



BEYOND THE LAKE PALACE

THERE ARE MORE THINGS TO CHECK OUT IN UDAIPUR THAN A STUNNING PALACE IN THE MIDDLE OF A BEAUTIFUL LAKE

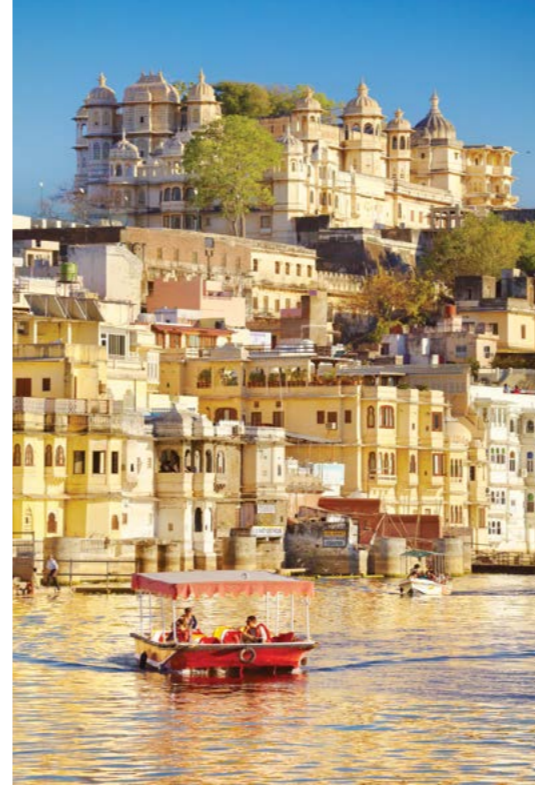
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One of India's best heritage cities, Udaipur does not disappoint. It lives up to its many sobriquets - White City, City of Lakes and Venice of the East, among them - even as it proudly displays its potpourri of cultures. As I started exploring the beautiful city, what struck me was that it has a central soul where the present Maharana, Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar, still resides and around which the city has developed. Even as you make your own forays into one of Rajasthan's most-visited destinations, here are the top six things that you must do in Udaipur, apart from admiring the beautiful Lake Palace.

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1 SEE THE CITY PALACE

■ Located on the banks of Lake Pichola, the City Palace is one of the largest palace complexes in Rajasthan. Its construction was started by Maharana Udai Singh in 1559 but could be completed by his successors only in the 18th century. Since it has been constructed across centuries, you can see a melange of Medieval, European and Chinese architecture in the numerous towers, domes and arches here. The palace is an architectural marvel built with granite.

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2 CHECK OUT THE UDAIPUR CAR MUSEUM

■ The Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation, under the leadership of the present Maharana of Udaipur, runs the Vintage & Classic Car Collection. The collection of the cars here are well maintained. Every week a mechanic comes here and actually starts the cars and takes them for a small round to make sure they are fit for use. This has ensured that even though some vehicles are over 70 years old, each one has been painstakingly restored and works like a charm. All the vehicles displayed here belong to past rulers of Mewar. The semi-circular motor garage displays the entire collection of 23 stately and vintage models.



3 PRAY AT THE JAGDISH TEMPLE

■ This temple was built by Maharana Jagat Singh in 1651 A.D. and is dedicated to a form of Lord Vishnu, called Laxmi Narayan. Since I arrived in the evening here, I took the road through the market and 32 steps led me to the temple. It is a beautiful white structure with intricate carvings on pillars and is the largest temple in Udaipur. There are detailed carved pillars, decorated ceilings, painted walls and lush halls and the main spire is 79 feet high making it visible from afar. There are two big stone elephants on either side of the entrance as well as a brass image of Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu.



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4

GO BOATING AT PICHOLA LAKE

■ Easily the most beautiful and picturesque lake around, this is located in the heart of the city. Built by Pichhu Banjara in 1362, the best way to explore this lake and its sights is to hire a boat. The pristine lake is set against the backdrop of the lush green Aravalli hills and thus makes for a sight that is picture-perfect. It

also helps that the azure tones of the water are clean and well-maintained. The lake itself is surrounded by palaces, temples, bathing ghats and elevated hills. The beautiful Lake Palace right in the middle of the lake on an island appears like it is floating on the water. The other important landmark here is Jag Mandir that is located on another island here.



6

VISIT THE SAHELION KI BARI

■ Built by Rana Sangram Singh II in 1710, this is a

quaint ornamental garden laid out for the enjoyment of 48 women attendants who came as part of a princess' dowry. This is immaculately maintained with beautiful floral gardens, fountains, marble pavilions, kiosks, marble elephants and a delightful lotus pool. Sahelion ki Bari literally translates to Courtyard of the Maidens and houses a small museum as well. It is located on the banks of Fateh Sagar Lake.



5

EXPERIENCE RAJASTHANI HERITAGE AND ART

■ If you love art, you will lose your heart in

Rajasthan's vibrant culture and heritage. While in Udaipur, check out the very unique paintings introduced by the Mughals and reinterpreted by Indian artists in their signature style that is today called Rajput or Rajasthani miniatures. Characterised by minute details, strong lines, fine brush strokes and bold colours, they usually depict portraits, court scenes and hunting expeditions. The rich and varied folk culture is manifested in the classical music and dance performances. While I was here I witnessed the lovely Ghoomar dance (above) and was mesmerised by women clad in beautiful colourful clothes who would spin around like a top. The Dummy Horse Dance or Bhavai performed by balancing seven to nine brass pots on the head is also awe-inspiring.