

Hustling in THE PINK CITY of INDIA

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The 953 *jharokas* were glistening in the sunlight. It was a hot summer afternoon and my American friends were staring at the intricate latticework on the five-storey Hawa Mahal. They had never seen anything like it before and were in awe of its architecture, design, and colour. So was I. It wasn't my first trip to the Pink City but was my first trip as a tour guide for these first timers in India. There was no better way to start their trip than a couple of days in the stunning city of Jaipur.

The Jaipur trip was well-planned in advance. Lizzie and Kelsey came in from New York City and after spending a few days in Mumbai, we had packed our bags to head to Jaipur. Everything was booked in advance, including our stay and self-drive car. And, to make things easier, I made sure that the girls and I got a credit card so that the trip was cashless and hence an easy travel experience. Lucky for us, we got discounts on our self-drive car and various other travel portals, all thanks to our selected card.

Jaipur is home to beautiful forts, royalty, traditions and delicious Rajasthani food. Our trip was centred on capturing

everything: from traditional *lehriya* and *bandhej* fabrics to silver jewellery and blue pottery.

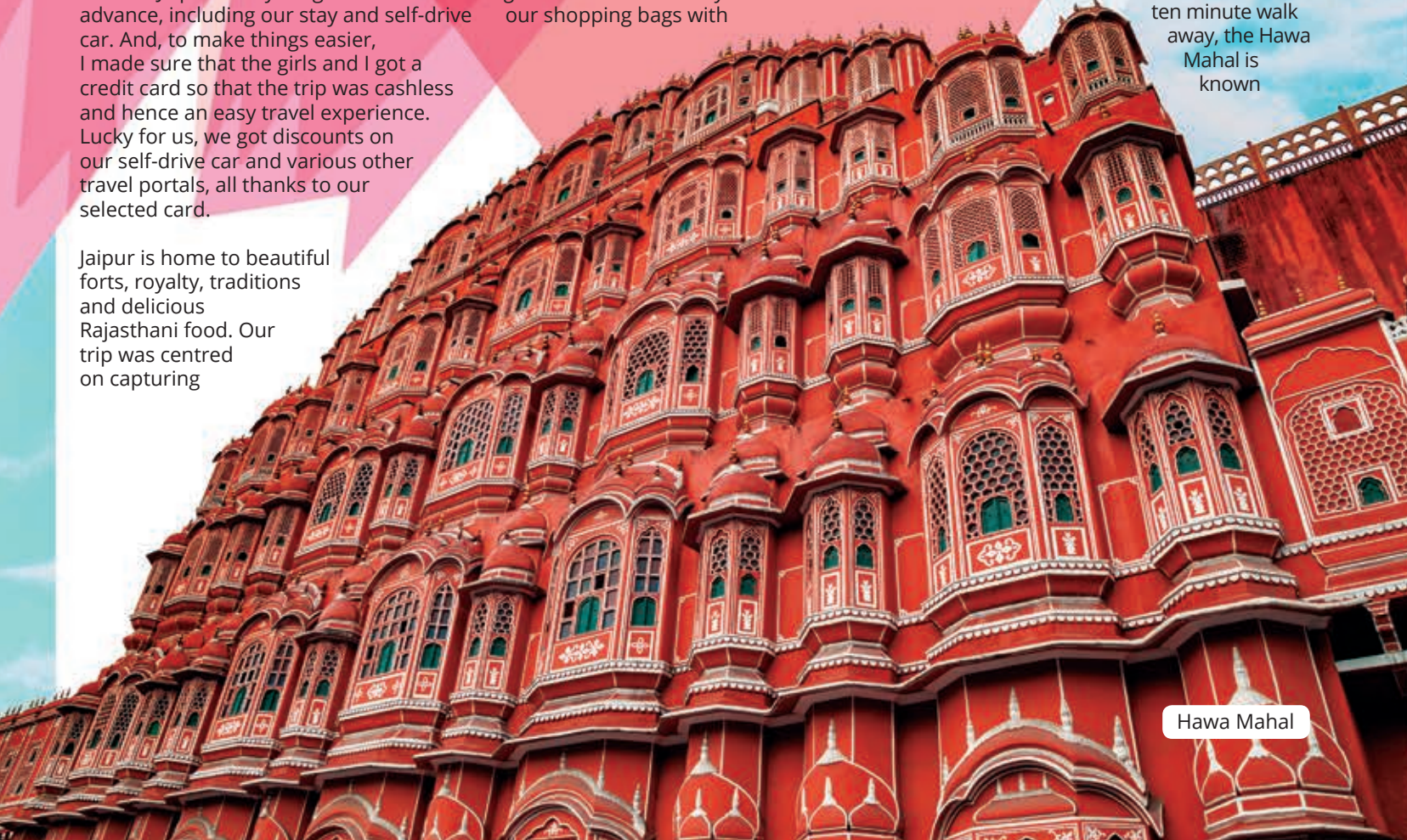
Our trip started with checking into an elegant heritage property. Travelling cashless had its perks; a quick



Jaigarh Fort

conversation at the reception and we were in our room minutes later. Our hotel was located very close to Jaipur City Palace and thanks to our self-drive car, we were soon on our way. The Jaipur City Palace was in a sprawling complex with eye-catching buildings and a collection of artefacts. Raju, our tour guide, told us all about its history and stories about its builder, the Rajput king Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh. After clicking a whole lot of pictures with the terracotta coloured walls inside and the gorgeous peacock gate that led to the Chandra Mahal in the complex, we made our way to the Hawa Mahal. Unlike other guides, Raju was good with accepting payment through his phone. We scanned and paid through the QR code displayed on his mobile, gave him

a good tip! A quick ten minute walk away, the Hawa Mahal is known



Hawa Mahal

for its intricate design. We learned about how the windows were for the royal ladies to watch the bustling city pass by. All the walking and posing had made us hungry so we walked to one of Jaipur's best vegetarian eateries, the iconic Kailash Restaurant.

We ordered a typical Rajasthani *thali* that had all the tempting flavours of Jaipur, from the famed *churma* to the basic but delicious *dal*. A tap and pay of our card and we were headed to our next spot. The rest of our evening was spent at Bapu Bazaar. The girls bought a whole lot of *Mojaris*, handicrafts and jewellery. Although these shops were small, they had the option of scanning and paying through QR codes and we did just that. We shopped some more and day one was a success.

Our second day started late; we were tired from all the walking from our previous day's escapades and decided to head out straight for lunch. We decided to drive up to the famous Chokhi Dhani. The traditional village restaurant gave us a slice of authentic Rajasthani

fare, traditional folk dances and music, all under one roof. After relishing some ghee filled dishes, the girls and I decided to take a camel ride.

I was pretty convinced that I would fall off the camel the minute he started walking but I enjoyed the rather bumpy ride. We drove around the place and made it to Amber Fort just in time to watch the sun set. After wandering through this stunning piece of Rajput-Mughal architecture, we watched the famed light and sound show that took us through the history of the royal family that once resided there. Dinner was an expensive affair. We headed to the famous 1135 AD restaurant, right around the corner from the fort. The night ended with a delicious dining experience amidst a grand and royal setting with glittering silver plates and the grandest

Rajasthani thali yet. A quick swipe of our card later, we were back in our car, driving back through the old city in the quiet of the night. Our vacation at Jaipur was a quick one, we stayed for a couple of days more to explore other sites, eat more of their delicious food and shop. On our flight back, I asked my girlfriends about their thoughts on the Pink City. The girls were very excited to have soaked in so much of culture (and food) in such little time and they were already making plans

to come back. I couldn't help but think to myself how easy it was navigating through the city and it was mostly because we had planned it all and did not have to worry about cash on hand, thanks to our card. I smiled on my flight back, planning my next rendezvous with Rajasthan. This time, it would be a solo trip but I would still want to travel cashless. Wherever you want to go, RuPay provides a host of benefits and offers to make your travel cashless and memorable. Visit rupay.co.in for more details.



City Palace

Amer Fort



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