

UDAIPUR

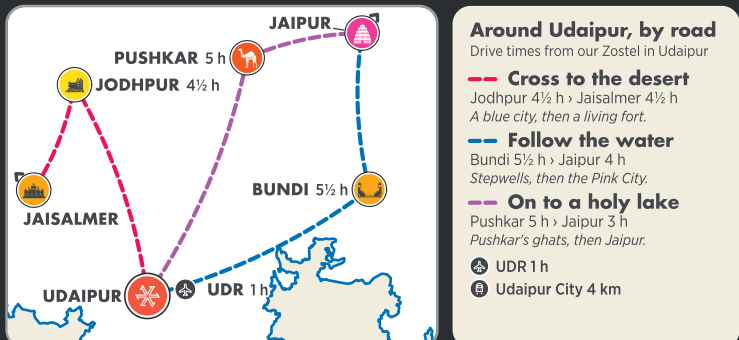
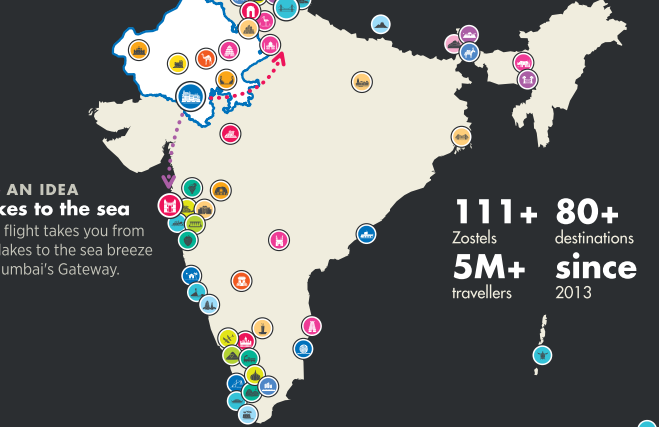
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for young travellers
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Udaipur is one, pick your next.



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The loop of the ghats: round Pichola's north shore
3.7 km · about 2.5 hours with stops · 14 stops

A loop from Chandpole at first light: over the bridge to Hanuman Ghat and Ambrai, back across the Daiji foot-bridge for coffee, then Gangaur Ghat, Lal Ghat, the Jagdish Temple, the palace gate and a kachori by the Clock Tower. Run it backwards for sunset at Ambrai.

Stay with us

Zostel Udaipur
Up a steep lane by Swaroop Sagar from Chandpole, an auto from the station, 3-7 km.



The stops

- 17 Chandpole**
Find the moon gate
- 14 Hanuman Ghat**
Gangaur Ghat's arches, across
- 10 Ambrai Ghat**
The Lake Palace, out in front
- 16 Daiji footbridge**
Stop mid-bridge: two lakes
- 15 Jheel's**
Take the view down Pichola
- 13 Gangaur Ghat**
Spot Mohan Mandir in the water
- 12 Bagore ki Haveli**
Two peacocks in glass mosaic
- 11 Lal Ghat**
Ask at the jetty what's sailing
- 4 Jagdish Temple**
The brass Garuda at the top
- 9 City Palace**
Find the sun of Mewar
- 2 The painters of City Palace Road**
Colours ground from stone
- 1 Jagdish Chowk**
Four ways out: learn them
- 6 Ghanta Ghar**
A clock face each way
- 5 Shri Lala Mishthan Bhandar**
Kachori hot from the oil



Khamma ghani, City of Lakes!

Khamma ghani! We're Udaipur's Zbus, and this is our city: a chain of lakes that kings, and one grain carrier, dammed out of dry hills, each one spilling into the next, with a white marble palace afloat in the middle and a longer one along the shore. Here the day starts on a ghat and ends on a rooftop, the kachori comes with a queue and the coffee comes in clay. You'll find palaces, yes, but also painters with squirrel-hair brushes, puppets with no legs, a clock a quarrel paid for and a hilltop built for watching rain. Walk the lanes, cross the footbridge, get a little lost, and come home to our roof above Swaroop Sagar with stories.

Stay with us in Udaipur

One Zostel, above Swaroop Sagar, by the Chandpole bridge.

Zostel Udaipur

Lake view from the rooftop, above Swaroop Sagar, Chandpole bridge, 200 m; Jagdish Chowk, under ten minutes on foot.

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 around

The old city is for feet: the lanes are narrow and steep, cars can't get in, and nothing inside it is far. Wear shoes with grip. For everything else, locals say hire a scooter, and they're right: Fateh Sagar, Badi and Sajjanganar are easy rides. Go gently. The Fateh Sagar loop has a 30 km/h limit, and the old city's lanes are no place to camera. Autos are everywhere: agree the fare first. Ride apps work here and end most haggling. Big shared tempos run fixed routes between the station, Suraj Pol, Hathi Pol, Chetak Circle and Fateh Sagar for coins. On the lakes, every boat is battery or solar now.

Money

Most shops, cafés and autos take a QR payment, and our own desk takes cards, but carry small notes for tempos, chai, shoe stands and ticket windows. The City Palace, Bagore ki Haveli, Sahelyon ki Bari, Moti Magri, the vintage cars, Shilpgram and both ropeways are ticketed. The best things are free: the ghats, the footbridge, Gulab Bagh, the Fateh Sagar pal, sunset from Ambrai. Count your change, and keep big notes out of sight.

Bargaining

In the bazaars, the first price is an opening line. Smile, ask, offer less and meet in the middle, or say thank you and walk on. Never bargain for what you don't mean to buy, or over food, chai or a temple offering. To learn what handwork should cost, start where prices are fixed: Rajasthan by Jagdish Chowk, or Sadhna in Fatehpura. Wave off anyone offering a cheaper workshop or a better boat: the shop pays them.

Temples and respect

The Jagdish Temple, Eklingji and the hilltop shrines are living places. Cover shoulders and knees, leave shoes outside, and keep the camera away inside the Jagdish Temple and Eklingji: a scarf in your daypack solves most questions. The ghats are living places too: families bathe at Manji ka Ghat and at the ends of the Daiji footbridge after a death, so give them room and keep your camera down. Ahar is a cremation ground still in use. Inside the palace museum, no flash and no touching.

Heat, rain and water

October to March is the sweet season, with warm days and cool evenings. April to June is fierce, well past 40°C: go out early and late. The monsoon, July to September, greens the Aravallis and fills the lakes. Carry a refillable bottle and top it up at our water dispenser; plastic bottles are banned at Sajjanganar. Don't swim in the lakes: people have drowned. For street food, pick busy stalls that cook it hot in front of you.

Safety, honestly

Udaipur is friendly and mostly safe. The usual trap is the helpful stranger: a 'guide' with a cheaper boat or a cousin's workshop is paid by wherever he takes you. Water: don't swim, wear the life jacket on boats, and take photos back from the edge. Hills: Bahubali and Neemach Mata have no lights and weak railings, so be down before dark. Traffic: scooters share every lane, so keep left and listen. Women travellers may get stares: use ride apps at night, and call our desk if anything feels off.

When to come

Winter is peak: clear light on the palace, long rooftop evenings, storytelling in January, world music in February and the crafts fair at Shilpgram in the last days of December. Spring brings Gangaur to the ghats. The monsoon is underrated: full lakes, green hills, the Hariyali Amavasya fair, and in a good year the whole town out to watch the lake gates open. Summer is for the brave: the lakes run low, but mornings and evenings are still lovely.

5 minutes of history

700s

A kingdom with a god for king
Tradition has Bappa Rawal, founder of the house of Mewar, raise the first temple to Ediklingji, a form of Shiva, north of today's city. Mewar's rulers call themselves the god's dewan, his minister, ever after.

c. 975

Twin temples at Nagda
At Nagda, Mewar's early capital, two temples are raised to Vishnu of the thousand arms. They survive the town, which is sacked in 1226, and are now known as Sas-Bahu.

c. 1400

A grain carrier's dam
A Banjara, a carrier of grain, is said to have dammed a stream by the village of Picholi. The pond behind it is the beginning of Lake Pichola. Accounts put it anywhere from 1362 to the early 1400s.

1553

Udaï Singh II founds a city
With Chittor too exposed, Maharana Udaï Singh II founds a new capital in the hills beside the old town of Ahar. The palace's own built dates it to 1553; many accounts say 1559, the year the palace was begun.

1559

A palace, and a second lake
The City Palace's foundation stone is laid above Pichola. In the same year Udaï Singh starts a great dam east of the city, finished by 1565; Uda Sagar. A year later he raises Pichola's dam and enlarges the lake.

1568

Chittor falls
The Mughal emperor Akbar takes Chittorgarh after the siege of 1567 to 1568, the fort's third and last. Udaipur, tucked into the Aravallis, becomes the seat of Mewar.

1576

Haldighati
In June, Maharana Pratap meets Akbar's army, led by Man Singh of Amber, in a pass about 40 km north. He leaves the field alive, and the war goes on for decades.

1615

Peace with the Mughals
Maharana Amar Singh I makes terms with Prince Khurram, who treats for his father Jahangir. The ruler of Mewar need never attend the Mughal court in person.

1622

A prince takes refuge
Khurram rebels against Jahangir, and Maharana Karan Singh shelters him at Udaipur, the two exchange turbans. Karan Singh begins the island palace of Jag Mandir. Khurram becomes the emperor Shah Jahan.

1651

The Jagdish Temple
Maharana Jagat Singh I completes the temple of Jagannath Rai beside his palace. In 1679, twenty men of Mewar die on its steps defending it from Aurangzeb's troops.

1678

More lakes
Maharana Jai Singh digs the lake that will become Fateh Sagar, and goes on to build Jaisamand, 50 km south-east, still counted among India's largest man-made lakes.

1743

A palace in the lake
Maharana Jagat Singh II begins Jag Niwas, a white marble palace on an island in Pichola, and finishes it in 1746. The world now knows it as the Lake Palace.

1818

The British arrive
After decades as a tributary of the Marathas, Mewar accepts British protection. The Maharanas keep their throne, their palace and their lakes.

1884

Sajjan Singh's decade
In ten years Maharana Sajjan Singh gives the city a public garden, its first museum and zoo, and a palace on a hilltop to watch the monsoon from. His successor Fateh Singh re-builds Fateh Sagar in 1889.

1948

Mewar joins India
Maharana Bhupal Singh, the last ruling Maharana, takes Mewar into the new union of Rajasthan's states and becomes its Rajpramukh. In 1963 the Lake Palace becomes a hotel; in 1969 the City Palace opens as a museum.

2025

A Wetland City
Udaipur and Indore become India's first cities accredited as Wetland Cities under the Ramsar Convention. Sixteen years earlier, in the drought of 2009, jeeps were driving across the bed of Pichola.

Every number is a tip on the map overlay, in the colour of its kind: ● For the Eye ● Out and About ● Khana-badsh ● Shopping ● Culture and Nights ● For a True Backpacker. A drawing beside a line shows what you will find there:

Talk like a local

Khamma ghani

Hello, and goodbye too (Rajasthani) khum-maa gah-nee

Ghani khamma

The reply to it, from an elder gah-nee khum-maa

Ram Ram sa

Hello, the everyday one raam raam sa

Aabhar

Thank you aa-bhaar

Aap kistar ho?

How are you? aap kis-tur ho

Tharo naam kaai hai?

What is your name? thaa-ro naam kaa-ee hai

Mharo naam ... hai

My name is ... hai mhaa-ro naam ... hai

Anee ra paisa katara vya?

How much is this? uh-nee raa pai-saa kuh-tuh-raa vya

Ha / Ni

Yes / No haan / nee

Gano badhiya

Very good guh-no buh-dhi-yaa

Mhane maaf karo

Sorry, excuse me mhaa-nay maaf kuh-ro

Daavlo haath / Jeemno haath

Left / Right daav-lo haath / jeem-no haath

Dhyaan raakhajo

Take care dhyaan raa-khuh-jo

Pachhe milaanga

See you again puh-chhay mi-laan-gaa

Eat like an Udaipurite

Half of Udaipur's history is in its kitchens. The old counters first, then the dishes to hunt down. Most of the old city eats vegetarian, and here that means no egg either.

5 Shri Lala Mishthan Bhandar

About 150 years by the family's count. Four generations of sweets beside the Clock Tower; kachori every morning. "Galab jamun made fresh morning and evening, still warm by the Clock Tower. Eat one there; box one for the dorm."



22 Jagdish Mishthan Bhandar (JMB)

Since 1977. The Suraj Pol sweet shop Udaipur names for pyaz kachori and mirchi bada; ask for alicani after.

"Both of these were born in Jodhpur. Eating them here feels like meeting cousins who turned out well."

36 Pandit Pav Bhaji

Since 1981. A hand-cart at the Town Hall gate, a recipe learned in Bombay, spices ground at home. "A Bombay dish on a Rajasthan cart, decades on. I ordered one plate and stayed for two."

35 The Egg World

Since 1984. The stall that made Chetak Circle the egg corner of a vegetarian city, and invented boiled-egg bhurji.

"Boiled eggs, scrambled all over again with spice, at the egg corner of a vegetarian city. Come after dark."

38 Natraj Dining Hall

The thali every local names first, by the railway station: Rajasthan and Gujarati, refilled until you stop them.

25 Krishna Dal Bati Restro

One thali, but here, the dal bati churma, upstairs on Gulab Bagh Road. Our own guide's pick. "Crack the baati, drown it in ghee, chase it with churma and a glass of chaach. Upstairs on Gulab Bagh Road."

23 Vasudev Doodh Bhandar

Age-old, just inside Suraj Pol: milk boiled down in a wide pan and served hot on winter evenings.

"Hot sweet milk from a kadai on a winter night, a glass at the counter. Find it by the steam."

19 Jai Bhole and Jai Bharat, Delhi Gate

Delhi Gate's two counters: jalebi from the oil in the morning, jalebi in hot milk at night.

44 Bombay Market, Fateh Sagar

The lakeside row that put hot coffee in a clay cup, dusted it with chocolate and drew the whole city.

"Coffee in a clay cup, hot and frothy, with chocolate on top. Drink it on the wall and watch the lake go dark."

30 Khamma Ghani

Since 1992. A lakeside table on our own lake (Rang Sagar, by its address) facing two bird islands; laal maas, and a separate vegetarian kitchen.

"I ordered the gatta curry and watched the birds on the two little islands until the lake went dark."



Dishes to hunt down

25 Dal baati churma

Lentils, hard-baked wheat rolls drowned in ghee, a sweet wheat crumble. Steamer and milder here than in Jaipur.

38 Gatte ki sabzi

Steamed gram-flour dumplings in tangy yoghurt gravy: an everyday dish of Mewari homes, and part of the thali.

22 Pyaz kachori

A flaky fried pastry of spiced onion, born in Jodhpur and now Udaipur's breakfast. Locals add curd.

22 Mirchi bada

A big green chilli stuffed with potato, battered and fried. Milder here than most; the monsoon is its season.

33 Dabeli

A soft bun of sweet-spicy potato, peanuts and pomegranate, from Kutch, adopted by Udaipur's street stalls.

44 Kulhad coffee

Hot, frothy coffee dusted with chocolate, in an unglazed clay cup: Fateh Sagar's own habit.

23 Kadi doodh

Milk boiled down slowly in a wide pan, sweetened and served hot: the winter-evening drink.

5 Malpua with rabdi

Syrup-soaked pancake with thickened milk, made at the old sweet shops when the rains come.

Got a day to spare?

49 Eklingji and Nagda

22 km north. The royal family's Shiva temple, then the Sas-Bahu temples of about 975 CE beside a small lake. Buses on the Nathdwara road pass Eklingji; a scooter does both in half a day.

Nathdwara

About 48 km north. The haveli of Shrinathji, a form of Krishna, since 1672. The image is shown in short spells through the day: no photographs or phones inside. Buses and taxis from Udaipur.

Haldighati

About 40 km north. The pass where Maharana Pratap fought Akbar's army in 1576. No bus goes all the way: a scooter or a shared taxi, with Nathdwara.

Kumbhalgarh

55 to 95 km north. Rana Kumbha's hill fort of the 1400s, on UNESCO's list, its wall put at 36 km. No bus timetable found: share a taxi, and add Ranakpur.

Ranakpur

About 90 km north-west. A marble Jain temple of the 1400s with 1,444 carved pillars. Visitors who aren't there to worship are let in from midday. Direct buses from the bus stand take about three hours.

Chittorgarh

About 115 km east. The fort Mewar ruled from before Udaipur, besieged three times, on UNESCO's list. The easy one: several trains a day, about two hours each way.

Jaisamand

About 50 km south-east. Maharana Jai Singh's lake of the 1680s, with six cenotaphs and stone elephants on its marble dam. Easiest by scooter or taxi.

Rajsamand. About 65 km north, an hour and a half by road, past Nathdwara. A lake dammed between 1662 and 1676, with carved marble pavilions on its embankment. Buses on the Ajmer highway pass it.

Festivals worth timing a trip for

13 Gangaur and the Mewar Festival (March or April)

Women in their brights carry the images of Isar and Gangaur from the Clock Tower to Gangaur Ghat, the town band playing, and the palace's boat comes down the lake to meet them.

42 Nirjala Ekadashi (June)

Shiva's own kite day; by old custom the kites go up from Fateh Sagar's Rani Road shore, and from the lake's bed where June has left it dry. The city flies them on Makar Sankranti, 14 January, as well.

4 Jagannath Rath Yatra (June or July)

A silver chariot leaves the Jagdish Temple, is pulled through the Clock Tower's bazaars and comes home to Jagdish Chowk by night. No colours or fireworks on the route.

32 Hariyali Amavasya (July or August)

The monsoon fair, more than a century old: two days of stalls from Sahelyon ki Bari to the Fateh Sagar pal. The second day is for women only.

13 Jal Jhuli Ekadashi (September)

Processions carry small shrines of the child Krishna through the old city to Gangaur Ghat, where the image is bathed in the lake.

55 Shilpgram Utsav (21 to 30 December)

Ten days of craftspeople and folk performers from across India at the crafts village, with about half a million visitors.

10 Storytelling and world music (January, February)

Udaipur Janu, a storytelling festival, in January; the World Music Festival in February, free to stand at, with mornings by the lake and afternoons on the Fateh Sagar pal.

9 Holika Dahan at the City Palace (March)

On the eve of Holi the royal family walks in procession to Manek Chowk and lights the bonfire. Ask at the palace whether visitors may watch this year.

Which lake is which

13 Lake Pichola

The old city's lake, with the City Palace on its east shore and two island palaces. Begun as a village pond, enlarged by Udaï Singh II in 1560, fed by the Sisarma stream.

16 Amar Kund, Rang Sagar, Kumhara Talab

Old names you'll still hear round the two bridges, for the last pocket of Pichola and the first of Swaroop Sagar.

31 Swaroop Sagar

North of the Chandpole bridge, and by the family's count. Four generations of sweets beside the Clock Tower; kachori every morning.

45 Fateh Sagar

The locals' lake, north-west of the old city: dug in 1678, rebuilt in 1889, with its islands and the evening promenade.

27 Doodh Talai

The milk pond, pinched off Pichola's south-east corner, under the sunset gardens and the Karni Mata ropeway.

53 Badi (Jivan Sagar)

Ten kilometres west and west-stream: a famine-relief lake of the 1600s whose overflow runs down to Fateh Sagar.

Udaï Sagar

The last lake in the chain, 13 to 15 km east: begun by Udaï Singh II in 1559. Everything the city's lakes spill ends up here, by the Ayad river.

How the water moves

Pichola spills into Swaroop Sagar; Swaroop Sagar into Fateh Sagar; Fateh Sagar into the Ayad river and on to Udaï Sagar. Since 2012 a tunnel through the hills has brought Pichola extra water.

In a dry year

They are all rain-fed. In July 2009 jeeps crossed Pichola's bed to Jag Mandir; after a good monsoon the gates open and the town turns out to watch.

On the water: ghats, islands, bridges

13 Gangaur Ghat

★ QUESTS

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

★ 4

Count the 32 marble steps. Count on the way up to the Jagdish Temple. If you lose your place, the stone elephants at the bottom will hold it for you.

★ 9

Find the three glass peacocks. Climb through the City Palace to Mor Chowk and find all three, one for each season of the year.

★ 16

Cross a lake on foot. Walk the Dargi footbridge, stop halfway and name the water on each side: open Pichola to the south and, to the north, the still pocket the old city calls Amar Kund.

★ 13

Beat the city to Gangaur Ghat. Go on the steps before the cafes open and watch the fair bank turn gold. Phones are allowed; talking is optional.

★ 1

Collect a 'Ghani khamma'. Greet a shopkeeper with 'Khamma ghani'. An elder may answer 'Ghani khamma'; everyone else will smile and say 'Ram Ram sa'.

★ 34

Spot the puppet with no legs. At a kathputli show, watch the skirts; the puppets have no legs, and dance from two strings looped over the puppeteer's fingers.

★ 44

Drink coffee from day. Order a kulhad coffee at Fateh Sagar, finish it on the wall, then give the cup back to the earth, or the bin.

★ 43

Find the telescope that stares at the sun. From the Fateh Sagar pal, pick out the island with the observatory on it. It has been watching the sun since 1975.

★ 40

Ride up, walk down. Take the ropeway to the Kamni Mata temple for sunset, then come down the stepped path before dark, snacks zipped away from the monkeys.

★ 11

Find the cormorants' pavilion. From Lal Ghat, look for Mohan Mandir, the little pavilion standing in the water. The birds drying their wings on it are cormorants.

REACHING US

Above Svaroop Sagar, by Chandpole

Zostel Udaipur. Our lake-view home at Purohit Ji Ka Khurra, up a steep lane above Svaroop Sagar, about 200 m from the Chandpole bridge. Chai and sunset at Aasro by the Lake, the rooftop cafe; a common room with snooker. Jagdish Chowk is under ten minutes on foot.

FOR THE EYE

4 Thirty-two marble steps above the traffic

Jagdish Temple. Maharana Jagat Singh I raised this temple to Vishnu in 1651, and it has been in worship ever since. Climb 32 marble steps between two stone elephants to a brass Garuda facing the shrine. Shoes outside, shoulders and knees covered, no cameras inside. Come for the aarti, morning or evening.

6 The clock a quarrel paid for

Ghanta Ghar. The Clock Tower of 1887 marks where the old city turns to business. Shopkeepers say a fine on two quarrelling trading communities paid for it: the city's first public clock, with four faces. Silver shops sit at its foot and the bazaars fan out from here.

9 Four centuries of palace behind one wall

City Palace. Udaipur Singh I began it and his heirs built for four hundred years: palace joined to palace above Lake Pichola, a museum since 1969. Find Mor Chowk's three glass peacocks and Badi Mahal's garden court at the very top. Take the audio guide, and go early.

24 A Rolls-Royce built for the cricket team

Vintage and Classic Car Collection. The Maharanas' own cars in the old Mewar State garage, about twenty of them, all kept running. Four Rolls-Royces, one cut into a pick-up for the cricket team, one seen in Octopussy, a 1958 Cadillac that carried a queen. Opposite Gulab Bagh.

29 The palace you can't walk into

Lake Palace (Jag Niwas). The white marble palace afloat in Pichola is Jag Niwas, built on its island from 1743 to 1746 and a hotel since 1963, for its own guests only. See it from Ambari Ghat at dusk, from the City Palace terraces, or from a boat bound for Jag Mandir.

32 Fountains that need no pump

Saheliyon Ki Bari. Maharana Sangram Singh laid out this garden for the court's women in the early 1700s: four pools, marble kiosks and elephants, fountains everywhere. It lies lower than Fateh Sagar, so the lake's pressure drives them with no pump. Best when the lake is full.

40 Four minutes up, a slow walk down

Karni Mata temple and ropeway. A hilltop temple on Machla Magra, the ridge south of the palace that carries the old city wall. Ride the four-minute ropeway from Doodh Talai, billed as Rajasthan's first, or climb the stepped path. The lake and old city spread below. Come for sunset; mind the monkeys.

41 The island you can land on

Jag Mandir. The island palace a boat will put you on. Begun around 1620, it sheltered the Mughal prince who became Shah Jahan; eight stone elephants guard the landing. The palace's own boat leaves from its jetty, Rameshwari Ghat, by the south gate. Go late in the day.

43 An island that stares at the sun

Udaipur Solar Observatory. The building on its own island in Fateh Sagar holds telescopes that look only at the sun, put there in 1975 because water all round keeps the air steady. It's a working laboratory of the space department: you can't visit, but now you know what it is.

46 A hero in bronze on Pearl Hill

Moti Magri. Pearl Hill, above the Fateh Sagar embankment, with Maharana Pratap in bronze on his horse Chetak, set up in 1962. Walk up past the ruins of Udaipur Singh I's first home here. From top, Fateh Sagar lies on one side and Pichola on the other.

48 A thousand arms, worn down to two

Sas-Bahu temples, Nagda. Beside a small lake at Nagda, near Eklingsji, two temples to Vishnu from about 975 CE. 'Sahastrabahu', the thousand-armed, was worn down to Sas-Bahu, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Enter by a free-standing carved arch; the carving inside is as fine as lace. Touch nothing.

49 The god who rules Mewar

Eklingsji. Twenty-two kilometres north, the temple of Eklingsji, a form of Shiva counted as Mewar's true ruler; the Maharanas were only his ministers. It's the royal family's own temple and opens for short spells: dress fully, leave shoes outside, no cameras.

45 Where Udaipur spends its evenings

Fateh Sagar and its pal. Where Udaipur itself spends the evening. From 1678 and rebuilt in 1889 by Maharana Fateh Singh, whose name it took. The embankment, the pal is the city's promenade, with sunset straight across the water. Solar boats leave from the Moti Magri end.

52 Where the old zoo's animals went

Sajjangarh Biological Park. At the foot of the Monsoon Palace's hill, the zoo that replaced the old one in Gulab Bagh: 36 hectares, opened in 2015, seen on foot or by golf cart. Pair it with the palace above for sunset. No plastic bottles here either.

53 A lake with nothing on it

Badi Lake. Ten kilometres west, a lake with no palace and very little noise. Maharana Raj Singh I built it in the 1600s as famine relief; three chhatris stand on its embankment. Ride out early by scooter, walk the embankment, then climb Bahubali Hill. Don't swim.

54 A hill named after a film

Bahubali Hill. A bare hill above Badi Lake, named online after the film Bahubali. A ten to twenty minute climb gives the lake below and Aravalli ridges all around. Good at sunrise or sunset, but be down before dark: no lights, no fences, and it burns in the dry months.

44 Coffee in a clay cup

Bombay Market, Fateh Sagar. The row of food stalls facing the Fateh Sagar embankment has three names and one drink: kulhad coffee, hot, frothy and drunk with chocolate, in an unglazed clay cup. Add a bread pakoda, sit on the wall across the road and watch the lake go dark.

SHOPPING

7 A whole lane of shoemakers

Mochiwada. Mochi means shoemaker, and this lane off the Clock Tower's bazaar is the city's footwear street. Come for mojris and juttis, Rajasthan's embroidered leather slippers: try them with a sock, expect them to stretch, and bargain. The founder settled each craft in its own quarter.

8 Galleries all the way to the garden

Bhatiyani Chohatta. The street from Jagdish Chowk towards Gulab Bagh is a gallery with traffic: miniature paintings shop after shop, leather journals and bags between them. Compare painters before you buy, bargain, and look in three shops before asking a price in one.

18 Handicrafts at the elephant gate

Hathi Pol Bazaar. The old wall's elephant gate, and the old city's handicraft street: miniature paintings, pichwai and phad cloth paintings, wooden toys, bandhani, silver and a row of mojri shops. Cabs can reach it; beyond, the lanes narrow. Learn fixed prices first, then bargain.

55

Udaipur

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

Khamma ghani! Start on a ghat, cross the water, look back. Then tell us everything on the roof.

50 Where Mewar's rulers end up

Ahar cenotaphs. Where the royal house of Mewar has cremated its dead for about 350 years; more than 250 domed cenotaphs, nineteen for Maharanas, and still in use. Walk softly. Next door, a small museum of pottery from ancient Ahar. Few visitors come.

51 Built to watch the rain arrive

Sajjangarh, the Monsoon Palace. The hilltop palace west of town, built in 1884 for Maharana Sajjan Singh to watch the monsoon clouds; he planned nine stories and an observatory. Come for sunset, with both big lakes below. The road up is long and steep. No plastic bottles.

OUT AND ABOUT

10 The whole postcard, for free

Ambari Ghat. Really Manji ka Ghat; 'Ambari' is the hotel next door. One sweep takes in Gangaur Ghat, the City Palace and the Lake Palace, from marble seats that cost nothing. Come before sunset and stay for the palace lights. Families bathe here after a cremation: give them room.

11 The quiet ghat with a jetty

Lal Ghat. A lane of guesthouses behind the Jagdish Temple drops to this small, calm ghat just south of Gangaur Ghat. Town boats have run from its jetty: ask there what's running today. Or climb to a rooftop cafe in the lane for chai and the lake.

13 Three arches, then the lake

Gangaur Ghat. Through the three-arched gate beside Bagore Ki Haveli, broad steps go down into Pichola. Gangaur's processions end here each spring. Evenings bring families and lights on the water, dawn is nearly empty, and the best time to watch the fair bank turn gold. Ten minutes from our door.

14 The bank the postcards are taken from

Hanuman Ghat. Cross the Dargi footbridge and turn left. Named for its Hanuman temple, this ghat looks straight across at Gangaur Ghat's three arches; a Hindi film was shot on its steps. Come in the late afternoon, when the sun is behind you and the old city is lit.

16 Walk across the lake

Dargi footbridge. A stone-paved footbridge, lamp-lit and for walkers only, from the Gangaur Ghat side to Hanuman Ghat and Ambari. Stop in the middle: open Pichola to the south, the still pocket called Amar Kund to the north. Mourners bathe at its ends, so keep cameras down then.

26 The garden a king built for everyone

Gulab Bagh. Maharana Sajjan Singh laid out this garden for his people in the 1870s; it's the city's largest, and free. Rose beds, a domed hall that was Mewar's first museum and is now a library, and a bird park where the zoo was. Come early.

27 The milk pond, and the sunset hill

Doodh Talai. South of the City Palace, a small pond pinched off Pichola between the city's fountains, said to have watered the royal dairy's cows. Two hill gardens stand over it: one faces west and is where Udaipur watches the sunset. The Karni Mata ropeway starts here.

28 Where the palace boats leave from

Rameshwari Ghat, the palace jetty. The City Palace's own jetty, by its south gate, where the palace's boats leave for a turn of Pichola and a landing on Jag Mandir. Ask at the gate what ticket you need. Sit on the side facing the palace, and go before sunset.

31 Our own lake, and no-body's postcard

Svaroop Sagar. The water under our rooftop isn't Pichola. North of the Chandpole bridge the lake is Svaroop Sagar, made in the mid-1800s to pass Pichola's overflow on to Fateh Sagar. No postcards, just houses at the waterline and egrets. In a good moonrise, crowds watch its gates open.

42 The island garden, by battery boat

Nehru Garden Island. The largest island in Fateh Sagar is a public garden, built around 1967 and reopened in September 2025 after four years shut. Its battery boats leave not from the pal but from a new jetty on Rani Road, on the far shore. Life jackets on.

43 An island that stares at the sun

Udaipur Solar Observatory. The building on its own island in Fateh Sagar holds telescopes that look only at the sun, put there in 1975 because water all round keeps the air steady. It's a working laboratory of the space department: you can't visit, but now you know what it is.

46 A hero in bronze on Pearl Hill

Moti Magri. Pearl Hill, above the Fateh Sagar embankment, with Maharana Pratap in bronze on his horse Chetak, set up in 1962. Walk up past the ruins of Udaipur Singh I's first home here. From top, Fateh Sagar lies on one side and Pichola on the other.

48 A thousand arms, worn down to two

Sas-Bahu temples, Nagda. Beside a small lake at Nagda, near Eklingsji, two temples to Vishnu from about 975 CE. 'Sahastrabahu', the thousand-armed, was worn down to Sas-Bahu, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Enter by a free-standing carved arch; the carving inside is as fine as lace. Touch nothing.

49 The god who rules Mewar

Eklingsji. Twenty-two kilometres north, the temple of Eklingsji, a form of Shiva counted as Mewar's true ruler; the Maharanas were only his ministers. It's the royal family's own temple and opens for short spells: dress fully, leave shoes outside, no cameras.

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56 The best view of Fateh Sagar

Neemach Mata. A hilltop temple on Dewali hill above Fateh Sagar's north shore, with the lake's best view. Climb the old path of steps, 800 or 900 m, or ride the ropeway that opened in January 2024. Do one each way, and don't lean on the railings.

KHANA-BADOSH

3 The old grains, on the floor

Millets of Mewar. Two friends opened it in 2011 to bring back the old local grains. Vegetarian and veg-an, a millet dal baati churma thali. Mewar gatta curry, bajra rotis, even a millet pizza, with floor seating if you like. On City Palace Road, steps from Jagdish Chowk.

5 Four generations of sugar and ghee

Shri Lala Mishthan Bhandar. By the family's own telling, this sweet shop beside the Clock Tower is about 150 years old and in its fourth generation. Mornings mean hot kachoris; then gulab jamun made fresh twice a day, and in the rains malpia soaked in rabdi. Eat standing.

15 A table hung over Pichola

Jheel's. Jheel means lake, and this cafe sits right on one, by Gangaur Ghat. Our guide's order: choco latte, mushroom sandwich, walnut pie. The coffee is fine, you're here for the view, best at sunset from the roof. Eight minutes' walk from our door.

19 Jalebi by day, milk by night

Delhi Gate's jalebi counters. Delhi Gate means jalebi. Mornings belong to Jai Bhale Mishthan Bhandar, opposite the police post; after dark, Jai Bharat Mishthan Bhandar on the circle serves doodh-jalebi, hot coils dunked in a glass of milk. In the rains, ask for malai ghevar.

23 Hot milk from a wide iron pan

Vasudev Doodh Bhandar. Just inside Suraj Pol, an age-old milk shop. Kadai doodh is milk boiled down slowly in a wide pan, sweetened and served hot by the glass: Udaipur's winter-evening drink, taken standing. The rabri, thick enough for a spoon, is the other order.

25 One thali, done properly

Krishna Dal Bati Restro. Known for one thing: a thali built round dal baati churma. Lentils, hard-baked wheat rolls drowned in ghee and a sweet wheat crumble, with chacha alongside and re-fills until you say stop. Upstairs on Gulab Bagh Road, near the vintage cars. Go hungry.

30 One slow dinner by the water

Khamma Ghani. A lakeside restaurant on our own lake, Svaroop Sagar (its address says Rang Sagar), serving since 1992. Locals come for bal masas, fiery red mutton curry cooked here in mustard oil; there's a separate vegetarian kitchen. Not a budget table: make it the trip's one slow dinner.

33 A roundabout you go to for dinner

Sukhadia Circle. A big roundabout with a pond, a three-tiered marble fountain and the city's favourite street-food stalls round its edge. Come after dark, when the fountain is lit. Order dabbu, a bun of sweet-spicy potato, peanuts and pomegranate, then pav bhaji and pani puri.

35 The egg corner of a vegetarian city

The Egg World, Chetak Circle. In a mostly vegetarian city, Chetak Circle is where the eggs are. This stall, in the family since 1984, made up boiled-egg bhurji: hard-boiled eggs worked into a spiced scramble, eaten with bread. The tandoori omelette is the other order. Expect a queue.

36 A hand-cart since 1981

Pandit Pav Bhaji. In 1981 a man who had learned pav bhaji in Bombay parked a hand-cart outside the Town Hall. His sons run a restaurant now, and the cart still comes out at the gate in the evening: buttery mashed vegetables in home-ground spices, mopped up with a soft roll.

38 Say 'bas' when you're beaten

Natraj Dining Hall. The thali everyone in Udaipur names first: a plain, busy hall near the railway station with a floor of all-you-can-eat Rajasthani and Gujarati thalis. Vegetarian, quick and kind to a budget. Learn one word before you sit: 'bas', enough.

39 End of the line, start of the trip

Udaipur City station. The end of the line, about 4 km by road from our door. Daily trains to Jaipur, Delhi, Agra and Ahmedabad; Chittorgarh is about two hours away by rail. No direct train to Jodhpur or Jaisalmer. Outside, tell the auto driver one word: Chandpole.

20 Where the city buys everything else

Bapu Bazaar. The working high street, from Suraj Pol to Delhi Gate along the old east wall: line artiques to electronics, clothes to books, bandhani too. Nothing is a souvenir, so prices are a local's. Stop for dahi chaat; the famous pav bhaji cart is opposite.

21 The big bazaar earns its name

Bada Bazaar. East of the Clock Tower, the old city's main market, where Udaipur itself shops: gold and silver, copperware and cloth, with Sindhi Bazaar's clothes shops just beyond. Little here is made for tourists. Come in the late afternoon, on foot, and bargain with a smile.

47 Fixed prices, and a reason

Sadhna. Sadhna began in 1988, in a drought year, so village women could earn: over 550 of them now. Patchwork, applique and tanka embroidery at fixed prices, with the profit going to the makers. On the Seva Mandir campus in Old Fatehpura, an auto ride north of the old city.

CULTURE AND NIGHTS

2 Brushes made of squirrel hair

The painters of City Palace Road. The lane from Jagdish Chowk to the palace gate is lined with miniature painters. Squirrel-hair brushes, colours ground from stone, real gold leaf: ask to watch, and see the palace museum's paintings first. Buy from the painter, never through a stranger who offers to guide you.

12 A haveli that dances every evening

Bagore Ki Haveli. A prime minister of Mewar built this 138-room haveli on the water at Gangaur Ghat in the 1700s; it's a museum by day. After dark comes Dharohar, an hour of folk dance and string puppets in its courtyard, with a dancer balancing a tower of pots. Be early.

34 Where the puppets live

Bharatiya Lok Kal Mandali. A schoolteacher who had learnt puppetry founded it in 1952. An hour of museum, with puppets from India and abroad, masks, turbans and folk instruments, then a kathputli and folk-dance show in the puppet theatre next door. It's 300 m north of Chetak Circle.

55 Four states' villages on one hillside

Shilpgram. A crafts village beyond Fateh Sagar, set up in 1989: thirty-one village houses from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa, built by people from each region. Quiet most days; from 21 to 30 December the Shilpgram Utsav fills it with craftspeople and performers.

FOR A TRUE BACKPACKER

1 The crossroads every lane leads to

Jagdish Chowk. The old city's hub, at the foot of the Jagdish Temple's stair. South is the palace gate, west are Lal Ghat and Gangaur Ghat, north is the Clock Tower's bazaars and the lane home to Chandpole. The lanes are narrow and steep: keep left.

17 The moon gate that gets you home

Chandpole. The old wall's moon gate, opposite Suraj Pol, the sun gate: the name now covers the road bridge and the neighbourhood too. South of the bridge is Pichola, north is Svaroop Sagar. Tell any auto 'Chandpole'; our door is about 200 m on, up a steep lane.

22 The sun gate, and the city's bus stop

Suraj Pol. The sun gate faces east, at a crossing that is the city's transport hub. Shared tempos run fixed routes from here to Hathi Pol, Chetak Circle and Fateh Sagar; say where you're going first. Nearby, Jagdish Mishthan Bhandar has sold sweets since 1977 and is known for kachori.

37 Where the day trips start

Udaipur bus stand, Udaipur Pol. The state bus stand at Udaipur Pol, about 3 km from our door: where the day trips start: buses on the Nathdwara road pass Eklingsji; Ranakpur is about three hours by direct bus. Private sleepers leave from across City Station Road. Start early.

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