

PACK YOUR BAGS

Labour of love



To behold the Ranakpur Jain temple in Rajasthan is like waking up to a dream. It's a paean in marble to the convergence of devotion, spirituality, and the zenith of artistic endeavour

SANDY & VIJAY

It stands like a white pearl framed by the emerald hills of the Aravalli ranges almost in the middle of nowhere. It's a paean in marble to the convergence of devotion, spirituality, and the zenith of artistic endeavour. To behold the Ranakpur Jain temple in front of you is indeed like waking up to a dream. The lovingly shaped contours of the exterior wraps your mind in raptures of the most sublime nature as you behold it for the first time.

Even before you step inside the threshold of the temple, it becomes evident that the structure is a labour of love, a dream that was dreamt by visionaries and artists of the highest calibre. An intricate maze of shikharas rises to the sky as if in perpetual benediction. As you move around the temple, what strikes you is the artist's attention to the minutest details, which has ensured that the temple mesmerises with its beauty from all sides.

Genesis of the marble dream

The Ranakpur Jain Temple in Pali district of Rajasthan stands as an ode to the genius of its builders and as an exquisite offering to the first Jain Tirthankara, Rishabhnanatha. The temple took shape during the 15th century. The seeds of the idea of the sublime temple were sown as a vision to Dharanashah who was a minister in the court of the then King of Mewar, Kumbha Rana. Dharanashah was a man on the spiritual path and he dreamt of building an exquisite temple shaped like the Nalinigulma Viman, a beautiful flying vehicle that figures in Jain mythology.

Dharanashah, with the blessings of his spiritual teacher Acharya Somasundarsuriji, began the single minded pursuit of his dream. Rana Kumbha supported his vision and had land allotted for his dream to take shape. Destiny ensured the harmonic confluence of spirituality with art when a sculptor named Depak from the village of Mundara came up with a design that met the approval of Dharanashah and the work on the temple began in right earnest. It took more than half a century for the grand temple to Rishabhnanatha to become ready. But when it did, every nook and corner of the temple stunned visitors with its exquisite beauty.

Breathtaking art and architecture

It is hard not to fall in love with the beautiful temple that stretches out in front of you. It spans a massive area of about 48,000 sq feet and stands on a raised platform. The temple's exterior overflows with artistic

embellishments that include exquisite carvings, sculptures, doorways, and cupolas. It is a glowing example of the Solanki or Maru-Gurjara style of architecture, which is common in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan and is especially visible in the various Jain temples of the region.

As you step inside the temple it is as if you have stepped into a surreal world that defies description. Long corridors, hallways, and exquisite pillars are seen in all directions. As you gaze in wonder in all the four directions, taking in the artistic majesty that is at once grand and divine, something compels you to gaze upwards. Gazing upwards at the domes that have been given exquisite shape and ornamentation you are reminded of the artistic pinnacle achieved by the strokes of another master at the Sistine Chapel.

Walking through the Ranakpur Jain Temple, also known as the Chaturmukha Temple, one is bound to be lost in the maze of artistic pillars that are seemingly everywhere. There are pillars to your right, pillars to your left, pillars behind you and pillars in front of you. The entire temple is studded with pillars that are as beautiful, if not more than, precious jewels and stones. There are 1,444 pillars on which the three-storeyed temple stands and it is remarkable to note that no two pillars are alike in design. The pillared magnificence of the Ranakpur Jain Temple comes alive in all its grandeur as your eyes take in the visual feast. The temple is scattered with artistic elements of the highest order, sculptures, Torans hanging from arches, domes and carvings.

The temple has four grand doorways in the cardinal directions that lead to the main chamber or the sanctum sanctorum. Four 72-inch identical images of Bhagvan Adinath facing the four directions have your attention riveted with their blissful and divine countenance. Similar images are found installed in the second and third floors of the temple also and it is these images because of which the temple is also referred to as the Chaturmukha Jain Temple.

The temple is a heady mosaic of 76 small domed temples, four assembly halls, and four principal shrines that are located in the four directions. Eighty four Devakulikas or smaller shrines flank the main shrine on all sides as an inspiration to Man to strive for freedom from 84 lakh cycles of birth and death.

Walking through the maze of the grand pillars, the beauty that engulfs you from all sides makes you turn your gaze inwards and for a moment you feel a strange calm, a moment of serene bliss, a joy that goes beyond the physical entity of the marbled grandeur of the temple.

The writers are travel/lifestyle bloggers



Grand pillars of the temple



Exquisite carvings on pillars



One of the grand pillars



Inside the main chamber



View of the Ranakpur Jain Temple from the nearby Parshawnath Temple



Side view of the Ranakpur Jain Temple

Send your contributions in 900 words for the Travel Section to travel.statesman@gmail.com

OFF THE SHELF

At your doorstep

This year, shop for Holi essentials at Amazon.in's Holi store. Customers can choose from a host of exciting products including balloons, colours, herbal gulal, gujiya makers, party essentials, fashion accessories, beauty products, Holi-friendly footwear, water resistant gadgets and more. The store also brings deals from top brands like JBL, boAt, GoPro, Toyshine, Mobilife, Haldiram, Ghasitaram, etc.



Sit back, relax and unwind



Online furniture and interior products brand Fabrento has come up with ranges to give one's house a trendy look. Zane king size bed with mattress and side table with its minimalistic design will never go out of style. Elano Green Leather Recliner three-seater gives a modern and comfortable sitting. Alle Study Table brings flexibility in a small space. Elano Carved Sofa Set (three plus three) brings elegance and sophistication to any living room. Rented prices are on request.

Complete care for men



Inatur has introduced their Argan range for men. These include face wash, face serum, shampoo, hair serum and hair cream. The face wash is a luxurious cream-based cleanser that preserves the moisture balance of the skin. Facial serum contains organic oils and extracts, which helps to hydrate, lighten and brighten skin tone. The shampoo and conditioner is enriched with pure, organic Argan oil known for its hair nourishing and hydrating properties. Argan oil serum often called liquid gold is extremely rich in beneficial nutrients such as fatty acids and Vitamin E. Prices range from Rs 550 to Rs 1,550. For details, visit: <http://www.inatur.in/>

Refined at its best

Lapis Bard has launched their Duco-rium Bordeaux range of large and small leather products in which the richness of fine leather and the glamour of gold converge to enhance one's lifestyle. The range comprises a laptop sleeve, laptop bag, and a tote backpack, along with bi-fold coin-pocket and removable card-sleeve wallets for men. These are available at: www.lapisbard.com, www.williamspenn.net



Smear colours with no worries



Organic skincare brand Nuskay has launched a Post-Holi Ritual Kit that brings to all the much-needed post-Holi skincare rituals, embracing ancient remedies and presenting them in a modern fuss-free format. It also equips one's skin for the upcoming dry weather. It contains Illuminating Face Elixir, Golden Dew Concentrate, Handcrafted Rose Petal Soap, and Sandalwood & Hibiscus Scrub. Prices start at Rs 2,000. These are available at: <https://nuskay.in/>

Comfort food with a twist

Sumeru, in collaboration with chef Manoj Padmanaban, has launched their Baked Paratha Lasagne. It is the perfect blend of desi comfort with an Italian twist. This innovative creation is made up of shredded parathalayered with rich chicken gravy topped with the goodness of molten cheese. At Rs149 for the vegetarian and Rs175 for the non-vegetarian options, this 300gms of mouth-watering goodness is here to elevate one's breakfast, lunch, snack or dinner choices.



Hit the street in style



Escaro Royale has introduced their Spring Collection 2020. The new collection is trendy, chic and stylish and completes the dapper look for men. The Golf Designer Brogue in Black and White incorporates high quality sheepskin leather lining. Amerigo Wholecut Oxford in Tan Burnish comes with a luxury shoe bag, complete shoe care kit and a shoe-horn for greater ease of use and care. The Aurora Ultralight Derby in Natural Wood Finish is crafted with genuine European techniques. Prices range between Rs 8,999 to Rs 9,999.

Pop of vibrant colours

Rangriti has launched its new collection for Holi. The range comes in bright shades, modern cuts and designs. Their assortment of clothes includes salwar kameez, palazzo, straight suit, double layering dress and Anarkali suit in blue, purple, red and white. For details, visit: www.rangriti.com

