

A photograph of the Amanbagh hotel in Jaipur, India. The image shows a multi-story building with a light-colored facade and a balcony with a decorative railing. A large tree with a thick trunk and dense foliage is in the foreground, partially obscuring the building. The building has several windows and a balcony with a decorative railing. The word "AMANBAGH" is written in white capital letters across the middle of the image. The scene is set in a lush, green environment with a large tree in the foreground and a body of water reflecting the building and the tree.

AMANBAGH

Experience Guide

The Amanbagh Experience	03	Spiritual Immersion	19
Revisit The Past	05-06	Narayani Mata Temple The Temple Town of Neelkanth Fire Meditation Celebration of Love	
Pratapgarh Fort and Village Ajabgarh Village, Fort, Temple and Mosque Abhaneri Stepwell Bhangarh		Family Adventures	21
Cultural Insight	07	Treasure Hunts Nature Walks Rangoli Art Garland Making Cricket, Badminton and Croquet Traditional Indian Games Visit a Local School	
Cow Dust Tour Jhaki Excursion in Gola Ka Bas (Craft Tour)		Cycling Henna Tattoos Children's Yoga Gardening	
Active Adventures	09-11		
Somsagar Lake The King's Throne Gwara Cycling Mansarovar Lake (Seasonal) Camel Polo Camel Rides Sariska Tiger Reserve Birdwatching			
Culinary Journeys	13-17		
Dinner Under The Stars Library Terrace Cooking Classes Gwaadi Dinner Private Pool Pavilion Jhilmil Baada Pool Colonnade Chhatri Dinner Somsagar Lake Picnic Bhangarh Picnic			

The Amanbagh Experience

The largest state in India, Rajasthan is endowed with exceptional natural beauty and a fascinating history. The northwest is dominated by the Thar Desert, separated from the more fertile southeastern regions by the Aravalli Hills. One of the oldest mountain ranges on earth and the setting for Amanbagh, these hills stretch 850km from the southwest to the northeast corners of the state and provide a plethora of opportunities for outdoorsmen, nature enthusiasts and historians alike.

A 90-minute drive from Jaipur or a short helicopter flight, Amanbagh lies in a verdant garden, close to traditional villages and historic attractions such as the 17th century Ajabgarh Fort, the deserted (and some say haunted) city of Bhangarh and the 11th century Narayani Mata Temple. Activities range from picnics in marble gorges and camel safaris to shikara boat trips on a nearby lake and sunrise yoga in a ruined city. Tailored to suit individual preferences, every activity is a bespoke adventure designed to reveal a unique facet of this colourful state.



Revisit the Past

The 'Land of Kings', Rajasthan only became part of India in 1949. Before that, it was a collection of 23 warring princedom ruled by Rajputs - fierce warrior families, rich in elephants, jewels and land. The Rajputs had risen to prominence during the 6th century, been subjugated by Babur and Akbar the Great's Mughal invaders in the 14th century, tolerated the dominance of the British Raj in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and survived with pride intact.

Pratapgarh Fort and Village

Pratapgarh is a small walled village about 40 minutes from Amanbagh. It is overlooked by a deserted, hilltop fort built in 1775 by the first Maharajah of Alwar, Pratap Singh. The high boundary wall was erected to protect the village from attacks by neighbouring maharajahs.

A hike to the fort will reward you with amazing views of the village and surrounding countryside. Explore the old buildings, find the only remaining canon, and visit the colourful temple. We can arrange yoga or meditation in the open chamber here.

On the western side of the village is the famous Radha Swami Temple and a small ashram. The temple houses over 5,000 ancient books and manuscripts, including letters believed to have been written by Pratap Singh himself.

A lively makeshift market lines the main street of the village and in its older quarters, merchants sit on wide verandas, smoking hookah pipes while patiently waiting for customers.

Ajabgarh Village, Fort, Temple and Mosque

The Ajabgarh temple, built in 1635, features a 24-pillar open courtyard with a marble façade. It once housed bejewelled statues of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita, but these fell victim to thieves some time ago. The temple and fort were connected by an underground passage originally designed for use by royal ladies so they could enter the temple in complete privacy.

The 17th-century mazaar (mosque) on the way to Ajabgarh was erected in the memory of Baba Kapoor Shah, the great Sufi mystic who devoted his life to meditation, to Allah and to the welfare of society. His disciples still visit his favourite meditation spot, a small chhatri at the top of a hill to practise the peaceful art of inner reflection.

We can organise daytime excursions to Ajabgarh on foot, by camel, or in our open-top jeeps. Our morning walk takes guests through the Ajabgarh Village, where they can meet locals and gain insight into rural life here.

Abhaneri Stepwell

About 65km from Amanbagh is a magnificent baori (stepwell pool), believed to be one of the oldest in Rajasthan. Almost 20 metres in depth and revealing 13 levels of steps, it was built in the 11th century. There is also a collection of exquisitely carved statues collected from the adjacent Harshad Mata temple.

The drive to Abhaneri takes you through the old town of Bandikui, which, during British rule, was the largest railway junction in North India. Allow four to five hours for the round trip by car, returning via Dausa, and including a picnic lunch. This experience can also be combined with a trip to Agra.



Bhangarh

Said to be haunted, the splendid ruins of Bhargarh - a medieval site of great archaeological importance - lie 12km from Amanbagh. Built in the late 1500s by Jaipur royal, Diwan Madho Singh (younger brother of Maharajah Man Singh, Akbar the Great's general), this now uninhabited city once teemed with magnificent bazaars, a palace, gardens, temples and bathing pools. Legend has it that only a generation after its completion, it was deserted overnight after being cursed by an evil court magician who had unsuccessfully attempted to seduce Bhargarh's virtuous and beautiful queen.

Bhangarh is a National Heritage Site, and though it is often hailed as one of India's top-ten attractions, very few tourists manage to include it in their itineraries. Mornings and late afternoons are an ideal time to visit this deserted city - an amazing setting for photography, meditation and yoga.

Cultural Insight

Amanbagh is situated in the middle of India's fabled 'golden triangle', between New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, yet reveals a side of Rajasthan untouched by tourism. Living much as they have done for centuries, neighbouring communities include the Meena, the dominant tribal Hindu community. Earning their living by rearing goats and sheep, they trace their origins to the mythological Hindu texts as descendants of Meen Dev (the fish god), an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The region is also home to different castes, including Brahmins (priests), Rajputs (warriors), Baniya (merchants), Gujar (cattle owners), Regur (carpet weavers), Ahir (basket weavers), Khatik (leather workers), Mali (farmers) and Kumhar (potters), who all co-exist harmoniously, adding to the rich culture of the area.

Cow Dust Tour

An all-time favourite with Amanbagh guests, this tour is a great way to experience rural Rajasthan. Head out in one of our jeeps for a tour of the surrounding villages during peak hour - late afternoon when our neighbours herd their goats, cows and buffaloes home after a day's grazing. The friendly locals may invite you for chai in one of their homes - a profound and inspiring experience.

Please don't demean our neighbours by offering them anything other than your warm smiles and respect. They consider you an honoured guest of their village. Should you wish, you are welcome to support the local community by means of a donation back at Amanbagh. Our Front Office team can provide more details about our community programmes.

This tour can also take place at sunrise when the world wakes up. You will smell the cooking fires being lit, see the goats coming out of their overnight shelters, and watch children pumping water from the village wells - often taking a cold alfresco shower.

Jhaki Excursion in Gola Ka Bas (Craft Tour)

The villagers of Gola Ka Bas are renowned for their craftsmanship. Witness the skill behind the Indian footwear that adorns every market, the precision of patterns in the carpets they weave and the detailing in awe-inspiring marble sculptures.



Active Adventures

Autumn, winter and spring's warm days are ideal for spending time in the region's great outdoors, whether trekking, cycling or exploring the flora and fauna.

Somsagar Lake

Reached by a dramatic walk through a narrow gorge, Somsagar Lake was built in 1598 during Emperor Akbar's visit to Ajabgarh. Its purpose was to provide a watering hole for the surrounding wildlife and birds. A Hindu shrine believed to have been built at the time of the lake's creation still stands.

A relatively easy walk that can culminate in meditation and yoga and/or breakfast, it takes approximately 45 minutes to reach the lake from Amanbagh. One of our favourite treks continues past Somsagar, crossing through the valley to the traditional Meena Village of Kala Para, where a jeep will collect you for the return trip. The complete journey takes approximately 3.5 hours and is comfortable for an average fitness level. Sturdy walking shoes, sensible clothes and a sunhat are essential.

The King's Throne

Carved out of the rockface on a hillside just behind Amanbagh is a stone throne, which according to legend, was used by the Maharajah of Alwar on his tiger-hunting expeditions in the area. The Maharajah's servants would tether a goat in the clearing while he sat on his throne, gun in hand, waiting for a tiger or leopard to be lured close enough. Walk through a small village and a picturesque valley before a short climb up to the throne. You can walk there with a guide or travel partway by jeep and walk the remainder of the way through the fields and forest.

This is an easy stroll, apart from the final scramble up the rocky ridge to sit on the King's Throne. The return walking time from Amanbagh is around 2 hours.

Gwara Cycling

Gwara is the local name for a small village, and at Amanbagh, we are lucky to have almost 20 such villages and hamlets nearby. Cycling is an enchanting way of soaking in the atmosphere of village life and reaching into the soul of rural Rajasthan. The villagers are friendly and happy to have their photos taken with you. The pace of Gwara life is timeless, but behind the serene exterior of the traditional dwellings lies much industry. You may come across someone making pottery, a barber shop, a carpet maker, a school, or simply a group of children playing. Make this a memorable experience by joining a family in their home for breakfast.

Mountain bikes and helmets are also available for more adventurous cycling (with or without a guide).

Mansarovar Lake (Seasonal)

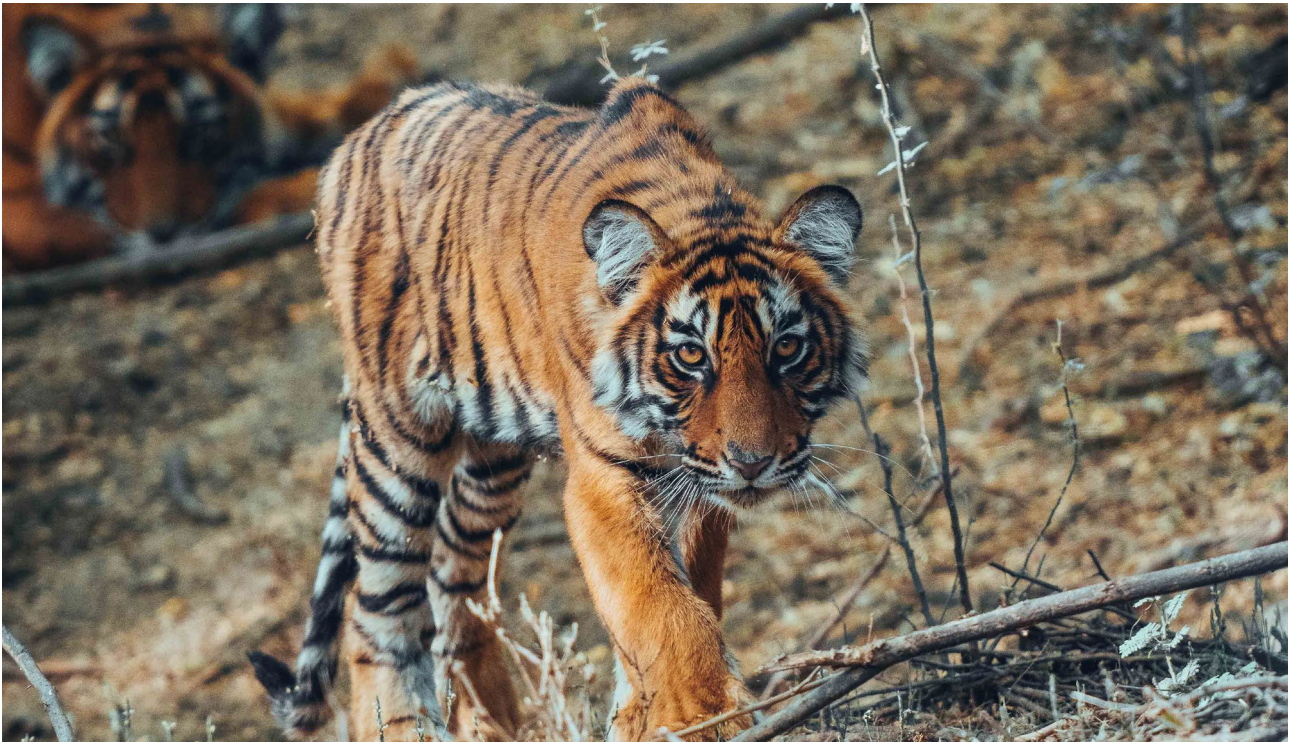
At the foot of the dirt road leading up to Neelkanth, 45 minutes from Amanbagh, Mansarovar Lake becomes a birdwatcher's paradise from October to February when the many species of local birds are joined by migratory birds from Europe. Mansarovar means 'Made by Shiva' and like its more famous namesake in the Himalayas, is reputed to bestow beauty and youth on anyone who bathes in it.

We recommend an early morning or a late afternoon visit to observe the variety of birdlife. Our resident naturalist is an expert in identifying not only our feathered friends, but also the rich variety of flora and fauna native to our area.

Croquet

Enjoy a game of croquet on the lawn with a cocktail in hand and cucumber sandwiches on standby. Our handcrafted croquet set is available for guests.





Camel Polo

Enjoy the perfect introduction to the world's grandest and arguably most entertaining sport. In this adaptation of the age-old game, the camel replaces the graceful horse. No previous equestrian (or camel riding) experience is required. You will learn the basics of polo before you put your new skills to the test in a competitive match.

Camel Rides

There is a story that when the Creator made all the animals, he had spare parts left over; he put them together and created a unique animal - the camel. They might look ungainly getting to their feet, but camels offer an excellent way to take in the scenery at an easy pace. Our camels, including our favourite pet camel, Babu, are here to transport you through the valley or simply for a leisurely ride around the property. If you would not prefer to travel too far on this 'ship of the desert', one of our jeeps will collect you for the return journey. Our camel drivers always walk alongside so you can feel quite safe despite the swaying gait. We also have a camel cart ideal for children to ride around the grounds or for a family excursion on the back roads behind Amanbagh.

Sariska Tiger Reserve

Covering an area of 765 square kilometres, this reserve was once the personal hunting ground of the Maharaja of Alwar. Today, it is a sanctuary for endangered tigers and is also home to leopards, wildcats, caracals, nilgai, chital, sambar deer, wild boars, jackals, langurs and macaque monkeys.

Early morning and late afternoon are the best times for wildlife safaris as the animals are more active. The park is closed annually from June to September. The nearest entrance to the reserve is 45 minutes from Amanbagh.

Birdwatching

During the autumn and winter months, more than 200 species of native and migratory birds can be identified around Amanbagh and on the edges of Sariska Tiger Reserve. Lists of these birds are available, and our resident wildlife expert will take you on birdwatching excursions to find them.





Culinary Journeys

Private dining can be enjoyed in a host of venues on the property. We will take care of every detail, ensuring an unforgettable experience.

Dinner Under The Stars

Imagine a hundred candles lining the way, soft white fabric flowing in the breeze, a butler, a musician.... dreams do come true.

Library Terrace

This lofty venue overlooking the main swimming pool is ideal for private dinners for two to 12 guests. Savour authentic Rajasthani flavours surrounded by flower rangolis and softly glowing diyas.



Private Pool Pavilion

Enjoy a romantic and relaxing evening in the privacy of a pool pavilion with shimmering curtains, floral rangolis, diyas and soothing sounds of traditional Indian music setting the scene.

Pool Colonnade

See the twilight sky changing colours and let the flickering candles light your way. Overlooking our scenic pool and decorated with shimmering curtains, diyas and flower petals - a special way to end the day.

Jhilmil Baada

Experience the outdoor feasting of royal hunting parties of old at Jhilmil Baada. A baada, or cleared patch of land, was where the royal cooks would create a feast out of the hunt. In a rustic clearing lit by lanterns, watch your personal chefs in action preparing traditional ghee-, yoghurt- and buttermilk-basted spit roasts and millet flatbreads over an open fire along with vegetables cooked in clay pots.



Cooking Class

Cooking classes can be arranged with Amanbagh's expert chefs and can be as simple or as creative as you wish. Pick your own herbs and vegetables in our organic garden, then master the intricacies of spices, and enjoy your favorite Indian dishes afterward in our atmospheric private dining venue, the gwaadi.

Gwaadi Dinner

Within Amanbagh's organic garden, the gwaadi is a venue constructed using traditional methods with earth walls and an open fire. During the day, enjoy a cooking class or demonstration. At night, it is reserved for private dining. Savour the cuisine from diverse regions of Rajasthan such as Mewar, Marwar and Nagaur, all to live soundtracks by local musicians.





Off-Site Private Dining

The cooler temperatures in winter and late autumn are ideal for alfresco dining - be it lazing on cushions in a historic chhatri overlooking the valley, or under a banyan tree on the lawns of Bhangarh. Evenings are particularly magical, especially if you are fortunate enough to be here around the full moon. Choose your location, then leave the rest to us.

Ancient Chhatri Dinner

For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, allow us to whisk you away to an ancient chhatri, just 5 minutes from Amanbagh. Take one hundred diyas, add to it a million stars, one musician and a loved one, and you get the perfect setting for an unforgettable evening. A private chef and server complete the picture.

Somsagar Lake Breakfast

A truly tranquil spot, Somsagar Lake is the ideal setting for a waterside, open-air breakfast. Relax on cushions as you spot birds and perhaps even watch a local farmer harvesting water chestnuts. Water levels vary greatly, depending on the season.

Bhangarh Picnic Breakfast

Combine a visit to the ancient city of Bhangarh with a picnic breakfast atop a temple with breathtaking countryside views. We will set up cushions and low tables so you can enjoy your breakfast in consummate comfort.



Spiritual Immersion

Rajasthan is a harmonious melting pot of religions and Amanbagh guests curious about its traditions can explore the region through temple blessings and guided meditation sessions in various scenic locations.

Narayani Mata Temple

Just 14km from Amanbagh, this sacred temple, established in 1058 AD, is believed to be the site of northern India's first sati, a Hindu practice in which a widow throws herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The story goes that Narayani and her new husband were returning to their village and while resting in the shade of a banyan tree, her husband was fatally bitten by a snake. During the cremation at this fateful site, Narayani chose to sacrifice herself, taking her husband's head in her lap and asking the villagers whether she could be of any help. They requested water, which miraculously sprang from the ground and continues to flow to this day. Sparked by her prayers, the pyre ignited and consumed them both, and Narayani became one of the most revered sati.

Witnessing the evening aarti at the temple, a ceremonial song prayer with the resonant sounds of bells and gongs, is a deeply profound experience.

The Temple Town of Neelkanth

Neelkanth, named after the blue-throated reincarnation of Lord Shiva, lies 30km (about 45 minutes by car) from Amanbagh. Surrounded by mountains, this ancient temple town features over 80 temple ruins from the 6th century, with Neelkantheshwar being the most renowned. This exquisitely carved temple predates even the others; the energy within the sanctum being tangible.

We suggest combining an excursion to Neelkanth with a visit to Narayani Mata or Mansarovar Lake.

Fire Meditation

This ancient ritual, said to have originated around 1500 BC, combines fire and mantra chanting with deep symbolism to help fulfill a specific desire of an individual, a family or a society.

Celebration of Love

Celebrate your love amidst the serene grandeur and natural splendour of Amanbagh. Commence your experience with a 90-minute couple's spa treatment designed for rejuvenating bliss.

Following this, our skilled artisans adorn the bride with intricate henna patterns, each design symbolising her radiant journey toward a life filled with shared joy and fulfillment.

The ritual of your love celebration takes place beneath the dome of a majestic chhatri, where the timeless atmosphere serves as a guardian of your vows.

Your sojourn concludes with a private dinner setup in one of Amanbagh's stunning, secluded settings—creating memories to cherish for a lifetime.



Family Adventures

While our cow dust tour and camel rides are ideal for families, almost all of Amanbagh's activities can be tailored to suit younger guests, whether cooking classes, hikes, or visits to historic archaeological sites. We also offer additional activities for children, including the following:

Treasure Hunts

Amanbagh's beautiful garden is a wonderland for children, especially when a treasure is added to the equation! Follow ingenious clues or a picture map (different each time) to find out just what lies hidden on our leafy grounds.

Nature Walks

A host of fascinating creatures live on or visit our property. Join our wildlife guide to learn about the insects, birds, bugs, butterflies and monkeys, and the plants and trees they live on. You will even learn how to identify the spoor marks of wild animals.

Rangoli Art

There's no paper required for this ancient art form! Learn to create beautiful patterns on the floor or outside on the ground with flower petals, lentils and coloured rice. Thought to bring good luck, rangoli designs are often inspired by nature.

Garland Making

Varmalla are traditional Indian flower garlands worn around the neck for various Hindu festivals and weddings. Typically made from marigolds, roses, jasmine and other flowers in season, their fragrance is also heavenly.

Cricket, Badminton and Croquet

Our lawns are perfect for sport, whether a cricket match, a game of badminton or some competitive croquet. We have all the equipment needed, and our staff are always game for a match or two.

Traditional Indian Games

Learning something new is always a thrill. Try your hand at Pitthu (a throwing and catching game also known as Seven Stones), Chaupar (a cross and circle board game) and Kanche (marbles), then teach your friends back home.

Visit a Local School

This experience is inspirational in many ways, for both visitors and locals. Visiting children will see not just how different rural schools in India are from their own schools back home, but also how they are similar.

Cycling

Cycling is a fantastic way to explore the countryside and local villages, with opportunities to interact with local children along the way. Our guide will design a route to suit age and fitness, and picnics can be arranged.

Henna Tattoos

These temporary body designs known as mehndi are an art form in India, used since antiquity to decorate the hands and feet of brides and grooms. The brown 'ink' comes from the plant Lawsonia Inermis, and the 'tattoos' usually last three to four weeks.

Children's Yoga

Yoga sessions can be tailored to children of all ages. Younger kids will love the story-like progression of asanas based on animal shapes, while older children will enjoy the challenge of balances and faster-flowing sequences.

Gardening

Children can join Amanbagh's gardeners for a digging, planting, picking, smelling and learning session that will see them getting their hands dirty with good clean earth, tasting sun-ripened fresh produce and no doubt, coming face-to-face with a few interesting insects!

AMANBAGH

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