury.com. Doubles from £290. Greaves Travel

(www.greavesindia.co.uk) offers a week-long trip to India, including flights, four nights at Suján Rajmahal Palace and sightseeing with a guide, from £1,850 per person

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