

BUNDI

a map made by Zostel
for young travellers
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ZOSTEL



Khamma ghani, Bundi!

Khamma ghani! We're the Bundi Zpbus, and this is our town: squeezed into a gorge of the Aravallis, under a Star Fort and a painted palace that Kipling called the work of goblins. Bundi has more than fifty stepwells: take their steps down, never into the water. The Hada kings ruled Hadoti from here, and the town still speaks Hadauti. Count the 84 pillars, climb to Taragarh early with the langurs watching, eat katt bafja off a leaf plate, and come for Kajli Teej in the rains or Bundi Utsav in Kartik, when lamps float on Nawal Sagar. Then come home to our rooftop, facing the hills.



Stay with us in Bundi

One Zotel, on the main road opposite the Circuit House; 500 m from the bus stand, an auto from the railway station.



Zostel Bundi

On the main road opposite the Circuit House, a short walk from the bus stand; blue and gold rooms, a stage for evening performances and a rooftop café facing the Aravallis and their sunsets.

Maps: © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), data fetched 2026-10-13 (UTC) - Terrain: Terrain Tiles on AWS (Mapzen/Tilezen), from SRTM courtesy of NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey, Walk Lines routed by FOSSGIS OSRM on OpenStreetMap. Drawings: the Zostel brand's own. Things change: check the day's timings at the gate.

Practical tips

Getting in

Bundi's railway station is about 4 km south of the old town; Kota Junction, about 40 km away, has more trains, and buses run between the two regularly. Direct buses come from Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Ajmer, Chittorgarh, Sawai Madhopur and Delhi. The handiest airport is Jaipur, about 206 km away. We're on the main road opposite the Circuit House, a short walk from the bus stand.



5 minutes of history

Long before Older than the forts

Stone Age tools found round Bundi are between 5,000 and 200,000 years old, and rock paintings in the Hadoti hills go back to the Mesolithic.

13th or 14th century

The Hadas take the gorge Rao Deva of the Hada Chauhan takes Bundi from Jaits, its Meena chief, and the land round it becomes Hadoti, the country of the Hadas. The town's name is said to come from Bunda, a Meena chieftain.

1354

The Star Fort

Taragarh rises on the ridge above the town, with tunnels cut through the hill to slip out in a siege. Its great bastion, Bhim Burj, carried a cannon called Garbh Gunjan, 'Thunder from the Womb'.

1568

A treaty with Akbar

After the siege of Ranthambore, Rao Surjan Singh makes terms with the Mughals and keeps Bundi largely its own; the rulers become Rao Rajas.

1607 to 1631

A palace too hard to carve

Under Rao Ratan Singh the Garh Palace steps down the hill below the fort, in a green-tinged local stone so hard that the rulers painted the walls instead of carving them. Elephants hold up the Hathhi Pol.

1624

Kota goes its own way

The emperor Jahangir hands part of Bundi to a younger prince, and Kota becomes a state of its own. The two courts' painters keep one closely related style.

1683 and 1699

Eighty-four pillars and a queen's stepwell

Rao Raja Anirudh Singh raises the 84-pillared cenotaph in memory of Deva, of the family that nursed him. In 1699 his queen, Rani Nathavati, builds Raniji ki Baori, 46 metres deep.

18th century

The painted gallery

In Rao Raja Umed Singh's time the Chitrashala fills with murals: ragamalas, love stories, Krishna and Radha, court processions.

1818 to 1949

A princely state, then India

Bundi allies with the British in 1818 against the Marathas and stays a princely state through the Raj. Its last ruler signs the accession to India on 7 April 1949.

1887 and 1888

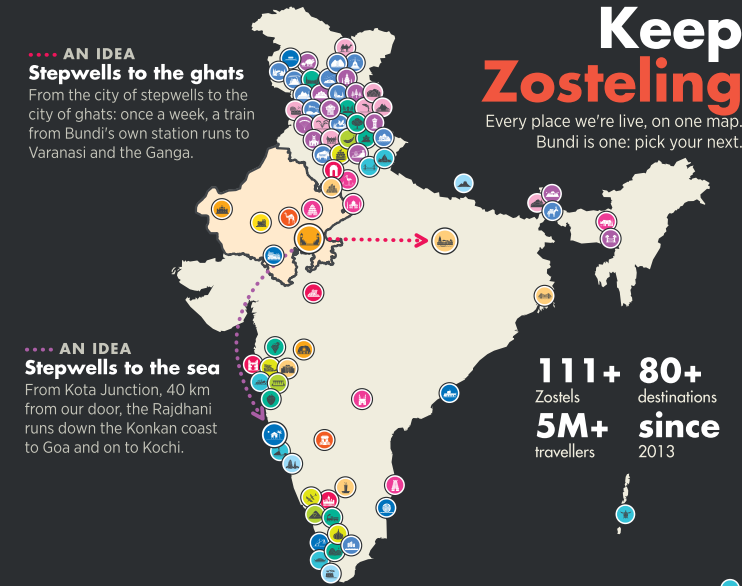
Kipling sleeps at Sukh Mahal

Rudyard Kipling arrives by tonga, is sent to the Sukh Mahal by the lake, and calls the palace 'the work of goblins more than of men'. Bundi is said to have fed his novel Kim.

Today

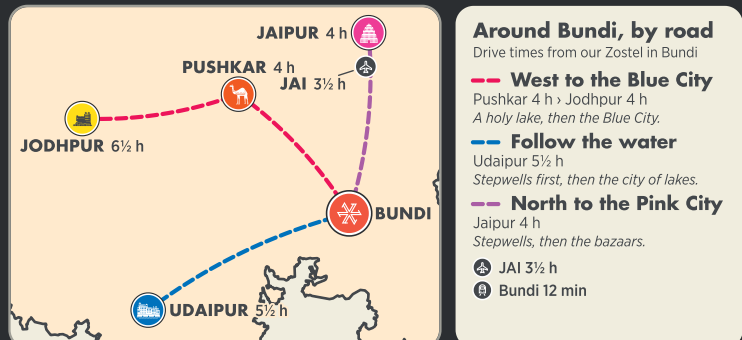
A festival and a tiger reserve

Bundi Utsav has filled the town every Kartik since the 1990s. In 2022 the forests to the north became the Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve, and tigers have been moved in.



Keep Zosteling

Every place we're live, on one map. Bundi is one; pick your next.



India and its states: DataMeet (CC BY 4.0), the Survey of India outline. Roads, airports, station: © OpenStreetMap contributors; drive times by FOSSGIS OSRM, scaled to Zostel's own published times (2026-10). Pins nudged apart where they crowd; edge pins point the way. Flights and trains change: check before you plan.

Getting around

The old town is made for walking, uphill to the palace and down to the stepwells. Autos cover the rest, and bicycles and motorbikes are for hire: wear the helmet. The lanes under the palace are narrow and steep: slow down.

When to come

October to March is the season. Summer is fierce, past 40 degrees. The monsoon, June to September, is short and lovely; the lakes and stepwells fill and the waterfalls run. Kajli Teej falls in Bhadra, August or September; Bundi Utsav in Kartik, usually November.

One ticket, three sights

A composite ticket covers the 84-pillared cenotaph, Sukh Mahal and Raniji ki Baori; the palace and Taragarh have their own, and a camera costs extra. Check the day's timings at the gate: they differ by sight and by day.

Money

UPI and cards work at our home; keep cash for the bazaar, the chai stalls and the autos. Bargaining is expected for paintings and crafts: start low, keep smiling.

The langurs and the monkeys

Taragarh and the palace belong to the monkeys as much as to anyone. Keep food zipped away, don't feed or touch them, and walk up in company, early, with water.

Stepwells, safely

Many of the fifty are free to enter; some are overgrown or locked, and their levels rise and fall with the water table. Stay on the dry steps, never in the water, and mind the edges: there are few railings.

Touts and friends

Ignore anyone in the street who offers to lead you round for a fee. Then sit down for a chai: the town is friendly, and most shopkeepers will talk for as long as you will.

Every number is a tip on the map overleaf, in the colour of its kind: Fifty Stepwells Deep: Tigers, Falls, Potters, Katt, Bafja, Repeat, Bangles and Brushes, Painted, Not Carved, Up Below the Langurs. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there:

Talk like a local

Khamma ghani

Hello, the warm Rajasthan one khum-maa gah-nee

Athee

Here, in Hadauti

ut-thee

Uthee

There, in Hadauti

oot-thee

Koine

No, in Hadauti

koi-nay

Avogo

Will come, in Hadauti

aa-vo-go

Baori

A stepwell: Bundi has over fifty

baa-oh-ree

Kund

A stepped water tank

koand

Sagar

Lake; literally, the sea

saa-gur

Pol

Gate, as in Hathhi Pol

pole

Chhattri

A domed memorial pavilion

chhut-tree

Eat like a Bundi local

Bundi eats Hadoti food: katt bafja for every occasion, panchkuta from the desert's dried pods and berries, gatte in yoghurt gravy, a mixed-flour bejad roti, and rabri malpua when it's time for something sweet. Then two chai shops facing each other in the old bazaar, and rooftops looking down into stepwells. The counters first, then the dishes to hunt down.

Krishna Chai Shop.

Every cup made fresh, the masala ground in on the spot; the walls are a guestbook from more than fifty countries.

"Shoes off, chai in hand, and leave one small line on the wall."

Sawariya Chai House.

Masala puffed in a mortar and pestle, across the road from Krishna's; drink one at each.

"Two chai shops, one road. Hase both, then argue."

The Lake View Restaurant.

Our guide's table by Nawal Sagar; paneer and cashew curry with the palace on the water.

"Late lunch by Nawal Sagar, the palace gold on the water."

The old town: stepwells, blue lanes and the painted palace

3.6 km • about 4 hours with stops • 6 stops

From the Chogan Gate's twin wells to Raniji ki Baori and Dhabhai Kund's upside-down pyramid, north through the blue lanes, under the Hathhi Pol's elephants into the palace and its painted Chitrashala, down to Nawal Sagar, back by Sadar Bazaar.



The stops

Nagar Sagar Kund

Look for two matching stepwells side by side, cut in pale stone and carved with sculptures

Raniji ki Baori

Look for ogree brackets on every archway, and stone elephants facing each other at the corners

Dhabhai Kund (Jail Kund)

Look for carved steps falling like an upside-down pyramid to the water, a carved gate at the top

The blue lanes of the old town

Look for the palace above, whenever a lane opens, and little stepwells tucked behind houses

Garh Palace (Bundi Palace)

Chhatra Mahal's elephant columns, Badal Mahal and the painted Chitrashala

Nawal Sagar

Look for the temple to Varuna, god of water, half under the surface in the middle

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Baori View Restaurant.

Our guide's rooftop over a stepwell, the fort behind it: curries, malai kofta and a paan shake.

"Dinner over a stepwell, the sun going down behind the fort."

A&R Cafe.

Cooked fresh, to order and to taste, near Surang Gate: the cashew curry and the stuffed tomatoes.

"Tell them how hot you like it, then wait. It's worth it."

Jay Cafe. A vegetarian thali in a family home below the palace, with a smoky aubergine dish and bassi.

"After the palace climb: a thali, then a lassi."

Rainbow Restaurant Cafe. Home-cooked food on a rooftop under the palace, veg and vegan, and sometimes a guitar at dinner.

"Poha in the morning, a thali at night, a guitar if you're lucky."

Haveli Braj Bhushanjee. Local vegetarian food in a traditional haveli: the lunch is a Rajasthan thali.

"A thali in an old haveli. Ask at the door first."

Mangi Lal Samosa Center.

Samosas hot from the oil, with chutney: the smell that fills Bundi's lanes.

"One samosa, then a second before the first is gone."

Meerup Corner Cafe & Restaurant. A thali with bafja, Hadoti's ghee-dipped wheat bread, and a proper dal baati.

"Bafja on a plate, ghee on the bafja. Ask if it's on today."

Dishes to hunt down

Katt bafja. Hadoti's own: round wheat bafjas, boiled, roasted golden and dipped in ghee, with katt, a barfi-like sweet of crumbled bread, ghee and jaggery, plus dal and kadhi, served on a pattal of leaves.

Panchkuta. Five dried things of the desert, ker berries, sagri beans, kumatiya, gundia and a sour fith, soaked, boiled and spiced; made the day before Basoda.

Gatte ki sabzi. Gram-flour dumplings in a yoghurt gravy: the kind of cooking a land short of water and fresh greens invents.

Bejad ki roti. A multigrain roti of wheat, jowar and gram flour, eaten with dal, kadhi or sabzi.

Dal and sev bhaji. Dal on one side; on the other, sev, thick gram-flour noodles, cooked into a saucy spiced sabzi.

Dal baati churma. Rajasthan's meal: lentil dal, hard-baked wheat baati, and churma of crushed wheat with ghee and sugar.

Rabri malpua. Small pancakes fried in ghee and soaked in syrup, under rabri, milk boiled down slowly till it thickens.

Samosa and kachori. The morning snack: samosas and kachoris fried at counters all over town, eaten hot with chutney.

Masala chai.

The old bazaar's ritual: chai made fresh with masala ground on the spot, in two shops that face each other.

Got a day to spare?

Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve.

North of town, India's 52nd tiger reserve since 2022: dhok forest, the Meji river, leopards and sloth bears, and tigers moved in. Book the safari with the forest department first; our home can help.

Bhimtal Falls. About 35 km out, a waterfall of about 150 feet drops into a pool in the Aravalli scrub, with an old temple beside it. Go in the rains or just after.

The Chambal, from Kota. About 50 km away, a boat on the Chambal through ravines and sandbanks: gharial, mugger crocodiles and migrating birds.

Theekarda. A short ride out, a village of potters who still shape and beat their pots by hand. The festival's village safari goes here too.

Menal. About 70 km south-west, past Bijolia on the Chittorgarh road: a gorge with a monsoon waterfall and a group of old carved temples on its lip.

Kanak Sagar, Dugarli. A wide lake by Dugarli village, north-west of Bundi, known for its migrating birds. Go in the cool months.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

Bundi Utsav (Kartik).

Three days in November: processions of dressed-up camels, horses and elephants, folk music and dance at the 84 pillars, turban-tying and moustache contests, and Deepdan, when lamps float out on Nawal Sagar. In 2026: 27 to 29 November.

Kajli Teej (Bhadra).

Bundi keeps its Teej in Bhadra, later than the rest of Rajasthan: a procession through the bazaars, women in their best with henna on their hands, a fair of bangles and paintings, and ghevar everywhere.

Kartik Purnima at Keshoripaipatan.

The full moon of Kartik brings a fair of more than a lakh of people to the temple town on the Chambal, in the district.

Fifty stepwells and counting

More than fifty. Bundi has over fifty stepwells, dug against drought and used as the town's meeting places. Many fell into disrepair under the Raj; a few are restored.

Fed by the lake.

Nawal Sagar raises the water table under the old town, and the wells rise and fall with it.

Raniji ki Baori.

The queen's stepwell of 1699: a narrow gate on four pillars, then steps falling 46 metres through carved arches, stone elephants facing each other in the corners.

Dhabhai Kund.

Also called 'Jail Kund', an upside-down pyramid of carved steps falling to the water.

Nagar Sagar Kund.

Twin stepwells by the Chogan Gate, built in the 1870s to see the town through famines, and restored.

Painted, not carved

Too hard to carve.

The palace's green-tinged local stone wouldn't take fine carving, so the Hada rulers covered walls and ceilings in paint instead.

The Chitrashala. A courtyard gallery of murals: ragamalas, love stories and court processions, in Bundi's blues and greens.

A school of its own. A ragamala of 1591, probably painted for Bundi's royal family, set the town's style: a painter of elephants and huns, known only as the Hada Master, took it to Kota.

Still painting.

Painters in the old town still work in the Bundi style, and Bundi Utsav holds a painting workshop at Sukh Mahal.

Langurs, rollers and gharials

Grey langurs.

Black faces and long tails on Taragarh's walls. Watch, never feed, never touch.

The Indian roller.

A brownish bird on a wire, until it flies and flashes bright blue.

In the reserve.

Leopards, sloth bears, wolves, hyenas, chinkara and nilgai live in the dhok forest north of town.

On the lake.

Jait Sagar holds resident and migrating birds among its lotuses.

In the river.

Gharial and mugger crocodiles bask on the Chambal's sandbanks.

Only in Bundi

Teej, but later.

The rest of Rajasthan keeps Teej in Shravan; Bundi keeps Kajli Teej in Bhadra.

A temple half under water.

In the middle of Nawal Sagar stands a temple to Varuna, the god of water, half sunk in the lake.

Jammed into a gorge.

The town fills a narrow V-shaped defile in the Aravallis, so most of it can only be seen from the palace.

A crack in India.

At nearby Satur, the Great Boundary Fault is a National Geological Monument.

Painted by prisoners.

Phool Sagar's palace has paintings made by Italian prisoners of war. It's private: see it from the road.

Hadoti on a plate

Bafja, how. Wheat dough with buttermilk, fennel, coriander and ajwain, rolled into balls, boiled, then roasted till golden and dipped in ghee.

Katt, how. Unsalted bread crumbled with ghee and jaggery or sugar, set on a tray, topped with dry fruit, cut in squares.

On a pattal. Katt bafja is served on a pattal, a plate of leaves, and made by cooks known as Pandits.

Panchkuta. Kier, sangri, kumatiya and their cousins, dried in the sun, soaked overnight, boiled, then spiced.

Before Basoda. Panchkuta is made the day before Basoda, Sheetal Ashtami.

Gatte.

Gram-flour dumplings in a yoghurt gravy; the royal version is stuffed with mawa and dry fruit.

Bejad roti.

Wheat, jowar and gram flour in one dough: a roti that fills you up for the walk.

Rabri.

Milk boiled down slowly in a wide pan till it's thick and sweet, with the layers of cream folded back in.

Markets by

QUESTS

Dares for the brave and the curious. The map marks each with a star; tick them off as you go.

- 5** Say khamma ghani before you ask anything. The Rajasthanis hello; the answer is ghani ghani khamma. Try it at the chai stall and the auto stand, then ask how Bundi says it.
- 4** Find five stepwells in a day. Bundi has more than fifty, most tucked between houses. Raniji ki Baori, Nagar Sagar Kund and Dhabhai Kund are the easy three; find two more on your own.
- 4** Find the stone elephants facing each other. The queen's stepwell drops 46 metres through carved arches, and stone elephants guard its corners. Frame a pair from the stairs.
- 26** Count all 84 pillars. Elephants and deer are carved on them. Count once going round, once going back, and see if you agree with yourself.
- 13** Look down an upside-down pyramid. Dhabhai Kund is an inverted pyramid of carved steps falling to the water. Stand at the rim and follow the lines down.

- 20** Walk in under the elephants' trunks. Two stone elephants with raised trunks stand over the palace's main gate, the Hathi Pol. Look up as you pass.
- 20** Find a royal procession in the murals. The Chitrashala's walls are covered in ragamalas, love stories and court processions, in Bundi's blues and greens. Find the elephants, then the king.
- 20** Find the palace where clouds came indoors. Basal Mahal, the Palace of Clouds, sits highest in the palace; the story goes that monsoon clouds drifted through its courtyards. Come in the rains and see.
- 21** Beat the heat up to the Star Fort. From the palace it's a short, steep climb to Taragarh, with the whole blue town below. Go early, with water and company.
- 23** Stand where Thunder from the Womb stood. Taragarh's great bastion carried a cannon named Garbh Gunjan, said to stir the stomach of anyone who heard it fire.
- 8** Read Kipling where Kipling slept. Kipling was put up at Sukh Mahal on Jait Sagar and wrote the town up in his Letters of Marque. Read a page by the water.

- 24** Find Jait Sagar's lotuses. The lake fills with lotuses in the monsoon and through the winter. Machines once tried to clear them; the lotuses won.
- 5** Eat katt bafra off a leaf plate. Boiled, roasted wheat bafra dipped in ghee, with katt, a sweet crumble set like barfi, served on a pattal. Hadoti's own.
- 5** Order rabri malpua, then another. Fried sweet pancakes soaked in syrup, under thickened milk. On every list of what to eat in Bundi.
- 15** Watch the lamps float out on Nawal Sagar. On Bundi Utsav's Deepdan night thousands of earthen lamps go out on the lake; folk music plays at the 84 pillars.

REACHING US

On the main road, opposite the Circuit House
Zostel Bundi. On the main road opposite the Circuit House, a short walk from the bus stand; blue and gold rooms, a stage for evening performances and a rooftop café facing the Aravallis and their sunsets.

FIFTY STEPWELLS DEEP

- 2** Twin stepwells in the middle of traffic. Nagar Sagar Kund. Two matching stepwells side by side by the Chogan Gate, carved in pale stone and built to see the town through dry years. Most people walk straight past. Stop at the railing, look down the carved steps, then turn round to the liveliest corner of the bazaar.
- 4** Forty-six metres down, past stone elephants. Raniji ki Baori. Built in 1699 by Rani Nathavati, and 46 metres deep: storey after storey of carved arches, stone elephants facing each other at the corners. Walk down slowly, look up from every landing, stay on the steps. One ticket covers the cenotaph and Sukh Mahal too.
- 6** Bundi went blue before it went viral. The blue lanes of the old town. Inside the old gates the houses are washed blue, said to keep them cool, and the lanes twist uphill to the palace past havelis and hidden stepwells. Get lost on purpose between Chogan Gate and the palace road; ask before photographing anyone at their door.

- 7** The painted stepwell behind a locked gate. Bhawalal Baori. One of the old shaped, behind a painted entrance of fish and birds, with pink walls, a carved gate and an old inscription. Often locked; if it is, look through the gate. If someone has the key, ask politely.
- 8** Where Kipling stayed, by the water. Sukh Mahal. A small summer palace on the dam at Jait Sagar's southern tip, built in the late 18th century. Kipling stayed here, and Bundi says it fed him. A state museum now, on the same ticket as Raniji ki Baori. Sit on the terrace over the water.
- 12** A working stepwell near home. Nahar Dhooos ki Baori. A few lanes from the Zostel, a stepwell in better shape than most because it's still in use: a religious group gathers here. Walk in quietly, shoes off if others are, keep to the edges, and ask before any photographs.
- 13** A kund like an upside-down pyramid. Dhabhai Kund (Jait Kund). A big kund, shaped like an upside-down pyramid, carved steps leading down to the water. Also called the Jait Kund, and much quieter than Raniji ki Baori. Come when the light is low and the shadows long; keep to the upper steps.

- 14** An old gate in the town wall. Lanka Gate. A weathered Rajput-style gate in Bundi's old town wall, at the end of Lanka Gate Road, a local landmark, not a sight, so no ticket and no crowd. Walk through it on a loop north to Raniji ki Baori, with Dhabhai Kund close by.
- 16** The lake with a temple half underwater. Nawal Sagar. A square, man-made lake below the palace, dotted with islands, a temple to Varuna half under the water in the middle. It feeds the old town's stepwells. Walk its edge in the late light, when the palace glows above it.
- 18** Said to be the oldest, easy to miss. Laxminath temple. Said to be Bundi's oldest temple, to Lakshmi, hidden behind the bazaar stalls on the road to the palace. Next door, the painted Charhuja Nath temple, whose four-armed Vishnu came from Ranthambore in 1569. Shoes off at both doors.
- 20** Built by goblins, Kipling thought. Garh Palace (Bundi Palace). Palace on palace up the hillside, in a green-tinted local stone, added by the Hada rulers over the centuries. Kipling thought it the work of goblins more than of men. Steep cobbles in: proper shoes, water, and the day's timings at the gate.

- 22** The Star Fort, run wild on the ridge. Taragarh (Star Fort). The Star Fort crowns the ridge above the palace: 14th-century, overgrown, with crumbling pavilions and rain-fed tanks. You go for the view of the blue town and the lake. Go in the morning, carry water, and keep food zipped away from the monkeys.
- 23** Home of the Thunder from the Womb. Bhim Buri. Taragarh's great bastion, built to store arms and carry a cannon called Garbh Gunjan, 'Thunder from the Womb'. Now one of the best platforms for looking down on the palace, the blue town and the lake. Rough, unfenced paths: watch your feet.
- 24** Hills on three sides, lotus in season. Jait Sagar. A lake in a fold of hills north of town, Sukh Mahal at one end and the royal cenotaphs beyond. Known for its lotus in the monsoon and winter, and for quiet. Walk or cycle its road early; come after the rains.
- 26** Eighty-four pillars, try counting them. 84-Pillared Cenotaph (Chaurasi Khambon ki Chhatra). Commissioned in 1683 by Rao Raja Anand Singh for Deva, of the family of the wet nurse who raised him: 84 carved pillars under one canopy, with elephants, deer and dancers. A short walk from the Zostel. Try counting the pillars; nobody gets 84.

- 29** The flower queen's lake palace. Phool Sagar. A 17th-century lake palace about 5 km north-west, built by Queen Phool Mata and named after her: the Flower's Sea. Rajput and European ideas, a kund, a chhatra in the middle. Private, so enjoy the lake and the outline from the road.

TIGERS, FALLS, POTTERS

- 10** A forest trail above Jait Sagar. Mandhata Balaji temple, Tiger Hill. A short walk uphill from Sukh Mahal, a Hanuman temple on Tiger Hill looks over Jait Sagar and the town. The trail runs through a forest reserve: stay on the path. Busy at a four-day fair round New Year; check access locally.
- 21** Beat the heat and the monkeys. The Taragarh hike, early. From the palace ticket counter, a path past the Hathi Pol climbs about 450 m to Taragarh. Start when the gate opens; by afternoon the ridge is brutal. Carry water, keep snacks zipped away; don't feed the monkeys, and walk on calmly.

- 25** A hilltop temple with two ways up. Chauth Mata temple, Banganga Hill. On Banganga Hill, a short drive out, set up by a Hada king too old to travel to the Chauth Mata temple at Chauth Ka Barwara, so he brought a replica of its image home. Climb the stairs rather than drive; busiest at Karwa Chauth.
- 27** India's 52nd tiger reserve, next door. Ranganath Vishdhar Tiger Reserve. India's 52nd tiger reserve since May 2022, about 1,500 sq km of dhok forest, mostly in Bundi district, between Ranthambore and Mukundra Hills: leopard, sloth bear, sambar. The gate is a drive away; book the safari and the permission first. Season: September to May.

KATT, BAFRA, REPEAT

- 1** Bundi's cheap, hot, crunchy answer. Mangi Lal Samosa Center. A vegetarian snack counter in the hospital area, listed for one thing: samosas hot from the oil, cheap enough for a second. Bundi's lanes smell of them. Tear a corner, let the steam out, add chutney.
- 17** Lunch with Nawal Sagar at your elbow. The Lake View Restaurant. Our guide's table by Nawal Sagar, the town's lake, with the palace and Taragarh above it. North Indian and international plates; paneer and cashew curry under the trees. Come late in the afternoon, when the palace turns gold on the water.

- 19** Home cooking, worth the wait. A&R Cafe. A family kitchen near Surang Gate, named on our Bundi page. No grand menu: they cook fresh, to order and to your taste. Diners come back for the cashew curry and stuffed tomatoes. Bring patience and an appetite.

BANGLES AND BRUSHES

- 5** The old town's main street. Sadar Bazaar. The road from the palace side into central Bundi, the old town's main street, with two famous chai shops facing each other. Walk it in the afternoon and stop at every chance. The bangle street and Nagar Kund's market are close by.

- 9** A whole street of bangles. Chuddi Bazaar. Chuddi means bangle, and this old-town street carries the trade's name. Lac bangles are still made in Bundi, by a women's self-help group for one: ask for the lac ones. Hold out your hand and let the seller size you.

PAINTED, NOT CARVED

- 3** Bundi's own Teej, later than the rest. Kajli Teej. On the third day of Bhadra, in August or early September, the goddess Teej rides through town in a decorated palanquin with elephants, camels and bands, opening a fair of folk performances. Monsoon green, the stepwells full. Check the year's dates.

- 15** Three days, lamps on the lake. Bundi Utsav. Three days in November, run by Rajasthan Tourism since 1996: a procession of decorated camels, horses and elephants, folk music at the cenotaph, katt bafra, turban-tying and moustache contests, and earthen lamps floating on Nawal Sagar. Check the year's dates.

UP BEFORE THE LANGURS

- 11** Five minutes' walk from home. Bundi bus stand (RSRTC). About 500 m from the Zostel, a quick taxi, auto or shared ride in. Direct trains to Delhi overnight, Kota in about an hour, Sawai Madhopur, Chittorgarh and Udaipur. Agree the auto fare before you load your bag.

Bundi

Every number is a tip around the map, in its colour. Every star is a quest.

