

THE TELEGRAPH

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“ Fantastically luxurious camping in the middle of India’s Thar desert.”

SUJAN The Serai
Jaisalmer, India

8/10
Telegraph expert rating

“ The Serai offers fantastically luxurious camping in the middle of India’s Thar desert. Guests can wander between a canvas-covered library, bar and restaurant to a raised infinity pool, before retreating to elegantly decorated rooms that resemble hotel suites more than tents. ”

7/10 Location

In 100 acres of private scrubland, around a 40-minute drive (25 miles) from Jaisalmer, India’s golden city. Another railway station, Chandan, is 2.5 miles away, but it’s far easier to arrange a transfer direct from the city. How highly you rate the camp’s location depends on what you’re looking for. Those hoping to spend a lot of time in Jaisalmer, a 12th-century desert hilltop city famous for its Unesco-listed fort and intricate havelis, may be disappointed. But those seeking an escape from the frequently frenetic pace of India will find an oasis-like retreat. The city is still a pleasant distance for day trips, but feels eons away in the lush stillness of the camp, or when exploring the nearby sand dunes.

9/10 Style and Character

This boutique Relais & Châteaux property blends traditional style with modern luxury. Common areas are decked out in leather, tartan and gleaming furniture from J&R Guram: a company that has painstakingly revitalised near-extinct craft skills. Outside, lush greenery and herb-scented gardens abound, and come nightfall, every inch of the main area is covered in flickering candles.

See more images at [Booking.com](#)

9/10 Service and Facilities

Upon arrival, guests make their way up the honey-coloured stone steps to the main tent, where a member of staff waits with cold towels and lemonade infused with basil grown on the estate farm. This is symptomatic of the Serai’s level of service. Staff are engaged without being obsequious, and quickly come to feel like old friends. Bejoy, an expert on the local environment, talked us through the night skies with the aid of an on-site telescope and thrilled us with stories while on a morning bird-watching walk.

A pool on a raised sandstone platform is a focal point, while a series of spacious tents make up a blissful spa. There’s no gym or tennis court, but other activities more than compensate, with expertly guided tours of Jaisalmer, an open-air cinema, and demonstrations from local artisans. A highlight was the Sundowner on the Dunes: a jeep then camel ride across the desert, followed by champagne and tiffin while watching the sunset on leather chairs set up on the sand. Chess, cocktails and Cuban cigars are all on offer in the tented library.

- Bar
- Parking
- Restaurant
- Spa
- Laundry
- Pool
- Room service
- Wi-Fi

8/10 Rooms

The Serai has 21 ‘rooms’ in total; 14 tented suites, six luxury suites and one royal tented suite set in an exclusive, walled-off compound. The latter two have their own private pools. Each air-conditioned canvas tent is erected on ‘Jaisalmer’ sandstone, with more Victorian-safari-style furnishings. Space is ample. Each suite comes with super-king bed, outdoor terrace lounge, a sitting room with writing desk, and enormous, double-sink bathrooms with waffle robes, walk-in showers and glass-stoppered bottles filled with Kama toiletries. Brass-plated service buttons will bring a butler, housekeeping or security respectively.

8/10 Food and Drink

Despite its isolated location, there’s a good amount of different dining spaces to choose from. An indoor tented dining room filled with teak tables serves the hotel’s made-to-order breakfast each morning, with fresh fruit juices and a range of both Indian and western options. Dinner can be eaten al fresco, on the main pavilion’s lantern-filled stone terrace or by the pool. A private dinner out in the desert can also be arranged, with a bar set up under the stars, local musicians and huge campfires. Surprisingly the best meal of our stay, however, was a private breakfast of sticky sweet chai, thali and warm parathas in the camp’s gardens.

7/10 Value for Money

Double rooms from £588. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi and laundry services.