

BRIDAL GUIDE

September/October 2014

650+
**BRIGHT
IDEAS**

Dream Dresses
Details that Pop
Hot Accessories

**Your
Wedding
Weekend
Guide**

- Welcome Dinner
- Reception Themes
- After Party

**WIN!
THIS
GOWN**
ENTER BY 9/15/14
SEE PAGE 44

**Beautiful
Bridesmaids**
Chic looks for
your bridal party

**IMPRESS
for less**
Budget
Secrets
From
The Pros



*the
color
issue*

Pretty **palettes**, sweet **pastels** and
bold hues for a **stylish** big day

TRAVEL INSIDER



RANTHAMBHORE
Being greeted by Mala and Lakshmi.

INDIA

Via rickshaw, elephant and horse cart, our **travel editor** tours the northern regions of this fascinating country.

by Jenna Mahoney

People often ask me if I have a favorite place. Usually I say: Countries are like children—there's no fave. But just like my parents lie to my sister (wink), I do too. I love India. There aren't enough adjectives to describe the allure of the diverse country. The cultural attractions are awesome, the landscapes and cityscapes are symphonies of color. It's home to some of the most pampering hotels on the globe. And it's the birthplace of yoga, Ayurvedic spa treatments and my favorite cuisine. Plus, the the shopping is unbeatable.

• **IN THE BEGINNING** I started my tour in Delhi, the national capital. It is the perfect introduction to the Rajasthan region, since it's home to Humayun's Tomb, an architectural precursor to the Taj Mahal and a show-piece of the Hindu-Islamic design principles found throughout the area. There are onion domes, geometric sandstone structures with marble inlay, astute attention to symmetry and sprawling gardens. Other notable activities include a rickshaw tour through Old Delhi and a visit to India's largest mosque, which was built by the ruler who commissioned the Taj. Delhi also embodies the India of today—a blend of ancient culture set against a growing economy and technological advances. That's evident in the hotels I stayed in—**Oberoi New Delhi** and **Oberoi Gurgaon**. Both boast contemporary design, high-end shopping and continental gastronomic offerings alongside traditional artwork, spa menus and hospitality rituals (room rates start at \$261 a night; oberoihotels.com).

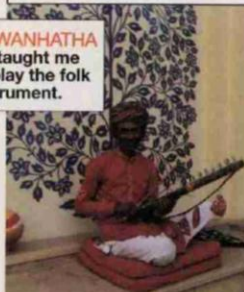
• **ON THE HUNT** When I'm far from home, I enjoy exploring nature, albeit served with impeccable service and wonderful food. I checked into the **Oberoi Vanyavilas**, a collection of tented villas set in a national park and tiger reserve (room rates start at \$942 a night; oberoihotels.com). The big draw: sighting the elusive cats while on a morning safari. Although it was no dice on the tigers (hey—can't control wild animals), I still had some only-in-India experiences at the →



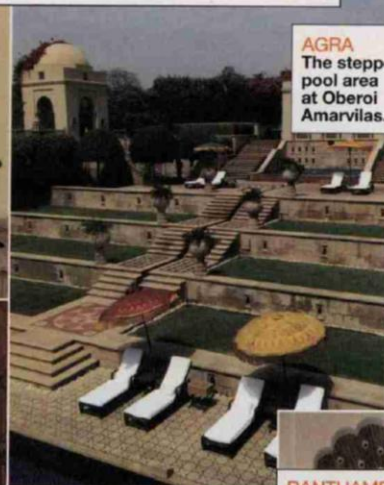
TAJ MAHAL
A detail of the marble inlaid with semi-precious stones.

TRAVEL TIP: *Although the easiest way to tour is by car, driving in India is strictly for the locals. I hired an amazing driver with **Kensington Tours**, who also arranged great local guides.*

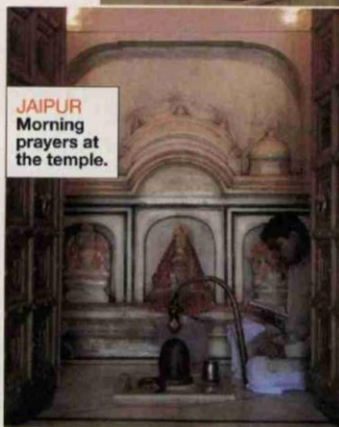
RAWANHATHA
He taught me to play the folk instrument.



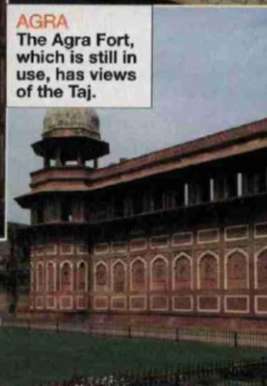
AGRA
The stepped pool area at Oberoi Amarvilas.



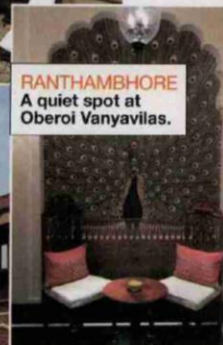
JAIPUR
Morning prayers at the temple.



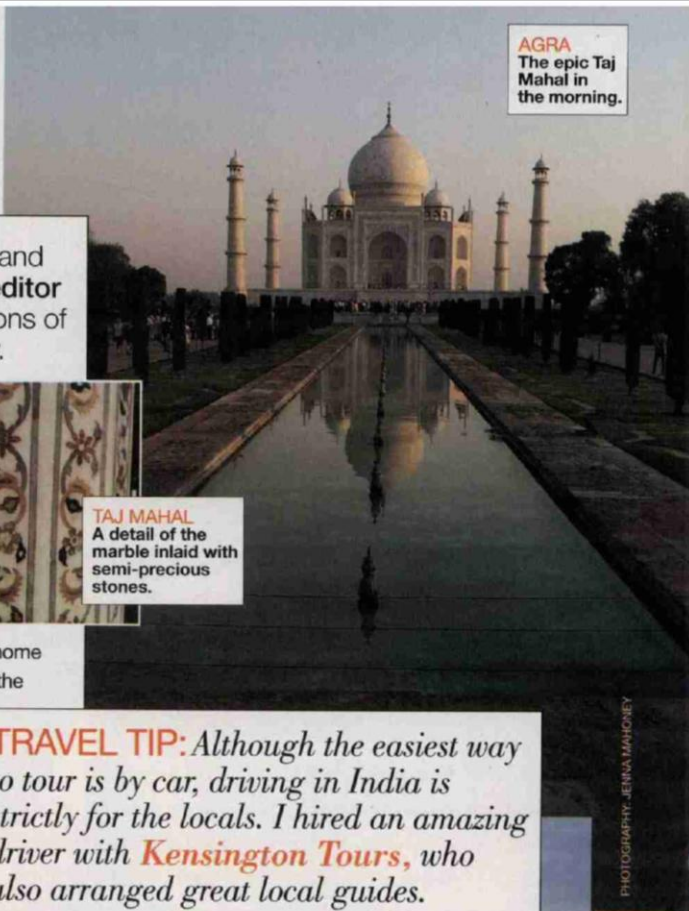
AGRA
The Agra Fort, which is still in use, has views of the Taj.



RANTHAMBHORE
A quiet spot at Oberoi Vanyavilas.

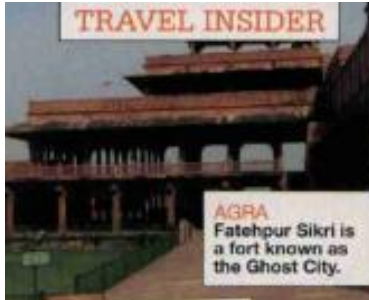


AGRA
The epic Taj Mahal in the morning.



PHOTOGRAPHY: JENNA MAHONEY

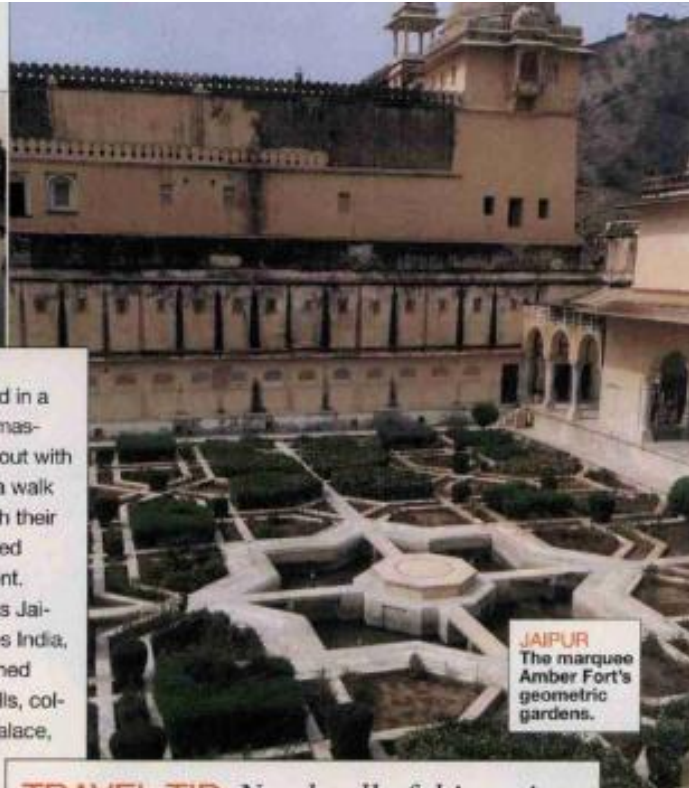
TRAVEL INSIDER



AGRA
Fatehpur Sikri is a fort known as the Ghost City.



TAJ MAHAL
I've got tears of happiness under those glasses.



JAIPUR
The marquee Amber Fort's geometric gardens.



RANTHAMBHORE
Deer abound in the national jungle.

resort property. The yoga classes are hosted in a pavilion and the spa's signature Ayurvedic massage with warm oil is heavenly. I also hung out with elephants Lakshmi and Mala. We went for a walk (well, I rode), and I helped them with their baths. Playing with the water washed away any of my tiger disappointment.

• **COLORFUL CITY** Next stop was Jaipur, a city that's much of how one imagines India, with traffic and cow-jammed streets, endless mazes of shop-lined passageways scattered with temples and a cacophony of smells, colors and sights. Here, I walked the bustling streets to the City Palace, the Palace of the Winds (so called for the screened windows) and the Observatory, a sprawling collection of ancient astronomical instruments. I also shopped—a lot. After watching a demo of how each rug is handcrafted from the spinning of the wool to the quality control, I bargained for one at Shree Carpets. I bought some handmade leather sandals, spices and incense and met a fourth-generation papermaker, from whom I purchased notebooks covered in vintage sari fabric.

• **STRONG SITES** Unlike other areas of India where sightseeing is all about the temples, Rajasthan and Agra are known for expansive forts. Built by the Mughals, who ruled here for most of the 16th and 17th centuries, the fortified palaces share Hindu-Islamic architectural concepts that include grand gardens, areas for worship and public and private apartments. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the sites, which include the Amber Fort, the Red Fort, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, is that many had irrigation systems that also functioned as air conditioning.

• **GRAND FINALE** I've been lucky enough to see some of the world's most magnificent sights, but few compare to the awesomeness of the Taj Mahal. I knew I would like the marble mausoleum, which took 22 years to construct, but I had no idea I'd feel so overcome with emotion. I spent the morning walking around the sprawling grounds of the monument before wandering inside to view the detailed semi-precious stone inlay. In the afternoon I gazed upon the Taj from the balcony of my room at the **Oberoi Amarvilas**, the only hotel that has views of the epic site (room rates start at \$807 a night; oberoihotels.com). Then I went across the river to Moonlight Gardens where I watched the sun set over the great monument. And at all hours, I marveled at the play of light, the intricacies of its design and the structure's enduring magnificence. ■

TRAVEL TIP: Nearly all of this region of India offers Wi-Fi—and it's free! I used a **Nexus 5** to take all the photos on these pages and upload to Instagram (@srajennamahoney) during my stay.



RAJASTHAN
Colorful trucks rule the roads.



JAIPUR
Wool spinners.



OLD DELHI
A weddings notions store.



JAIPUR
Rajasthani street food.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JENNA MARONEY