

ROMANCING Rajasthan

It's the finer details that make a holiday memorable, and travellers in the know often look for destinations that will enrich their experience and properties that go that extra mile to enhance it. It could be the complimentary Bloody Mary or bowl of ice cream that's served up by the poolside at Samode Palace, the sight of tiger cubs playing within a few metres at Aman-i-Khas, a delicious traditional repast at Chhatra Sagar, complete with the signature tomato chutney, the thrill of having shared a suite with Brad Pitt at the super-luxurious The Oberoi Rajvilas or a breathtaking view of the hills from the Devi Garh Fort Palace spa. **Travel+Leisure** rounds up the five unforgettables of Rajasthan whatever your desire—a heritage holiday, a spa sojourn, a wildlife encounter, a culinary experience or sheer indulgence. **By Monalika Namchoom. Photographed by Dheeraj Paul**



COURTESY OF DEVI GARH FORT PALACE

DELICIOUS BITES

1) AFTER MINTS

Supari is a traditional Indian mouth freshener and is made from betel nuts and other ingredients like dry dates, fennels, melon and coriander seeds, saffron, coconut natural sweeteners and herbs. Some *suparis* are also scented with *kewda* and silver-coated cardamom seeds. There are numerous types of *supari* available in Jaipur, with flavours ranging from rose to mint.

2) NATURAL REMEDIES

Churan is an Ayurvedic digestive made from natural ingredients such as tamarind, *ajwain* and a variety of herbs and spices that aid digestion. Its medicinal properties are also known to cure stomach-related problems and make for tasty sweet and sour treats. There are dozens of different kinds of *churan* made from ingredients like dates and mango. Look out for Anardana Goli (pomegranate *churan*) in Jaipur, these pills have been used in India for hundreds of years for their therapeutic effects.

3) LOCAL DELIGHTS

The little town of Beawar in Rajasthan is famous for the delicious and crispy sweet *tilpatti* made from sesame seeds and sugar. This sweet is eaten primarily from October to March, and is considered a winter dessert. If you happen to be in Beawar, you must try this local delicacy.

4) TASTY DESSERTS

The 100 per cent vegetarian multi-cuisine restaurant at the LMB Hotel in Jaipur is one of the most popular eateries in the city. The restaurant offers a variety of cuisines cooked with pure ghee such as Indian, Continental, Rajasthani, Chinese and South Indian. The sweet shop at the hotel is unmatched in its variety and quality, and makes items rarely found elsewhere. Sweets to try include Ghewar, Midri Mawa, Rasmalai and Gulab Sakri.

—TARINI AWATRAMANI

Regional Flavours Top: The five ingredients that make up the *pachkutta*. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Harsh Singh, one of the two brothers that run Chhatra Sagar, Nimaj; lotus seed pudding with rose petals is a big hit; a view of the camp site.



Epicurean Excursion in Chhatra Sagar, Nimaj

Getting to this lakeside setting at night is definitely an adventure and just as you think you're lost, a man appears and points towards where Chhatra Sagar stands—atop a reservoir that's a 100 years old. Tranquil and isolated, the Chhatra Sagar camp site overlooks a lake and the overall effect is romantic.

The 11 tents also face this serene water body and are roomy spaces with ensuite bathrooms and a front porch. Run by Harsh Singh and his brother Nandi, the informal and friendly ambience will make you feel right at home. **WHY** Mealtimes at Chhatra Sagar are a simple affair, but the food that is dished out here is definitely worth the trip. Considered to be some of the finest Rajasthani home-cooking in the region, they consist of various regional specialties like *khada masala*, *laal maans* and *safed maans*. Or, let your tastebuds sample some of the vegetarian dishes that are made using ingredients plucked from plants that are indigenous to Rajasthan, like *pachkutta* and *sangri*. The most popular dessert is the lotus seed pudding with rose petals, and we even got Harsh's wife Shrinidhi, who supervises the cooking in the kitchen, to give us the recipe: Take popped lotus seeds (*makhana*) and roast them in one teaspoon of ghee. When they turn brown and crispy, crack them unevenly with your fingers. Boil some milk in a pan and add the *makhana*s to it. Let it cook till it gets a *kheer*-like consistency, then add sugar and rose petals just before removing from the fire. Serve chilled.

WHAT'S MORE Chhatra Sagar is perhaps one of the only places that offers cooking classes, so step into the spacious family kitchen for a demonstration by the elegant ladies of the house. Food samplings aside, partake in the tour of the surrounding farmlands. The Chhatra Sagar lake attracts about 200 species of resident and migratory birds, so don't miss the bird walks in the evening.

HOW Nimaj is two hours away from Jodhpur and about four-and-a-half hours from Jaipur. Be sure to take a print-out of the map with you.

WHEN The Chhatra Sagar camp is set up from October to March.

Nimaj, District Pali; 91-2938/230118; www.chhatrasagar.com; doubles for Rs 15,000 and include meals, soft beverages, cooking demonstration, morning farm/village tour by jeep and evening bird walk. +