

Condé Nast Traveller

THE WORLD MADE LOCAL
FEB-MAR-APR 2022 | ₹200

INDIAN EDITION

★ *Now in India* ★

THE GOLD LIST

Our favourite classic hotels
around the world

★ **PLUS** ★

RAJASTHAN REDESIGNED
THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO ALIBAUG
ICONIC ITINERARIES: EGYPT
TALES FROM TINOS, GREECE
WHERE TO GO IN 2022

CONTRIBUTORS

REBECCA MISNER

Writer; *Below the Surface*; p110

One of my most memorable day breaks was in Tahiti. After a long and painful journey, when I finally made it to the hotel at around 5am and went out on my balcony, the past 24 hours vanished. The mountains, sky and the water were the most ethereal pinky-gold.

📍 beccabeq



TALIB CHITALWALA

Photographer; *The Insider's Guide to Alibaug*; p38

It was on my first assignment to Nepal and I remember waking up at 2am to trek to the viewpoint to catch the first ray of sunlight over the Annapurna mountain range.

📍 talib_chitalwala



CONTRIBUTORS SPEAK

“WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY OF A GOLDEN SUNRISE OR SUNSET?”

PRACHI JOSHI

Writer; *The Insider's Guide to Alibaug*; p38

At Rome's hilltop Campidoglio square (designed by Michelangelo) watching the setting sun bathe the Forum and the Colosseum in a golden glow—as it has for over 2,000 years.

📍 delishdirection



ASHISH SAHI

Photographer; *Desert Chic*; p130

I was in Kashmir in the peak of summer for a shoot. To my surprise, it was relatively calm and tranquil. I took a shikara at 4am to catch the morning light and travelled through the waterways for five hours. I have never seen anything more beautiful than this. It truly felt like paradise on earth.

📍 ashishsahi



JEROME GALLAND

Photographer; *Below the Surface*; p110

I was on the Lake Nasser in Egypt. There was golden light, clear skies and the water was like a mirror separated by a thin strip of land. Suddenly, a fisherman arrived on his boat, cutting out silhouettes in a monochrome landscape. It was a spectacular and minimalistic sunset.

📍 jeromegalland



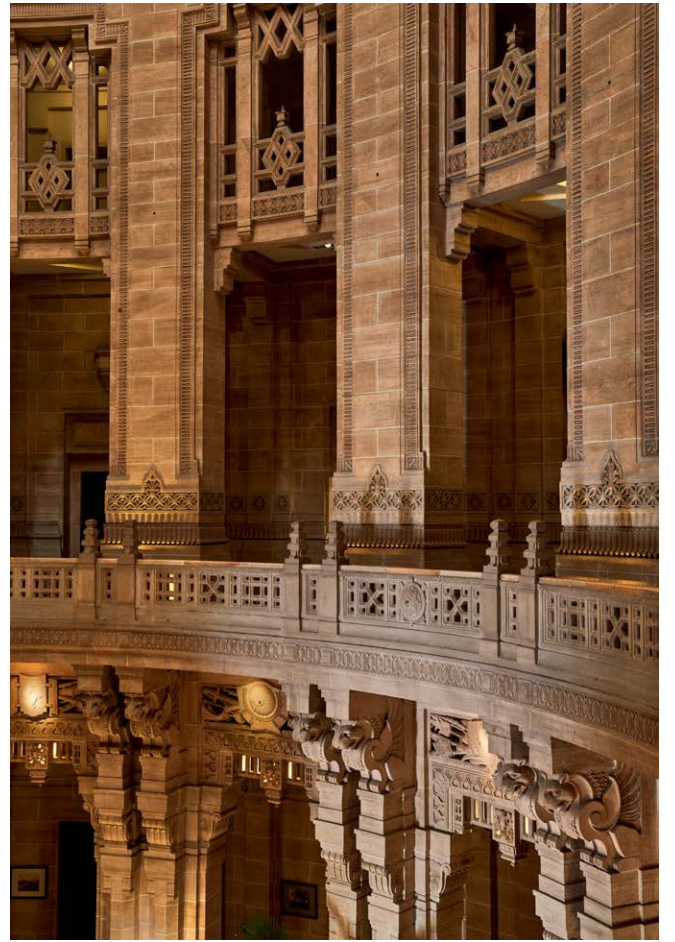
MITA KAPUR

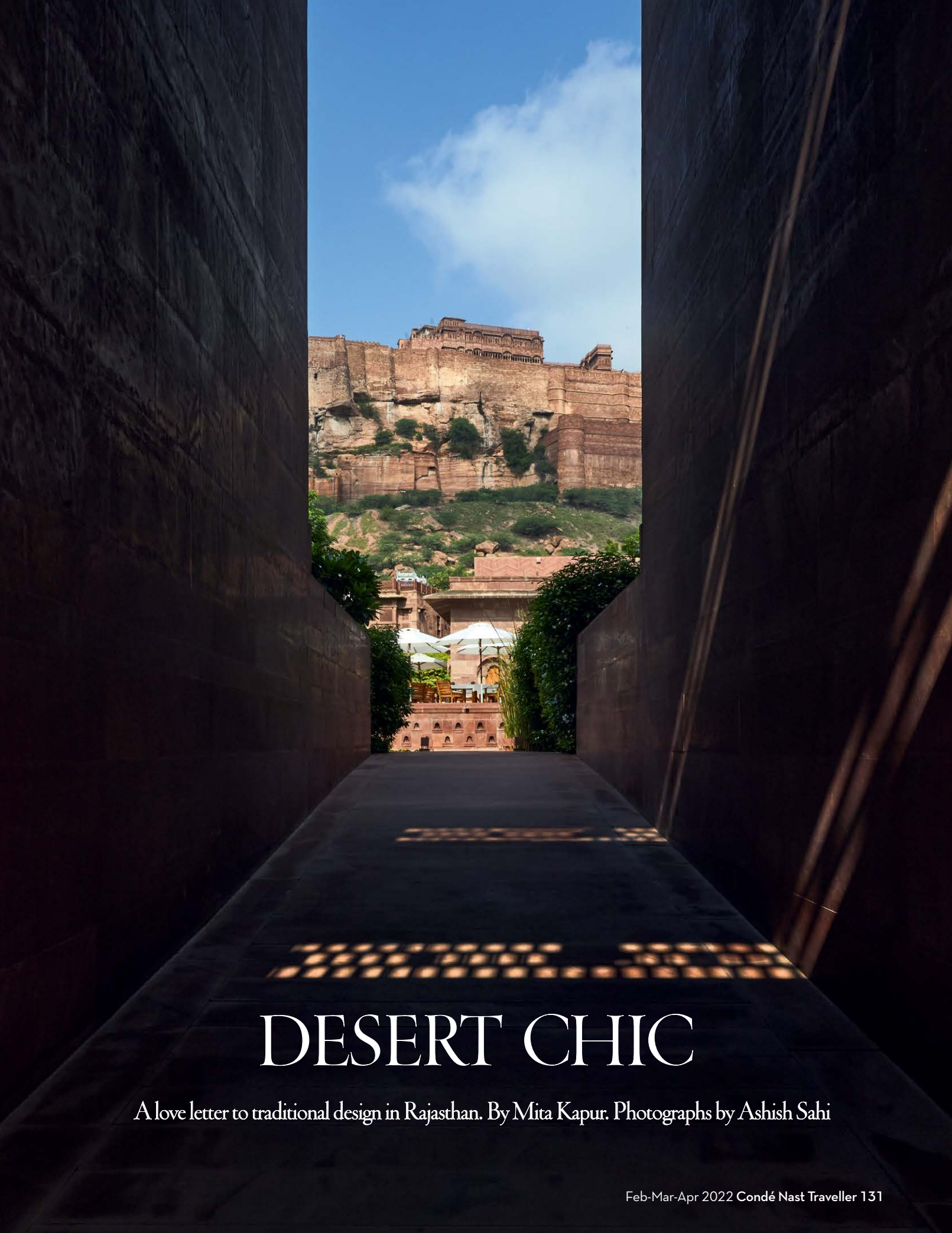
Writer; *Desert Chic*; p130

When the sun dips into the depths of the Aravalli hills surrounding Alila Fort Bishangarh. Each view of the sunset from different points at the fort sends a different message, what remains the same is the stillness.

📍 mitakapur







DESERT CHIC

A love letter to traditional design in Rajasthan. By Mita Kapur. Photographs by Ashish Sahi



Jaipur has been my home for over five decades, but I still feel like I'm decoding its many design motifs. It's been a quest of sorts, ever since I was a child, and my father would take us to the temples and vegetable markets of Johari Bazaar. Even then, I was fascinated by the representations of flower buds and cloves atop buildings; by the wave-like patterns on the tie-dyed leheriya saris of the women selling coriander on their haunches. So much of Rajasthani design, I would later learn, came from block-printers during the Mughal Empire around the 17th century. Designers would take inspiration from their imagination as much as the arid landscape—on a figurative search for water, lushness and plenty. Theirs was a rich technicolour vision of elephants, peacocks and parrots; of lotus flowers, feathers and dancing women. The shapes were as vibrant as the colours: paisley, inspired by the mango; the V-shaped chevrons that you still see on flooring and chhatris; or the circular badroon ka jaal motifs of so many frescoes. These icons have remained in the communal imagination since. For the keen-eyed, they are everywhere, but these are some of my favourite places to explore a contemporary take on traditional Rajasthani design.

JAIPUR

THE JOHRI In a lovingly restored 19th-century merchant's haveli in the heart of Johari Bazaar, The Johri boutique hotel has a fresh yet whimsical take on Rajasthani design. It was opened in December 2020 by cult restaurateur Abhishek Honawar and jewellery scion Siddharth Kasliwal, who also run beloved Jaipur hotel 28 Kothi. The property's pastel interiors were designed by Honawar's partner, embroidery specialist Naina Shah, whose New York/Mumbai-based family business has created designs for Alexander McQueen and Heidi Slimane. She had all of the hotel's new furniture made in Rajasthan, and the gem-themed suites don't just feature iconic scalloped arches, but more subtle touches like hand-embroidered floral headboards, block-printed lampshades and classic chevron patterns on the haveli's grand columns. There is a jungle mural in the lounge, and scenes of cranes beneath swaying palms in the restaurant, where a wall has the original arash plasterwork. This is the Rajasthani haveli for a design-aware crowd—a soundproofed sanctuary, within touching distance of the thrumming bazaar.

Doubles from \$220/₹16,385; thejohrijaipur.com →

Right: **Sabir Bhai's workshop, Jaipur.** Facing page, clockwise: **The Johri, Jaipur; Siddharth Kasliwal at The Johri; works by Shan Bhatnagar; The Johri.** Previous pages, clockwise: **top floor at RAAS Jodhpur; Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur; Mehrangarh Fort from RAAS Jodhpur; a corridor at RAAS Jodhpur; Umaid Bhawan Palace**



“Designers would take inspiration from the arid landscape—on a figurative search for water, lushness and plenty”



KAMAL ASSAT It would be easy to miss Kamal Assat's little atelier in the tight alleys of Johari Bazaar. But his family has been making painted meenakari and gold-inlaid jadau jewellery for Jaipur's royal family for over two centuries, while shipping to clients globally. Many of Kamal's bright, intricate designs are inspired by centuries-old traditions, like the leheriya chevrons or painted lotus flowers on his gold rings. A white ring, studded with a Golconda diamond, uses a fresco pattern from the Amer Fort; one dramatic necklace features painted flamingoes on a string of Colombian emeralds. Some play with expectations, though, like a white ring with a criss-cross pattern inspired by paved German streets. "My jewellery is a mixture of motifs that I have been learning since I was ten years old, and things that flow from my imagination," he says. kamalassatjewelry.com

SABIR BHAI Leheriya saris and stoles are casually stuffed into giant bags in Sabir Bhai's Rangrez Creation studio in Ramganj Bazaar. The distinctive patterns of colourful dots, the result of repeated tie-dyeing, is known as mothra—named after the moth daal, harvested in August, when mothra saris are worn to celebrate the Teej monsoon festival. This old technique had fallen out of favour, partly because the acid used on the cotton was harmful to both humans and the environment. Along with his son, Mohammed Saqib, Sabir has come up with an acid-free way to achieve the same effect, while going back to earthy colours that haven't been widely used in 150 years—made using natural materials like kesula flower, onion peels, raw turmeric, kacha katha, sandalwood powder and babul bark. They've also adapted patterns like the nine-colour nagina mothra or two-colour Rajashahi leheriya, previously only used for turbans. [@1.rangrez](https://www.instagram.com/1.rangrez)

RASA At Rasa at Rambagh Palace, the block-printing is done the old way with handmade wooden blocks, but the effect on their clothing and fabric is very modern—all clean lines, fluid silhouettes and striking colours. Life and business partners Manish and Madhu Tibrewal have been honing their craft for more than two decades, employing a team of mostly local women to create gorgeous saris, pillows and bed linen. Some intricate sari patterns are inspired by the wooden jaali window screens in Mughal and Rajput homes, while cushion covers feature layered wave motifs. rasajaipur.com

NILA HOUSE Run by the Lady Bamford Foundation, the mission at Nila House is to support local craftspeople using old techniques, especially natural dabu indigo dyeing, which is not only part of Indian heritage, but safer to use than many of the synthetic dyes that have overtaken it. It also supports responsible cotton farming, handloom weaving and hand-spinning on the charkha. The duotone products are more minimal than most Rajasthani design—almost Japanese in feel—but table cloths with 60 unique floral block-prints nonetheless refer to local symbolism, as do double-heart saris and napkins with indigo-dye bursts inspired by breaking water. nilajaipur.com

JAIMINI HANDICRAFTS In Jaipur's Narain Niwas Palace, Jaimini Handicrafts specialises in modern takes on miniature paintings—an art form beloved by the Mughals. Jaimini uses local artists, who paint on handmade purana paper. Their art might directly mine Mughal times with depictions of court scenes and love trysts or have more contemporary takes on parrots, tigers or blue lilies. "We encourage

our artists to remain open to styles and influences, as long as the art is rooted in tradition," says shop owner Manjot Singh. "We believe this art form can still feel contemporary." jaimini.co.in

SHAN BHATNAGAR Acclaimed, self-taught artist Shan Bhatnagar brings his devotion to Lord Krishna to his contemporary pichwai art and his work as an interior designer. The 400-year-old temple art of pichwai developed in Nathdwara, near Udaipur. A pichwai painting illustrates myths around Shrinathji, avatar of Krishna. Shan evokes the moods of traditional pichwai while swapping out the conventionally used natural dyes and acrylics on cloth for oil paints on canvas. He also occasionally embellishes the works with zardozi embroidery, semi-precious stones and even thikri—the glass mosaic that once created mirrored palace halls. [@shaanse_jaipur](https://www.instagram.com/shaanse_jaipur)

“Many of Kamal Assat's designs are inspired by centuries-old traditions. Some play with expectations, like a ring with a criss-cross pattern inspired by paved German streets”

NATHDWARA

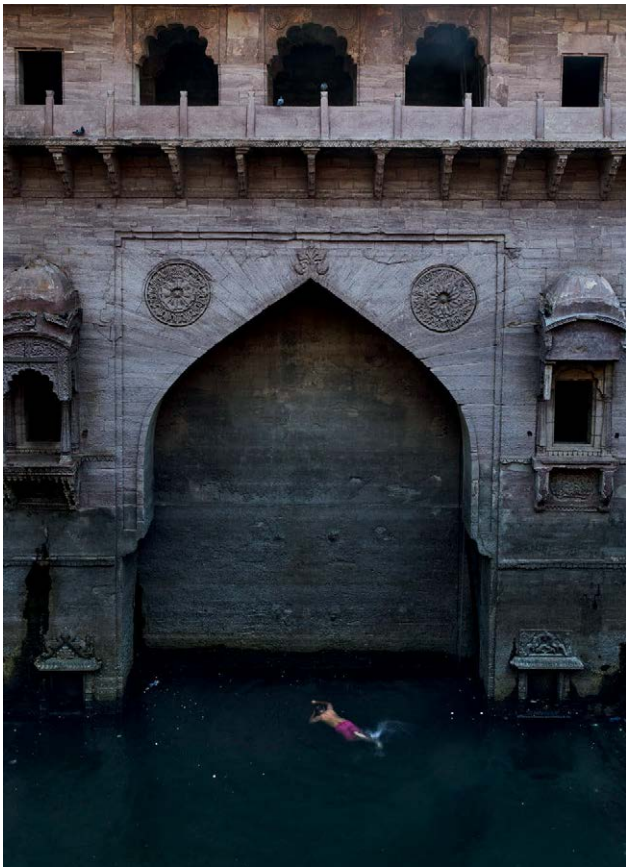
MUBARAK HUSSAIN KHILJI At Nathdwara's Shrinathji Temple, you can see the avatar of Krishna having his clothing changed five times a day in worship. The tie-dyeing technique of leheriya is an old practice with newer forms, like the modern take on the five-coloured Bhopal shahi leheriya that has a white stripe running through each colour. Leheriya karigar Mubarak Hussain Khilji works for the Shrinathji Temple, dyeing fabric that will adorn the deity. He learned the craft from his grandfather, Laala Bhai Rangrez, and finds it the most ordinary thing to have answered this higher calling. 8003583624

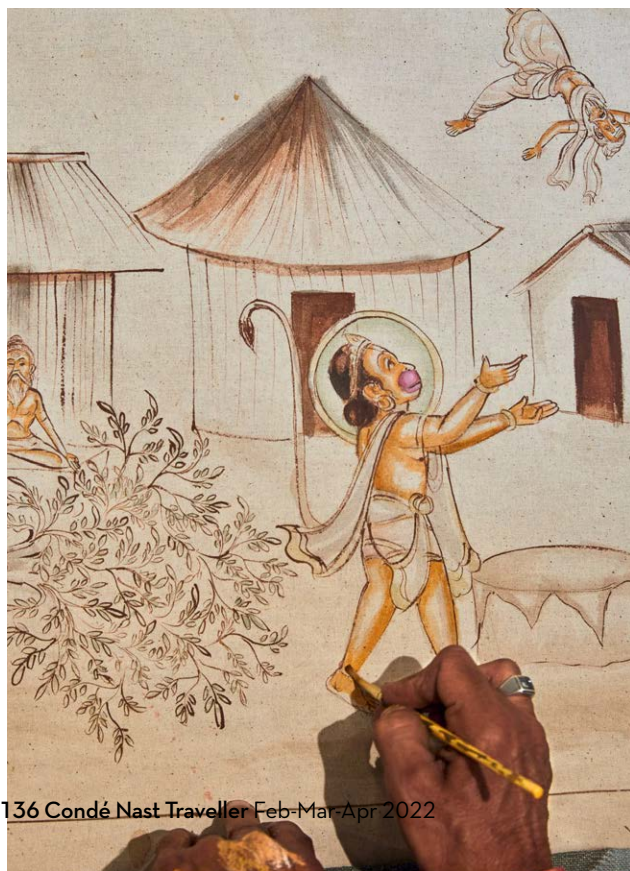
JODHPUR

ROMIL BHANSALI At Romil Bhansali's Gems and Jewels Palace, it isn't just Rajasthan's royalty exerting an influence but also "regal jewellery of empires the world over". A ruby necklace has tanzanites carved with Rajasthani motifs in a setting inspired by Russian jewellery. Another stunning necklace threads Colombian emeralds and rose-cut diamonds in an Art Deco-inspired style. A labour of love, it can take four months to design the frame for a piece of earrings inspired by the latticework of Rajasthan's forts. [@gemsjewelspalace](https://www.instagram.com/gemsjewelspalace)

RAAS JODHPUR Based around an 18th-century haveli, the glam resort of RAAS Jodhpur echoes the rosy hues and heritage architecture of the Walled City. The zenana of the former haveli is now a clutch of charming rooms, the traditional jaali-work has a modern interpretation across the hotel's elevation, and the laal maas and seekh kebabs show a loyalty to Jodhpur's royal traditions. One suite overlooks a stepwell that dates to 1740AD during Maharaja Umaid Singh's reign; it is spectacular to see the structure, restored and cleaned by RAAS and the Jodhpur Development Authority, in use by residents today. *Doubles from ₹20,000; raashotels.com →*

Clockwise: **hand embroidery at Nila House, Jaipur; tableware at Nila House; Mubarak Hussain Khilji makes leheriya fabric to adorn the deity at Nathdwara's Shrinathji Temple; The Stepwell Cafe, adjacent to RAAS Jodhpur**







UMAID BHAWAN PALACE Taj Hotels' Umaid Bhawan Palace straddles time periods with ease: lift your gaze from the floor pattern of a rising sun depicting the power of Marwar, to the commissioned, Art Deco-influenced paintings by Polish artist Stefan Norblis. The palace was built by Jodhpur royalty to provide employment during a time of drought and famine and its relevance and charm are as timely as ever. *Doubles from ₹52,640; tajhotels.com*

MOHAMMAD TAYEB KHAN Jodhpur's leheriya style is broader and the colour gradients are gentler, to contrast with the rugged desert. Water inspires its many artists including Padma Shri-awardee Mohammad Tayeb Khan, known for creating leheriya with ombre dyeing. His family has been in the business for nine generations. His great-grandfather took a ship to England with Maharaja Umaid Singh, whose turbans he dyed to match his clothes there. The royal family approached his father to recreate the shaded hues of French chiffon. The Gaj Shahi turban was by Tayebji's family; the chunari work and shaded colours shaped today's leheriya saris. 9829548786

UDAIPUR

MANGLAM ARTS Manglam Arts takes the pichwai tradition further in their contemporary renditions. Shyam Rawat says of his family-owned company: "We've created a subtler, white-on-white pichwai for people who wish to carry forward their loyalty to this rich tradition in a modern space." At their workshop, artists bend over large panels, creating scenes from the Ramayana and Hanuman Chalisa. Manglam Arts makes and exports home decor to over 30 countries and has one of the most extensive pichwai collections. *manglam.com*

THE HOUSE OF THINGS At home decor store and online marketplace The House of Things, Aastha Khaitan pays homage to her hometown rather imaginatively. "I wanted to make our local treasures accessible," she says. "How do you fit a pichwai into a modern hotel lobby? I took motifs from larger canvases and created furniture, wall art, artefacts." Works include paintings by Shammi Bannu Sharma, descended from a line of miniaturists, whose art conjures the gods in a celebration of the human imagination and of the desire of a desert people. *thehouseofthings.com*

RAFFLES UDAIPUR The recently opened Raffles Udaipur, blends British colonial style with elements of Rajasthan's royal heritage. The hotel reinterprets jaali latticework in its rooms and pays homage to traditional craft in the floral motif on the wooden floors. A spice wall acts both as an art installation and an introduction for guests to an entire range of culinary ingredients used in several regions in Rajasthan. Even the cocktails and food deeply explore lost local history, melding recipes to contemporary tastes. The hare ghaas ki roti, for instance, is a bread made from wheatgrass and based on a dough of wild grass that Maharana Pratap's wife used to prepare to feed both their son and his horse Chetak during their refuge in a forest; it is perfectly delectable even without accompaniment. *Doubles from ₹50,000; raffles.com*



Clockwise: **RK Rawat of Manglam Arts in Udaipur stands against their contemporary pichwai; Rasoi cookery school at Raffles Udaipur; Sawai Kitchen restaurant at Raffles Udaipur; Sawai Kitchen; The Writer's Bar at Raffles Udaipur; a pichwai in the making at Manglam Arts**