

# Masterpieces of *Rajputana heritage*

The majestic hill forts of Rajasthan stand high in all their grandeur

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**T**he land of kings, the state of Rajasthan, was earlier known as Rajputana. It was divided into various regions, each ruled by a different clan. Over the years, these clans built historical monuments, especially forts on hills which shaped the rich cultural heritage of the state. Constructed between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, these hill forts are longstanding masterpieces of Rajputana heritage. At the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee held in Cambodia, six forts of Rajasthan were declared UNESCO World Heritage sites under the group, Hill Forts of Rajasthan.

### **Chittorgarh Fort, Chittorgarh**

Built by the Mauryan rulers in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it has been named after the Mauryan ruler, Chitrangada Mori and was later ruled by the Sisodia clan. The courtyard's history is studded with a series of palaces, gates, temples and two commemoration towers. Apart from these two, the sprawling fort has four palace complexes, 19 temples, four memorials and 20 water bodies. Constructed in two phases, the first hill fort with one main entrance was established in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and successively fortified until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Its remains are mostly visible on the western edges of the plateau. The second structure was constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of the Sisodia clan when the royal entrance was relocated and fortified with seven gates. The Kumbha Shyam Temple, Mira Bai Temple, Adi Varah Temple, Shringar Chauri Temple and Vijay Stambh were constructed in this phase that illustrate pure Rajputana style of architecture.

## Ranthambore Fort, Sawai Madhopur

While Ranthambore National Park is known for its tigers, the majestic Ranthambore Fort is situated in its premises. Built during the 8th century, the fort draws its name from the hills, Thambhore, the hill on which the fort is situated while Ran comes from a nearby hill. Standing high on the merging point of the Vindhyas and Aravallis, the fort has thick arched doors carved exquisitely on wood and metal. Of the four gateways, only one, Misradhara, still stands.

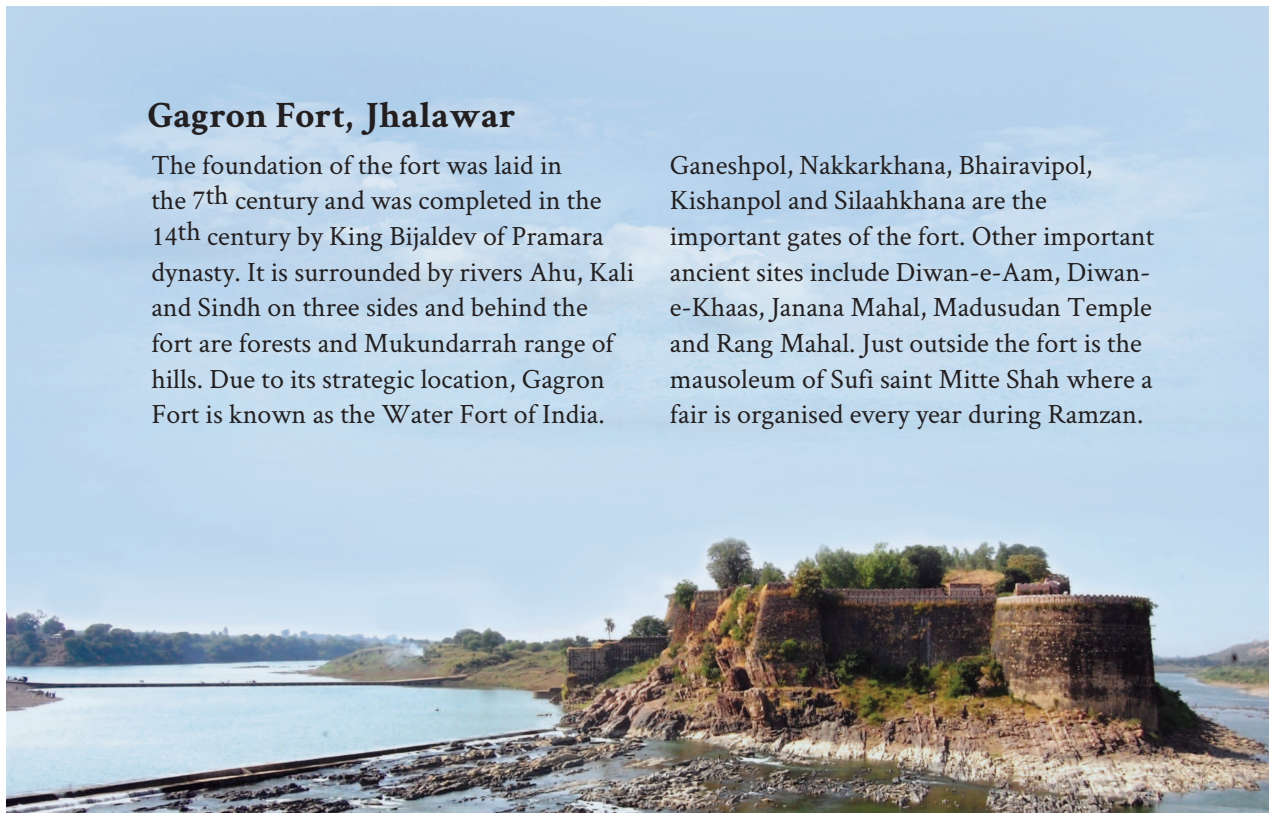




## Gagron Fort, Jhalawar

The foundation of the fort was laid in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and was completed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by King Bijaldev of Pramara dynasty. It is surrounded by rivers Ahu, Kali and Sindh on three sides and behind the fort are forests and Mukundarra range of hills. Due to its strategic location, Gagron Fort is known as the Water Fort of India.

Ganeshpol, Nakkarkhana, Bhairavipol, Kishanpol and Silaahkhana are the important gates of the fort. Other important ancient sites include Diwan-e-Aam, Diwan-e-Khaas, Janana Mahal, Madusudan Temple and Rang Mahal. Just outside the fort is the mausoleum of Sufi saint Mitte Shah where a fair is organised every year during Ramzan.



## Kumbhalgarh Fort, Kumbhalgarh

Located in the western range of the Aravallis, Kumbhalgarh Fort was constructed during the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Rana Kumbha. Enlarged through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kumbhalgarh is the birthplace of Rajput king, Maharana Pratap. The fort has the second largest wall in the world after the Great Wall of China. Thirteen mountain peaks of the Aravallis protect this fortress. The most picturesque palace is Badal Mahal (Palace of Clouds) which boasts of stunning rooms with exquisite colour mishmash of turquoise, white and green. One can have an alluring bird's eye view of the sand dunes of Thar desert from the ramparts of this fort.

## Amer Fort, Jaipur

Known world over for its artistic Hindu style architecture, Amer Fort is located 4km from the capital city of Jaipur. Constructed of red sandstone and marble, the opulent palace is divided into four main sections, each with its own entry gate and courtyard. The main entry is through Suraj Pole (Sun Gate) which leads to Jaleb Chowk, the first main courtyard. This was the place where armies

*The main entry of the fort is through Suraj Pole which leads to Jaleb Chowk*

would hold victory parades. The fort consists of Diwan-e-Aam, Diwan-e-Khas, Sheesh Mahal (mirror palace) and Sukh Niwas where a cool climate is created by winds that blow over a water cascade within the palace. The Hall of Victory, popularly known as the Jai Mandir, is noted for its panels and ceiling that are permeated with mirrors in varied colours and shapes.



## Jaisalmer Fort, Jaisalmer

One of the largest fortifications in the world, Jaisalmer Fort was built in 1156 AD by Rajput ruler Rawal Jaisal from whom it derives its name. The fort stands amid sandy expanse of the Thar desert on Trikuta Hill and has been witness to a number of battles. Its massive yellow sandstone walls are of a lion colour during the day, fading to honey-gold as the sun sets, thereby camouflaging the fort in the

*The fort stands amid sandy expanse of the Thar Desert on Trikuta Hill*

yellow desert. Hence, it is also known as the Golden Fort. The fort has four entrances to the town side, one of which used to be guarded by a canon. The fort enshrines various *havelis* or houses, built by the wealthy merchants. Satyajit Ray, the famous film director, was in awe of the fort, and used it as the backdrop for his *Sonar Kella*, later producing an iconic movie based on the book of the same name.

