JODHPUR

a map made by Zostel for young travellers

FREE MAP · RAJASTHAN

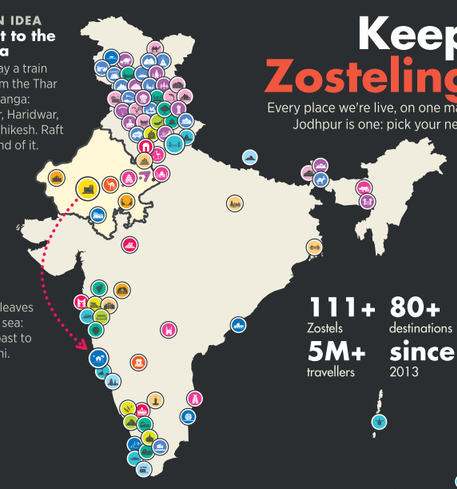


LIVE IT. NOW

ZOSTEL

AN IDEA
Desert to the Ganga
Every day a train runs from the Thar to the Ganga: Jodhpur, Haridwar, then Rishikesh. Raft at the end of it.

AN IDEA
Desert to sea
Once a week a train leaves the Blue City for the sea: down the Konkan coast to Goa, then on to Kochi.



Keep Zosteling

Every place we're live, on one map. Jodhpur is one: pick your next.

111+ Zostels · **80+** destinations · **5M+** travellers · **since** 2013



Around Jodhpur, by road

Drive times from our Zostels in Jodhpur

Ride into the Thar
Jaisalmer 4½ h
On to a fort people still live in.

Cross to the lakes
Udaipur 4½ h
A marble temple, a long wall, then the lakes.

On to the Pink City
Pushkar 3½ h › Jaipur 3 h
A holy lake, then the Pink City.

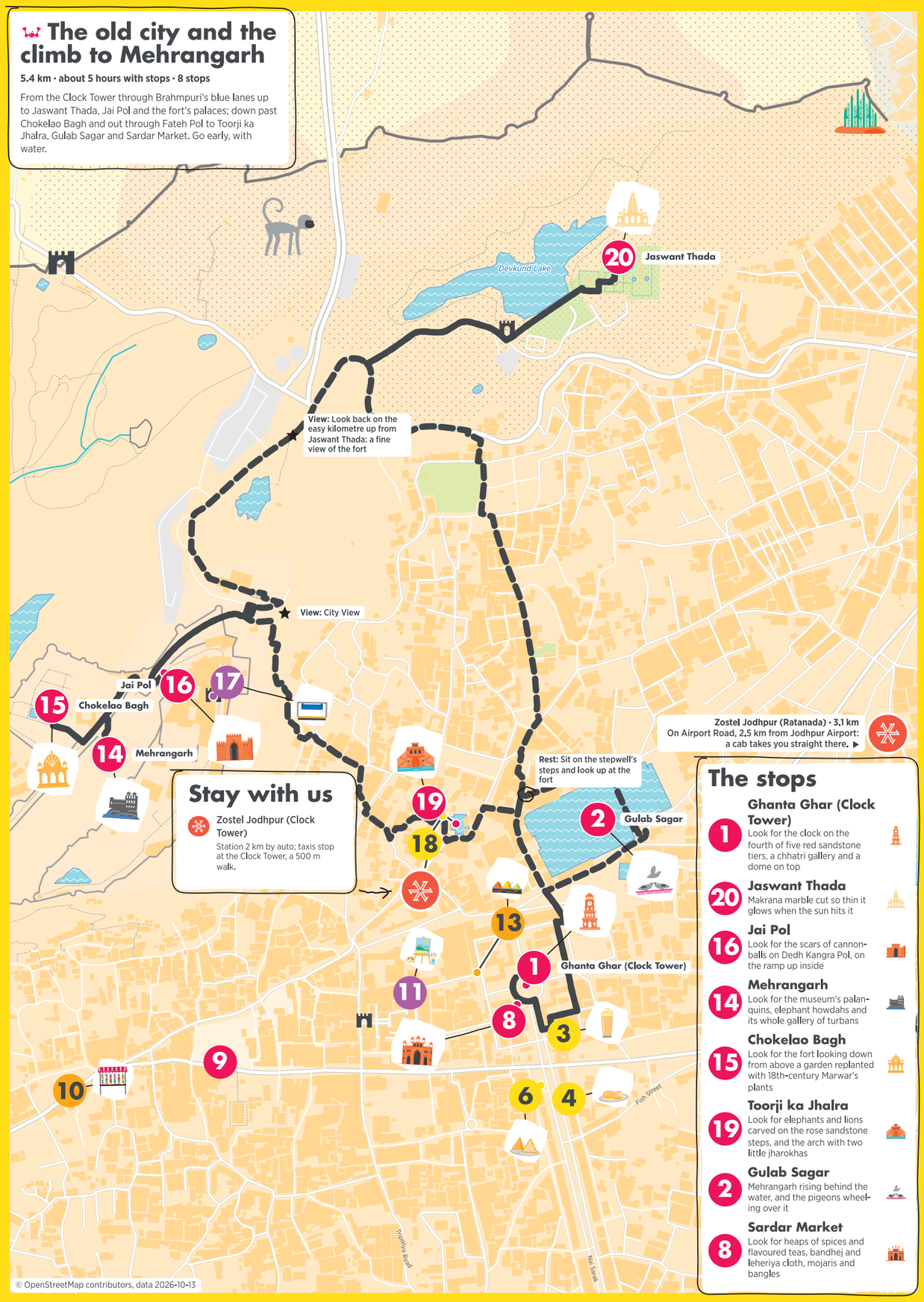
JDH 5 min, KQH 4 h
Jodhpur 1.6 km

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.

The old city and the climb to Mehrangarh

5.4 km · about 5 hours with stops · 8 stops

From the Clock Tower through Brahmpuri's blue lanes up to Jaswant Thada, Jai Pol and the fort's palaces; down past Chokelao Bagh and out through Fateh Pol to Toorji ka Jhalra, Gulab Sagar and Sardar Market. Go early, with water.



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The stops

1 **Ghanta Ghar (Clock Tower)** — Look for the clock on the fourth of five red sandstone tiers, a chhatri gallery and a dome on top
20 **Jaswant Thada** — Makrana marble cut so thin it glows when the sun hits it
16 **Jai Pol** — Look for the scars of cannonballs on Dedh Kangra Pol, on the ramp up inside
14 **Mehrangarh** — Look for the museum's palanquins, elephant howdahs and its whole gallery of turbans
15 **Chokelao Bagh** — Look for the fort looking down from above a garden replanted with 18th-century Marwar's plants
19 **Toorji ka Jhalra** — Look for elephants and lions carved on the rose sandstone steps, and the arch with two little jharokhas
2 **Gulab Sagar** — Mehrangarh rising behind the water, and the pigeons wheeling over it
8 **Sardar Market** — Look for heaps of spices and flavoured teas, bandhej and leheriya cloth, mojaris and bangles

Khamma ghani, Jodhpur!

Khamma ghani! We're the Jodhpur Zobus, and this is where Zobu was born, in the very first Zostel, in 2013. Rao Jodha set his fort on a bare rock in 1459, and Mehrangarh still rises over the old town; under it, the lanes of Brahmpuri are washed in blue. Climb to the ramparts in the cool of the morning, then come down for a mirchi bada and a makhaniya lassi by the Clock Tower. Bargain in Sardar Market, sit by a stepwell, ride out to the Bishnoi villages where blackbuck graze, and come in October for folk music under the full moon. Two homes wait: one in the lanes by Toorji ka Jhalra, one in Ratanada.

Stay with us in Jodhpur

Two homes: Zostel Jodhpur (Clock Tower) in the lanes by Toorji ka Jhalra, the fort over its rooftop, and Zostel Jodhpur (Ratanada), a haveli-style home with a pool.

Zostel Jodhpur (Clock Tower)

In Makrana Mohalla's lanes, a couple of minutes from Toorji ka Jhalra, looking straight up at Mehrangarh. Graffiti, traditional decor, dorms and private rooms, a rooftop with the Blue City in view. Taxis drop you at the Clock Tower: a 500 m walk.

Zostel Jodhpur (Ratanada)

A haveli-inspired house on Ratanada's Airport Road, 2.5 km from the airport: two beagles at the door, a pool table and board games, a swimming pool, a bonfire under the stars, workstations. Dorms and private rooms; Umaid Bhawan and the fort a short ride.

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

The airport is south of town, about 2.5 km from our Ratanada home and 6.5 km from the Clock Tower. Jodhpur Junction, the main station, is about 2 km from the Clock Tower and the main bus stand about 1.5 km; autos and cabs wait outside both. A cab drops you at the Clock Tower: our home there is a short walk into the lanes.

Getting around

Walk the old city: its lanes are too narrow for most cars. Autos have no meters, so agree the fare before you get in. Ride apps work across the city, but not inside the old town. Lanes are shared with scooters and cows: keep to the edge.

When to come

November to February is the pleasant season; January nights can touch freezing. October and March are good too, and October brings the folk festival. From April the desert heat sets in, and the monsoon from June to September is short and light.

The heat

April, May and June routinely pass 40 °C. Climb to the fort early, rest in the middle of the day, cover your head and carry water; refill at our homes' water dispensers rather than buying plastic.

Up to the fort

Mehrangarh sits on a cliff over the old town. The road and ramps up from the blue lanes are steep and the gates come one after another: wear proper shoes and go early. Visitors report a lift inside the fort, from the entrance up; check at the gate. Jaswant Thada is about 1 km downhill, an easy walk.

Money

UPI and cards work at both our homes. Keep small cash for autos, street food and the bazaar, and draw it before you head out to the villages. Bargaining is normal in the markets: start low, keep smiling.

Touts and commission shops

Round the Clock Tower, auto drivers and friendly strangers may steer you to a particular shop: they earn a commission on what you buy, and you pay for it. Choose shops yourself. A cup of chai while you browse is hospitality, not a trap. Even the famous omelette stall has copies claiming to be the real one.

Every number is a tip on the map overleaf, in the colour of its kind:
Climb, Then Gaze · Lakes, Rock and Desert · Mirchi Bada Mornings · Bargain by the Clock · Folk Under the Full Moon · Where Zobu Was Born. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there:

The lanes at night

Jodhpur is comparatively safe, but the blue lanes are a maze, and quieter and darker late. Go with a friend after dark, keep a map offline, and use the fort on its rock as your compass. Ask at our desk for the way back.

Dress and respect

Dress modestly in the old town: shoulders and knees covered helps everyone, and women travellers report less hassle. At temples, mosques and cenotaphs, take your shoes off where asked and ask before you photograph anyone.

On the road

Buy train and bus tickets only at the counters or online, never from a tout promising a seat. On long rides, say a polite no to snacks or tea from strangers, however kind.

5 minutes of history

Before 1459
Mandore first
Nine kilometres north, Mandore was the seat of the Pratiharas from the 6th century, then the Rathores' capital, until Rao Jodha moved it to a rock of his own.

1459
A fort on the mountain of birds
Rao Jodha lays Mehrangarh's foundation in May 1459 on Bhakurcheeria, 'the mountain of birds', about 120 m over the plain. The new city takes his name.

1544
A handful of millet
Sher Shah Suri beats Marwar's army at Sammel and takes Jodhpur, at such a cost he is said to have remarked he almost lost an empire for a handful of millet. Rao Maldeo is back within a year.

1580s
Marwar under Akbar
After Rao Chandrasen dies in 1581, Akbar annexes the kingdom. Marwar becomes a Mughal vassal that runs its own affairs, and Mughal touches enter its buildings.

1679 to 1707
Thirty years for a throne
When Maharaja Jaswant Singh dies, Aurangzeb takes the state. Durgadas Rathore keeps the young Ajit Singh's cause alive for decades, and Ajit Singh is restored in 1707; Mehrangarh's Fateh Pol marks the victory.

1730
Khejarli's trees
Soldiers come to fell khejri trees at Khejarli for the Maharaja. Amrita Devi, a Bishnoi woman, holds on to a tree; she, her daughters and 363 Bishnois in all are killed. The felling is called off and the village protected for good.

1899 to 1906
Marble that glows
Maharaja Sardar Singh raises Jaswant Thada below the fort for his father, Jaswant Singh II, in sheets of Makrana marble thin enough to glow in the sun. In 1910 his Clock Tower gets its clock.

1929 to 1943
A palace built for work
After drought and famine in the 1920s, Umaid Bhawan rises slowly on Chittar hill to give farmers work: ground broken in 1929, finished in 1943. It is a home, a hotel and a museum now.

1949
Marwar joins Rajasthan
Maharaja Hanwant Singh signs the accession to India in August 1947, and on 30 March 1949 Jodhpur becomes part of the new state of Rajasthan.

2007
Folk music on the fort
The Rajasthan International Folk Festival opens at Mehrangarh in October 2007, timed to Sharad Purnima, the year's brightest full moon. Some 250 musicians and artists come each year.

Talk like a local

Khamma ghani
Hello, the warm Marwari one
khum-maa gah-nee

Ghani ghani khamma
The reply to it
gah-nee gah-nee khum-maa

Ram Ram sa
Hello, the everyday one; sa adds respect
raam raam saa

Padharo sa
Please come in, welcome
puh-dhaa-ro saa

Padharo mhare des
Welcome to my land
puh-dhaa-ro mhaa-ray days

Aap kaiso ho?
How are you?
aap kai-so ho

Hoon thik hoon
I'm fine
hoon theek hoon

Taaro naam su hai?
What's your name?
taa-ro naam soo hai

Maaf karo
Sorry, forgive me
maaf kuh-ro

Haan / Na
Yes / No
haan / naa

Pol
A gate: Jai Pol, Fateh Pol, Suraj Pol
pole

Jhalra
A stepwell, like Toorji's
jhaal-raa

Eat like a Jodhpur local

Jodhpur eats fried, spiced and very sweet, and it eats on its feet. Chai and mirchi bada to start the day, mawa kachori at breakfast, makhaniya lassi by the Clock Tower, gulab jamun in a curry for lunch, laal maas for the meat-eaters, an omelette at Sardar Market's gate at any hour. The old counters first, then the dishes to hunt down.

3 Shri Mishrilal Hotel. Our own guide's makhaniya lassi: hung curd with kewra, saffron and cardamom, fresh butter on top, poured here for generations.
"Makhaniya lassi by the Ghanta Ghar. Take the spoon, and take your time."

8 The Omelette Shop. At Sardar Market's gate: omelettes made fresh in front of you, thousands of eggs a day by one count.
"Masala omelette at the market gate. Eat it standing, like everyone."

6 Shahi Samosa. Our own guide's samosa: big, spiced, a piece of cashew in the potato, with tamarind chutney.
"Find the samosa by the queue on Nai Sarak. Join it."

4 Janta Sweet Home. Our own guide's mawa kachori, stuffed with mawa and dry fruit and soaked in syrup; pyaaz kachori and mirchi bada beside it.
"One mawa kachori, one pyaaz kachori, and Nai Sarak's morning begins."

27 Surya Namkeen. Mirchi bada with a slice of white bread, by Jalori Gate.
"Mirchi bada by Jalori Gate. Hold the bread; you'll need it."

Mohanji Mithai Wala. Our own guide's rabri laddoo, and the food writers' rabri ghewar, the honeycomb sweet under thick milk.
"Rabri on the laddoo, rabri on the ghewar. Inside Jalori Gate, that's normal."

Vijay Restaurant. Our own guide's malai roti with gulab jamun ki sabzi, sweet jamuns in a spiced gravy; the Jodhpuri kabuli too.
"Gulab jamun in a curry, near the Achalnath temple. Trust Aada Bazaar."

Chaturbhuj Rameshchand. Gulab jamun of khoya, warm in syrup, and kalakand and gujiya, in the lane between Girdikot and Tripolia.
"A warm gulab jamun in Pungalpara, then a box of kalakand for the road."

32 Gypsy. A thali popular with locals, about thirty-five dishes by one count, with ker sangri and gatte ki sabzi.
"Upstairs in Sardarpura, a tray of thirty-odd bowls. Pace yourself."

Gulab Halwa Wala. Our own guide's gulab halwa: milk simmered deep red, no rose in it, named after the man who made it first.
"Gulab halwa in Sardarpura: no roses, all milk. Buy the box."

Dishes to hunt down

27 Mirchi bada. Jodhpur's own snack: a fat green chilli stuffed with spiced potato, dipped in gram-flour batter and fried golden, often in a slice of bread. Our guide's way to start the day, with chai.

4 Pyaaz kachori. A crisp, flaky pastry filled with spiced onion, born in Jodhpur and now eaten all over India, with a sweet and hot tamarind chutney.

4 Mawa kachori. The sweet kachori, Jodhpur's speciality: stuffed with mawa and dry fruits, fried, then soaked in sugar syrup.

3 Makhaniya lassi. Hung curd, sweetened and flavoured with kewra, saffron and cardamom, topped with fresh butter. Food writers place its birth at the Ghanta Ghar.

6 Shahi samosa. Jodhpur's big samosa, spiced potato with a piece of cashew, which food walkers say makes it royal; tamarind chutney on the side.

Gulab jamun ki sabzi. Fried khoya gulab jamuns cooked in a spiced curry instead of syrup, eaten with a sweet malai roti. Odd on paper, right on the plate.

32 Ker sangri. The desert's own vegetables: sangri pods of the khejri tree and sour ker berries, sun-dried, soaked and cooked with yoghurt and red chilli, eaten with bajra roti.

Rabdi ghewar. A honeycomb disc of ghee, flour and syrup under a layer of rabdi, milk cooked down slow. Jodhpur is famous for it; its season is Shravan, the monsoon month of Teej.

Chai with mathri. Our guide's pair: a glass of chai with mathri, the flaky Rajasthani biscuit of flour and carom seed made to keep for days.

Laal maas. Rajasthan's red mutton curry, once cooked on royal hunts: yoghurt, garlic and Jodhpur's own Mathania red chillies, very hot, with wheat or bajra roti.

Tie-dye, leather, the bandhgala and the breeches

Embroidered leather. Belts, bags, bracelets and shoes, the leather stitched in colour: the city's own style.

The Jodhpuri coat. The bandhgala, the high-collared coat born in the princely state of Jodhpur; the city also gave its name to riding breeches.

Jodhpur these days

Rooftop cafés facing the fort, a film crew's favourite rock, and a desert park grown back.

Where Zostel began. The first Zostel opened here in August 2013. Zobu was born here too.

Rooftops facing the fort. The old town's roofs turn into cafés, each claiming the best view of Mehrangarh. Come at sunset and judge.

14 A fort on film. Mehrangarh has been a set for The Jungle Book, a Batman film and more, and a studio for an album recorded inside its walls.

30 A desert grown back. Below the fort, since 2006, the Rock Park has brought back some 250 of the Thar's own plants on bare volcanic rock.

17 The folk festival. Every October, since 2007, folk music fills the fort for the year's brightest full moon.

Work in the Sun City. Our Ratanada home has workstations, a pool and a bonfire for the evening: bring the laptop.

Good to know

Maha Mandir, on 84 pillars. North of the old wall, Maha Mandir is an early 19th-century Shiva temple on 84 carved pillars, worked with yoga postures and flowers, its murals of Nath yogis a nod to Maharaja Man Singh's devotion. Shoes off, and ask before photos.

The Dussehra that mourns Ravana. While effigies burn across India on Dussehra, some Shrimali Brahmin families in Jodhpur mourn Ravana as their ancestor; Mandore is held to be the home of Mandodari, his queen, and the city even has a Ravana temple. A different Dussehra: watch quietly.

Jaswant Thada, the Rock Park and the lakes behind the fort

3.6 km · about 3 hours

At sunrise from Jaswant Thada's marble up to the Rock Park's gate and a short trail over volcanic rock, round the fort's west side to the twin lakes of Ranisar and Padamsar, then down through Fateh Pol to Toorji ka Jhalra for breakfast.

20 30 29 19

5 Bandhani and leheriya. Cloth tied and dyed in dots, or in waves: Nai Sarak for bandhani by the metre, Sarafa Bazaar for leheriya.

7 Mojaris. Pointed, embroidered slippers by the hundred in Mochi Bazaar, the cobblers' market. Walk in them before you pay.

The bandhgala. The closed-neck coat Jodhpur's court made famous, cut short and fitted for riding; still worn for formal days across India.

Jodhpurs. A prince of Jodhpur took his polo team's riding breeches to England in 1897, and the world named them after the city. Tailors here stitch a pair in a day.

Wood, iron and 'antiques'. Jodhpur is one of India's great furniture and handicraft towns, and much of it is made to look old. Love it for the craft; don't pay for the age.

13 Spices and tea. Heaps of chilli, cumin and tea round the Clock Tower: buy it loose, smell it first.

Food from the desert larder

Sangri, the khejri's pod. Picked green and unripe in spring, then sun-dried and stored: the pod of the khejri, Rajasthan's state tree.

Ker, the desert caper. A small sour berry of the kair shrub, dried, then soaked back to life before it is cooked.

Panchkuta. Five dried things in one pot: ker, sangri, kumatiya, gunda and kachri. It keeps without cold, so it travels.

13 Mathania chillies. The red chilli of Mathania, a village in Jodhpur district: the heat in laal maas, sold by the sack round the Clock Tower.

Food that keeps. Water was scarce and greens few, so Rajasthan cooked food that lasts for days and eats cold: mathri, dried pods, pickles.

Bajra roti and ghee. Millet roti with ghee or butter is what ker sangri and panchkuta are eaten with.

Got a day to spare?

Luni and the weavers. South of the city, Luni is a base for village safaris; nearby Salawas weaves dhurries and Kankani prints the block cloth Jodhpur is known for.

38 Mandore. About 9 km north, the capital before Jodhpur: gardens of royal cenotaphs, a Hall of Heroes carved from one rock, and a temple to 33 crore gods.

39 Bishnoi villages and Guda. South-east, the villages of a people who have guarded trees and animals for five centuries: blackbuck and chinkara in the fields, mud houses that stay cool, cranes on Guda's lake in the cooler months. Ask at the desk about a village safari.

39 Khejarli. South-east of the city, where Amrita Devi and 363 Bishnois gave their lives for the khejri trees in 1730. 363 trees stand round its temple now.

38 Osian. About 65 km north, an oasis town of 8th- to 12th-century Hindu and Jain temples, with dunes at its edge for a jeep ride out.

40 The Bullet Baba shrine. About 50 km down the Pali road, travellers stop at a shrine whose idol is a motorbike. The story says the police kept taking it away, and it kept coming back.

Jaisalmer, next. Not a day out: a stop of its own. From Jodhpur, the road west to Jaisalmer's fort and our Zostel there takes three and a half to four hours.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

Marwar Festival (Ashwin, September or October). Two days around Sharad Purnima, first called the Maand festival for the songs of Marwar's heroes: music at the fort, Umaid Bhawan and Mandore, and camel shows.

17 Rajasthan International Folk Festival (October). Folk music at Mehrangarh, timed to Sharad Purnima, the year's brightest full moon: musicians of Marwar and from across the world, on the fort.

Gangaur (Chaitra, March or April). Sixteen days from the day after Holi: women make clay images of Gauri, then carry them through the streets in procession.

Dhinga Gavar (after Gangaur). Jodhpur's own: women in costume, gods, police, saints, patrol the old city's lanes all night with sticks, guarding Gavar's image. An unmarried man they tap is said to marry soon.

Makar Sankranti (January). Kite day: many of the old town's rooftops fill with flyers, and the sky with kites.

Water in the desert

The old way with water. The walled city once lived on its stepwells and tanks. Toorji ka Jhalra is one of the few still showing how it worked.

19 Toorji ka Jhalra. The stepwell in the middle of the old town, its carved sandstone steps going down and down; credited to a queen of Marwar, around 1740.

2 Gulab Sagar. The old town's tank by the Clock Tower, built by Gulab Rai in 1788.

29 Ranisar and Padamsar. Twin lakes behind the fort, joined to each other, with Mehrangarh in their water.

36 Kaylana Lake. Made in 1872 west of town on the site of older palaces and gardens; it still gives the city water, and winter brings migratory birds.

41 Balsamand. A lake older than the city, dug in 1159 to water Mandore, with a summer palace and peacocks in its gardens.

Only in Jodhpur

The sticks of Dhinga Gavar. One night a year the old city's women take the lanes in costume, sticks in hand, and for that night the lanes are theirs.

14 Why blue?. Brahmin homes, cooler walls, a wash that kept termites off: ask three people, get three answers. The blue is the old town's, below the fort.

40 A motorbike for a god. Down the Pali road, a motorbike is the idol of its own shrine, and riders stop to bow before they ride on.

14 Built by Titans. Kipling said the fort might have been built by Titans and coloured by the morning sun. Stand under it at dawn and try to disagree.

A handful of millet. The emperor who took Jodhpur in 1544 is said to have grumbled he almost lost Hindustan for a handful of millet.

14 The fort has a birthday. Mehrangarh was founded in May, and the fort still marks the day.

Zobu's hometown. The first Zostel opened in Jodhpur in 2013, and so did Zobu.

Markets by what they sell

Commission shops. Drivers and helpful strangers steer visitors to shops that pay them a cut, and the price carries it. Go in on your own.

8 Sardar Market. Round the Clock Tower: spices, flavoured teas, embroidered textiles, handicrafts, antiques.

13 Spices. Mathania red chilli, masala blends, saffron and flavoured teas inside the market's gate; some shops let you taste.

5 Nai Sarak. Bandhej saris, dupattas and turbans, and leather: the main shopping street.

7 Mochi Bazaar. The cobblers' market: Jodhpuri juttis and mojaris, some made to your colour; lac bangles.

7 Sojati Gate. Handicrafts, jewellery and tie-dye for the people back home; henna stalls and snacks.

10 Sarafa and Kapda Bazaar. Silver jewellery, and leheriya, the wave-striped tie-dye, in the cloth market beside it.

Tripolia Bazaar. Brassware, rugs, ironware and embroidered leather juttis, with street food between.

Palace Road. Antiques, furniture, metalwork, puppets and paintings between Umaid Bhawan and Ajit Bhawan.

QUESTS

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

1 · Say khamma ghani before you ask anything. Hello in Marwari is khamma ghani; the answer is ghani ghani khamma. Try it at the lassi counter, the auto stand and the fort gate, and count the grins.

14 · Count the gates on the way up. Mehrangarh has seven gates. Count the ones you pass under on the way up to Suraj Pol, and read each name.

14 · Find the cannonball scars. Dedh Kangra Pol still bears the scars of a bombardment by cannonballs. Find the gate, then find the marks.

16 · Learn why Jai Pol was built. Maharaja Man Singh built the Victory Gate in 1806 after a war with Jaipur and Bikaner. Ask at the gate who won.

14 · Photograph five blue doors in Brahmpuri. The blue is thickest on the town's north side, in Brahmpuri, under the fort: walls, windows and doors. Five doors, five shades. Ask before you photograph anyone in them.

14 · Ask three people why the houses are blue. Brahmin homes, cooler walls or a wash that kept the termites off: nobody agrees. Pick your favourite.

30 · Spot a grey langur. Langurs live even in the city. Watch from afar; never feed them.

30 · Find a thhor on the rock. The park brought back the desert's own plants on the volcanic rock under the fort. Walk one of its four colour trails and find the thhor, the leafless spurge.

20 · Watch Jaswant Thada's marble glow. Its Makrana marble is cut so thin it glows in the sun. Stand where the light comes through and see.

19 · Sit on the stepwell's carved steps. Toorji ka Jhalra's sandstone steps are carved all the way down. Sit, look across, and count the levels.

1 · Start a day with mirchi bada and chai. The city's breakfast: a fat green chilli, stuffed, battered and fried, with a hot cup of chai.

3 · Drink a makhaniya lassi by the Clock Tower. Thick, sweet, with cardamom and a lid of butter. The famous counter is right by the Clock Tower: ask anyone.

8 · Find the real omelette stall. Just outside the market's gates is the omelette stall, and near it the stalls that say they are the real one. Taste two and decide.

7 · Try on a pair of mojaris. The cobblers' market has every Rajasthani shoe there is, embroidered and pointed. Walk ten steps in a pair before you bargain.

1 · Get a pair of jodhpurs stitched. The riding breeches the world named after this city: tailors round the Clock Tower can stitch a pair at a day's notice.

38 · Count the heroes at Mandore. Mandore's Hall of Heroes has sixteen figures carved out of a single rock. Count them, then find the old capital's cenotaphs in the gardens.

39 · Spot a blackbuck in a Bishnoi village. The Bishnois have protected trees and animals for five centuries, and blackbuck and chinkara graze round their villages. Go quiet, and early.

17 · Hear folk music under October's full moon. The folk festival fills the fort with musicians on Sharad Purnima, the year's brightest full moon. Stay up for it.

REACHING US

In the lanes, looking straight at the fort

Zostel Jodhpur (Clock Tower). In Makrana Mohalla's lanes, a couple of minutes from Toorji ka Jhalra, looking straight up at Mehrangarh. Graffiti, traditional decor, dorms and private rooms, a rooftop with the Blue City in view. Taxis drop you at the Clock Tower: a 500 m walk.

A haveli by the airport road

Zostel Jodhpur (Ratanada). A haveli-inspired house on Ratanada's Airport Road, 2.5 km from the airport: two beagles at the door, a pool table and board games, a swimming pool, a bonfire under the stars, workstations. Dorms and private rooms; Umaid Bhawan and the fort a short ride.

CLIMB, THEN GAZE

1 · The old city's clock, and its compass

Ghanta Ghar (Clock Tower). Begun in 1909 by Maharaja Sardar Singh, clockwork from England, five tiers of local red sandstone in the middle of Sardar Market: the old city's compass. Come at dusk, when it lights up under the fort. Touts steer visitors to 'commission' shops: choose your own.

2 · A tank of water in a desert city

Gulab Sagar. A big stone-edged tank in the walled city, made in 1788 by Gulab Rai, a favourite of Maharaja Vijay Singh: one link in the old network that kept a desert city in water. Walk its edge, Mehrangarh behind, pigeons over the water.

7 · The gate between the station and the bazaar

Sojati Gate. Between the station and the old city, the gate on the road to Sojat, and a busy market of handicrafts, jewellery and souvenirs, with Nai Sarak's fabric and tie-dye close by. Look around before you buy.

8 · Spices, tie-dye and a riot of noise

Sardar Market. Round the Clock Tower, through its old gates from Nai Sarak: spices and teas in heaps, bandhej and leheriya, silver, bangles, mojaris. Chai offered is hospitality. Go without a driver who 'knows a shop': prices are better when nobody takes a cut.

9 · Older than most of the fort

Achal Nath Shivalaya. Commissioned by Queen Nanak Devi, consort of Rao Ganga, and finished in 1531: older than most of the fort. Halls of carved Chhitar stone, Jodhpur's own sandstone, and a reservoir called the Ganga Bawari. A working temple: shoes off, ask before photos.

12 · The fort's own goddess, at the far end

Chamunda Mata temple, Mehrangarh. At the fort's southern end: Chamunda Mata's temple, whose image Rao Jodha brought from Mandore in 1460. Still the royal family's goddess. Walk the ramparts to it for the view; shoes off at the door.

14 · Built by Titans, Kipling guessed

Mehrangarh. Founded by Rao Jodha in 1459 on the 'mountain of birds', mostly 17th century; Kipling's palace 'built by Titans'. Moti Mahal, Phool Mahal, Sheesh Mahal, palanquins, howdahs, a turban gallery. A Batman film shot here. Go early, with water.

15 · An 18th-century garden, replanted

Chokelao Bagh. A garden of more than two hundred years at the foot of the palace walls: an 18th-century four-part garden replanted with the plants and scents of old Marwar, now a botanical museum. Sit in the shade, then carry on down to Fateh Pol.

16 · The victory gate, and the way in

Jai Pol. The main gate of Mehrangarh's seven, built in 1806 by Maharaja Man Singh after his wars with Jaipur and Bikaner. Tickets here; then a steep ramp up past Dedh Kangra Pol, still scarred by cannonballs. Climb in the morning cool.

19 · A stepwell two minutes from our door

Toorji ka Jhalra. A stepwell between Gulab Sagar and the fort: rose sandstone steps on three sides, carved with elephants and lions, an arch and two jharokhas on the fourth. Usually dated about 1740, to Rani Tanwarji. Water after the monsoon. Two minutes from our door.

20 · Marble so thin it glows

Jaswant Thada. Begun in 1899 for Jaswant Singh II, finished 1906, the royal cremation ground since: Makrana marble so thin it glows in the sun, 'the Taj Mahal of Marwar'. Portraits inside; pavilions, a tiered garden and Devkund lake outside. A kilometre from the fort.

21 · The way out towards Nagaur

Nagauri Gate. The gate on the old road to Nagaur, one of the gates of the wall raised after 1532 under Rao Maldeo; the wall is mostly gone, the gate still names the neighbourhood. Count the gates you cross.

23 · Gupta pillars in a city park

Sardar Government Museum and Umaid Garden. In Umaid Garden, the city's big park: a museum grown from an exhibition for Lord Kitchener's 1909 visit, its building opened in 1936. Gupta-era pillars from Mandore, one showing Krishna lifting Govardhan; Jain bronzes; miniatures. A quiet hour.

24 · An old royal garden house

Rai ka Bagh. One of the royal family's older homes, gardens round it, from before the city spread beyond its walls; it and the Ratanada palace were judged too small, so Umaid Bhawan went up instead. A greener, slower corner.

26 · A gate named for the road

Jalori Gate. The walled city was ringed after 1532, under Rao Maldeo, and each gate named for the town its road ran to: this one for Jalore. Most of the wall has gone; the gates stand in the traffic. Sweet shops all round: find the arch, then eat.

28 · The moon gate of the old wall

Chand Pol. The moon gate, named among the walled city's gates with Sojati, Jalori and Nagauri. Its wall, raised after 1532, has mostly gone. Find the old arch among the houses.

29 · Twin lakes behind the fort

Ranisar and Padamsar. Two old tanks side by side behind the fort, by Fateh Pol. Ranisar was made by Rao Jodha's queen Jasmade Hadi in 1459; Padamsar is named for Queen Padmini. On a calm morning the fort is reflected whole in the water.

31 · A palace built to give work

Umaid Bhawan Palace. Built 1929 to 1943 on Chittar hill to give work in a famine: two or three thousand people on site. Lanchester's Rajput-and-Art Deco palace, its dome seen from the fort. Royal home, hotel and a museum with vintage cars: the museum is yours.

34 · A hilltop view of the whole city

Masuria Hill. The rocky hill southwest of the old city, for the panorama: fort, blue town, Umaid Bhawan's dome, desert beyond. A temple to Baba Ramdev on top. Go for the evening light; down before dark.

35 · A temple up rock-cut stairs

Siddhnath Temple. A Shiva temple up rock-cut stairs in the Takhat Sagar hills, built, local legend says, by a saint called Nepali Baba. Reach it from the filter house on Chopasani Road. Go in the cool morning, with water; pair it with Kaylana.

36 · The city's water, and its sunset

Kaylana Lake and Takhat Sagar. The lake Jodhpur drinks from, among hills of igneous rock west of town: made in 1872 by Pratap Singh, fed today by the 'elephant canal'. Takhat Sagar is the next reservoir along. Come for sunset; take a boat if they're running.

37 · Meet the desert's animals

Machia Biological Park. Opened in 2016 on Kaylana Road to replace the old city zoo: the desert's own thorn scrub and animals, chinkara and blackbuck, desert foxes and cats, hyenas, spiny-tailed lizards, a bird-watching point. Closed Tuesdays; pair it with Kaylana.

38 · The old capital, before Jodhpur

Mandore Gardens. Marwar's capital until 1459, 9 km north. Royal cenotaphs built like temples, Ajit Singh's of 1793 the grandest; the Hall of Heroes, sixteen figures from a single rock; a museum. Langurs everywhere: keep food zipped.

41 · Older than Jodhpur itself

Balsamand Lake. Dug in 1159, three centuries before Jodhpur, as a reservoir for Mandore. A summer palace on its shore (a hotel now), gardens of mango and guava, peacocks. Come for the calm water at sunset; pair it with Mandore.

32 · Thirty-odd bowls, one round tray

Gypsy, Sardarpura's thali. In Sardarpura, a thali popular with locals, upstairs: about thirty-five dishes by one count, Rajasthani and Gujarati, from ker sangri and gatte ki sabzi to a mirchi vada chaat, and gehu ki kheech, a porridge of broken wheat and milk. Lunch, unhurried.

LAKES, ROCK AND DESERT

30 · Volcanic rock, and the desert's own plants

Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park. Since 2006 the invasive thorn scrub has been chiselled off the volcanic rock below the fort and the desert's own plants put back: thhor, kair, rohido, around 250 species. Four short trails over rock some 700 million years old. Go at sunrise.

MIRCHI BADA MORNINGS

3 · A lassi you eat with a spoon

Shri Mishrilal Hotel, the makhaniya lassi. Inside Sardar Market's gate by the Clock Tower: makhaniya lassi for generations, our own guide's pick. Hung curd, thick and sweet, with kewra, saffron and cardamom, a slab of fresh butter on top. Rabdi and peda too. Find a step and go slowly.

4 · Mawa kachori, the sweet one, starts here

Janta Sweet Home, Nai Sarak. Our guide's mawa kachori, a Jodhpur speciality: a flaky crust stuffed with mawa and dry fruits, fried and soaked in syrup. Balance it with the savoury side, pyaaz kachori and mirchi bada. Breakfast here, standing, as the bazaar wakes.

6 · Big samosa, one cashew, long queue

Shahi Samosa, Nai Sarak. On Nai Sarak, before Sardar Market's main gate: follow the queue. Big samosas with a piece of cashew in the potato, which food walkers say makes them shahi, with tamarind chutney. Pyaaz kachori and mirchi bhaji too. Eat one too hot.

18 · Breakfast above the stepwell

Stepwell Café, over Toorji ka Jhalra. Over Toorji ka Jhalra, a short walk from our Clock Tower Zostel: three storeys up to a rooftop facing Mehrangarh. Our guide's pick for the view, Outlook's for breakfast, Rajasthani or pancakes. Look down at the stepwell, then up.

27 · The chilli the city is known for

Surya Namkeen, Jalori Gate. By Jalori Gate, one of the food writers' picks for mirchi bada, born in Jodhpur: a green chilli stuffed with spiced potato, dipped in gram-flour batter, fried golden, with a slice of bread to tame it. Hot in both senses.

BARGAIN BY THE CLOCK

5 · Tie-dye by the mile

Nai Sarak, the bandhej street. The main shopping street into Sardar Market, our guide's for bandhej: cloth pinched into tiny knots, dyed, untied into dots. Saris, dupattas, turbans; some stalls show you the tying. Belts, bags and embroidered cloth too. Feel the cloth, count the dots, then bargain.

10 · Silver on one side, leheriya on the other

Sarafa Bazaar and Kapda Bazaar. The jewellers' market, one of our Clock Tower Zostel's three shopping streets: traditional silver jewellery, and leheriya, the wave-striped tie-dye, in Kapda Bazaar, the cloth market beside it. Take your time, compare a few counters, and ask what the silver is.

13 · Sniff before you buy

The spice shops of Sardar Market. Inside the gate: sacks and jars of Mathania red chilli, from a village in Jodhpur district, masala blends, saffron, flavoured teas. Some let you taste first, Wikivoyage says: smell, taste, ask where it's from. Buy small packs of what you'll cook.

FOLK UNDER THE FULL MOON

11 · Learn miniature painting by the clock

Umaid Heritage Art School. A small gallery near the Clock Tower where miniature painting, tiny brushes and very steady hands, is shown and taught. Watch the painters over chai, or take a lesson; some stay for days. Ask before you photograph the work.

17 · Folk music under the brightest moon

Rajasthan International Folk Festival (at Mehrangarh). Every October, timed to Sharad Purnima, the year's brightest full moon, Mehrangarh becomes a stage: some 250 musicians, the desert's Manganiyars among players from across the world, in courtyards and on ramparts. Book early; bring a shawl.

40 · A shrine to a motorbike

Om Banna, the Bullet Baba shrine. On the Pali highway, travellers pray to a motorbike: after Om Singh Rathore died here in 1988, the story goes, his motorbike kept returning to the spot overnight. Drivers tie a red thread for a safe road. About an hour and a half away.

WHERE ZOBU WAS BORN

22 · State buses, east of the old city

The bus stand. RSRTC and private buses to every big town in Rajasthan, Ahmedabad and Delhi. About 1.5 km to our Clock Tower home, 3.7 km to Ratanada. Agree the auto fare first. Off an overnight bus? Walk in for mirchi bada and chai.

25 · Arrive here, walk to the bazaar

Jodhpur Junction. Where most travellers arrive, with direct trains from across India. About 2 km to our Clock Tower home, 3.5 km to Ratanada. Agree the auto fare first: no meters. Buy tickets only at the reservation office or online, never from touts.

33 · A musical fountain, cheap and cheerful

Shastri Circle. When your legs are done with forts, do what the city does in the evening: a roundabout garden and its musical fountain show. Coloured jets, music, families on the grass. The show needs its own ticket: check at the gate.

Jodhpur

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

Two homes: Zostel Jodhpur (Clock Tower) in the lanes by Toorji ka Jhalra, the fort over its rooftop, and Zostel Jodhpur (Ratanada), a haveli-style home with a pool.

Our desert's songs, on Jodhpur's fort, under October's full moon. I clapped till the last musician went home.

Jaipur has its pink walls. Jodhpur starts the day with a mirchi bada and chai under the Clock Tower. Fair.

Six hours by bus from Pushkar. I'd ride it again for one makhaniya lassi by the Clock Tower.

Bundi is the city of stepwells, so I came to judge Toorji ka Jhalra. It passes, steps and all.

Udaipur has its lakes. Kaylana is Jodhpur's, made in 1872 on the edge of the desert, with winter's birds.

Zostel Jodhpur (Clock Tower)

Station 2 km by auto; taxis stop at the Clock Tower, a 500 m walk.

Zostel Jodhpur (Ratanada)

On Airport Road, 2.5 km from Jodhpur Airport: a cab takes you straight there.

Around Jodhpur

The box is the big map. Edge pins point the way (not to scale).

Climb, Then Gaze
Lakes, Rock and Desert
Mirchi Bada Mornings
Bargain by the Clock
Folk Under the Full Moon
Where Zobu Was Born
our two Zostels
a quest (the list is round the map)
The old city and the climb to Mehrangarh, the walk (side A)
circled: don't miss it
a dot: its true place, where a number stands aside
a drawing by a number: what is there
the walled city, its gates
forts and palaces
water
parks and gardens
the hills
grassland
the railway
a station

N · 0 · 125 m · 250 m

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