



# RAJASTHAN - LAND OF THE KINGS

SHORT STORIES

16/05

Magnificent palaces, majestic forts, colourful cities and barren desert landscapes



Rajasthan: India's largest state

Translated from Hindustani, Rajasthan means "the land of kings". No other state in India is so rich in sublime palaces, some of which are still inhabited by former kings, the maharajas, or in spectacular landscapes, whose diversity ranges from desert regions to dense jungle.

Rajasthan is roughly comparable in terms of area and population size roughly comparable to

Germany: 342,239 km<sup>2</sup>, approx. 75 million inhabitants. More than 90% of the population speaks Hindi, the official language. Rajasthan's GDP ranks seventh among the 36 Indian states (as of 2015).

*"For over 1000 years, the proud warrior people of the Rajputs ruled Rajasthan and played a leading role in the political development of modern India. Bravery, a rigid code of honour and pronounced pride are still part of their self-image today."*

- Kalyan Singh

## Content in brief

- Indian State of Rajasthan
- Grandiose castles, forts and palaces
- Traditional irrigation
- Melting pot of cultures, tribes and clans
- Water supply in the desert region
- Gods and temples in Rajasthan
- Traditional clothing



Kumbhal Garh Fort, Kumbhalgarh



Padmini's Palace, Chittaurgarh

## Impressive buildings

Many of the fortifications, castles, palaces and Jain temples of purest marble date back to the Middle Ages. The Maharajas and Ranas gathered the best architects, musicians, painters and other artists to decorate the structures. In recent decades, most of the castles and palaces have been successfully converted into hotels.

## Chittorgarh Fort

Chittorgarh is the former capital of the Kingdom of Mewar. The House of Mewar has ruled continuously since 734 AD, making it the oldest ruling house in the world. Only a few kilometres away on a ridge lies the fortress of Chittorgarh, the largest fort in India in terms of area. The fort became famous through three sieges by powerful enemies. Each time, up to 14,000 inhabitants committed ritual suicide (jauhar). The greatest tragedy occurred in 1303, when the besieger Sultan Ala-ud-din Kilji targeted Queen Padmini. When it was foreseeable that the fortress would be taken, the men rode into battle and the Rajput noblewomen, among them Padmini, committed suicide.

## Kumbhalgarh

80 km north of Udaipur, secluded in the Aravalli Mountains, at an altitude of 1100 metres, lies Kumbhalgarh, the second largest fortress in Rajasthan. It was built by the ruler of the kingdom of Mewar, Rana Kumbha (1443-58). The fort houses 360 temples. A wall about 12 metres high and 8 metres thick with a total of 7 gates encloses the fort. With a length of 38 kilometres, the wall is the second largest in the world after the Great Wall of China.

## Traditional irrigation

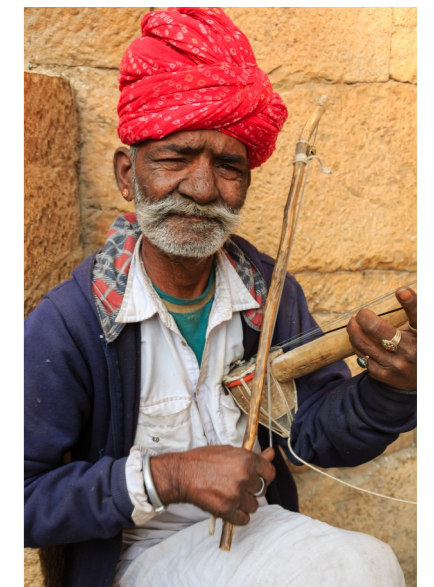
Many small farmers still depend on rotating oxen to irrigate their fields during the dry season. Using cogwheel technology and a chain to which vessels are attached, they fetch the water from the depths and pour it into irrigation channels.



Traditional irrigation, Kamba

## Population

The country's population is a melting pot of many different castes, clans, social groups, religions, cultures and tribes.



Musician, Jaisalmer



Gadsisar Lake, Jaisalmer

## Desert and water

Due to the climatic conditions (average annual temperatures of at least 25-42 degrees Celsius), artificial lakes were created early on as water reservoirs. As early as 1367, Rawal Gadsisar ensured the water supply of Jaisalmer with the Gadsisar rainwater reservoir.

Today, India's largest water canal, the Indira Gandhi, ensures the region's water supply. The water is transported about 650 km from the rivers of the Himalayas to the Thar desert.

## Jaisalmer

Close to the Pakistan border, in the middle of the Thar desert, lies the city of Jaisalmer with its monumental fort. The fort was built in 1156 by the Rajput ruler Rawal Jaisal on a 120-metre-long and 500-metre-wide Trikuta rock. The yellow-brown sandstone has contributed to the city being called the "golden city" today. The old town with Jain temples and havelis (merchants' houses) is located within the fortress.

## Sam Sand Dunes

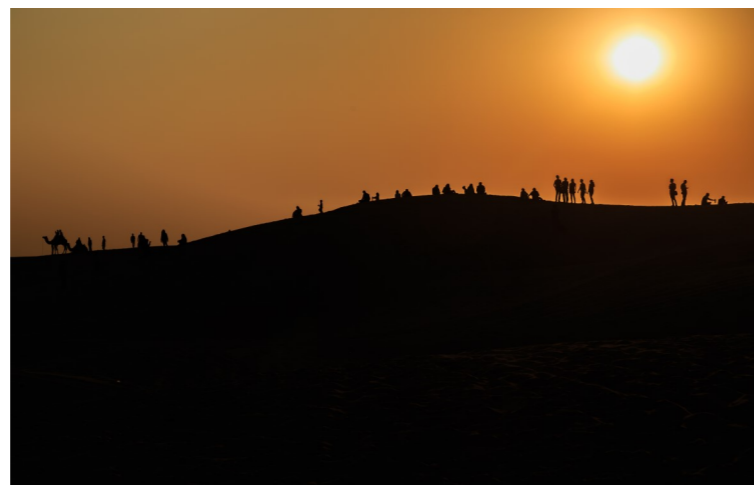
Among tourists, the sand dunes of the Thar Desert, near Sam and Kanoi, are famous for their breathtaking sunsets and their camel rides and jeep safaris.

## Haunted Village Kuldhara

Kuldhara is a famous village that was abandoned by all its inhabitants in just one night. About 200 years ago, the Diwan came to the village to collect taxes. He fell in love with the beautiful daughter of the village chief (Mukhia) and wanted to marry her. However, Mukhia and villagers were against the marriage. Together they decided to flee and leave Kuldhara and 84 other villages.



Camel ride, Kanoi



Sam Sand Dunes, Thar Desert

## Gods and temples

The Hindus have in their world of gods a trinity of the supreme god, a Trimurti. It consists of the gods Brahma the divine creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer.

Brahma is depicted as a mature, bearded and well-fed man with four faces and four arms. He wears the Brahmin cord with jewellery and flower wreath.

The Preserver Vishnu is a radiant youthful god with four arms. He wears royal clothes and a high royal tiara.

Shiva embodies creation and new beginnings as well as preservation and destruction. Together with Shiva, the bull Nandi as his mount, his wife Parvati and his sons Skanda and Ganesha are often depicted.



Kirti Stambha (Tower of Fame), Chittorgarh

The temples of Rajasthan are witnesses to the art and the brilliant lifestyle of the Maharajas of Rajasthan.

Temples can be found in every city, in every fortress in every palace. The number of temples in Rajasthan is incalculable. In the capital Udaipur alone there are more than 5,000 temples.

The most famous temples of Rajasthan are the Brahma Temple in Pushkar, the Dilwara Jain Temple of Mount Abu, the Eklingji Temple in Udaipur, the Jain Temples of Ranakpur, the Karni Mata Temple in Deshnok (Bikaner) and the Shrinathji-dwara.



Fort Village, Chittorgarh

## Clothing

In keeping with the colourful Rajasthani culture, the Rajasthani dresses are adorned with many mirrors and embroidery.

The traditional dress of women includes an ankle-length skirt and a short lace, also known as lehenga or chaniya choli with the headscarf chunari. The traditional dress of men is called angarkha (upper garment).

## How to reach us

If you need more information and pictures, please call us at:

**resuimages Photography**  
Reiner Sutter

Kelterstr. 63  
D-75217 Birkenfeld

+49 7082 415 415

resuimages@outlook.com

Visit us on the web at  
www.resuimages.de