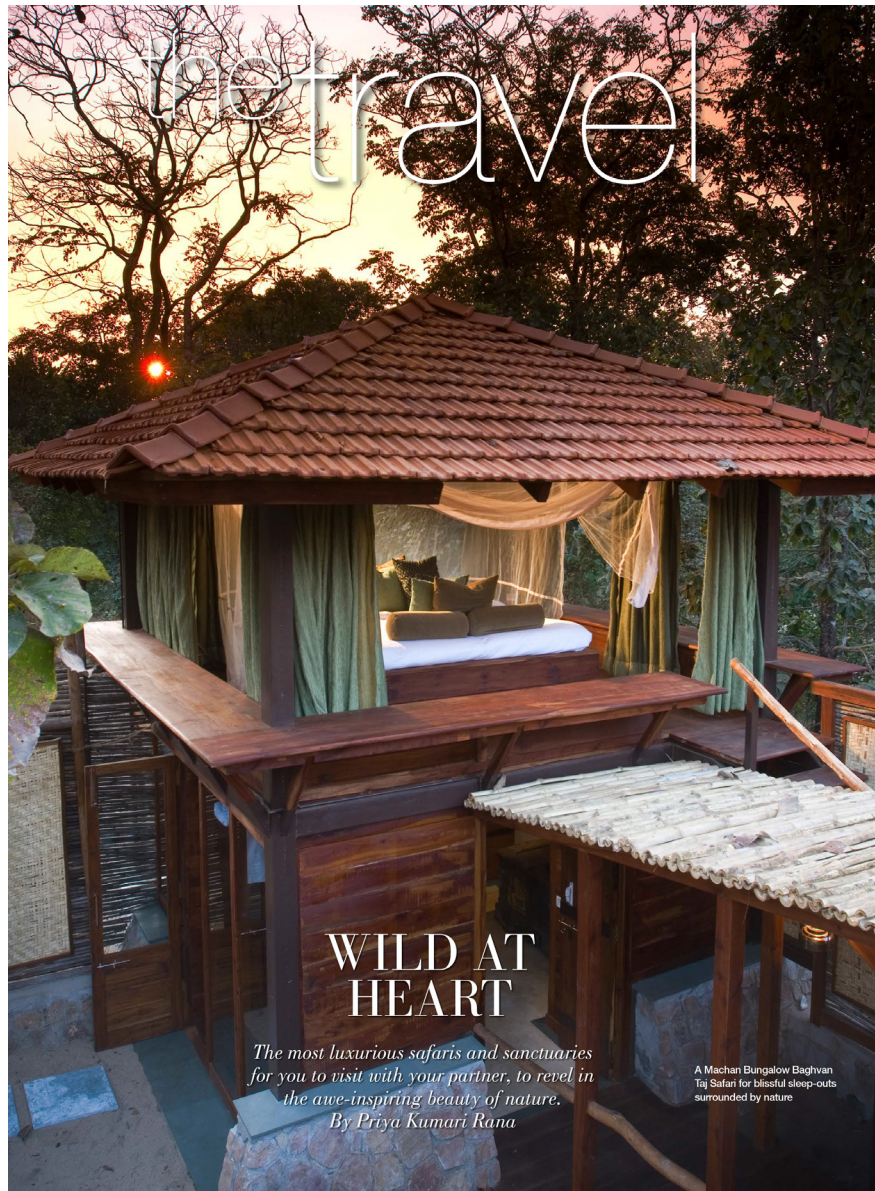


“The real star.”



WILD AT HEART

*The most luxurious safaris and sanctuaries
for you to visit with your partner, to revel in
the awe-inspiring beauty of nature.
By Priya Kumari Rana*

A Machan Bungalow Baghvan
Taj Safari for blissful sleep-outs
surrounded by nature

THE TRAVEL

2022

The TRAVEL

SUJÁN JAWAI Jawai Bandh, Rajasthan

Set amidst ancient granite hills and scrubland of Marwar, this luxurious tented camp redefines glamping, even as you enjoy leopard sightings and a brand-new equine wellness therapy, featuring the fiercely-loyal Kathiawari and Marwari horses. Amidst the former royal Rajput States of Jodhpur and Udaipur, the property borrows its name from the seasonal Jawai river that flows through the arid landscape. Think spacious, air-conditioned tents propped up in the middle of rocky terrain comprising granite hills, which are 850 million years old. This Relais & Châteaux property is your own private wilderness, with the Suján group's comforting and luxe touches.

Lodging is the real star (as are the excursions and safaris, of course), with eight Rock Suites, one Royal Panthera Suite, and the brand-new private encampment called Eden. Suján founders Anjali and Jaisal Singh have personally overseen the refurbishment of the interiors, with natural fabrics and weaves. Guest areas like lounge and bar tents have been opened up and brought closer to the wilderness, allowing further engagement with the magnificent views. As supporters of not only the wildlife and forests of the area, the Singhs are opening a boutique in each camp (with some pieces designed by Anjali) that supports local traditions and crafts.

In stark contrast to the rugged, rocky landscape are the scarlet turbans of the Rabari herdsmen and herdswomen who roam the area with their flocks of sheep. Suján Jawai pays homage to them by not only organising strolls with this fascinating pastoral community (the men wear white *angarkhas* and *dhotis* with *majris*, while the women wear



Uninterrupted views of the rocky terrain at Suján Jawai



The fierce and loyal Kathiawari and Marwari horses are the true stars of the equine therapy programme

deep-red *lehengas* and *dupattas*, gold *naths* and white *churas*), but also with photographs inside the tents that highlight their colourful attires.

Since you are in the leopard territory, hop into any one of the two wilderness drives that leave the camp in 4 x 4 Gypsies, in search of the elusive big cats. While leopards are the predominant species in the area, you will most probably chance upon antelope, hyena, crocodile, and smaller mammals, too. On safari, there are trackers and expert drivers who will look out for the precise location of, say, a leopard, so sightings are virtually guaranteed if the animal happens to be in that area. The area is also home to over 250 species of birds, from the migratory greater flamingos and sarus cranes to resident raptors. What makes your expedition all the more enjoyable is a packed picnic with hot beverages and breakfast food.

Dine al fresco with chairs surrounding a bonfire as you sip a spirit of your choice, or eat a hearty Rajasthani meal—with their farm-fresh produce (ethically-sourced from local producers), Suján Jawai's cuisine is a mix of local delicacies and international classics. What Anjali and Jaisal have added this year is the concept of Riding in the Wild—where not only can you explore the rugged landscape on horseback, but also improve your mental health through their Healing with Horses programme. The first of its kind experience in the country, the programme aims to spiritually connect you with the horse handpicked by you. Tenacious and loyal, these magnificent creatures are surely bound to teach you a thing or two.



Cool-off with a dip in the pool after a long, hot safari



Learn to tie a bright red *saafa* (turban), Rabari-style, by a member of the nomadic Rajasthan tribe



Minimalist lobby and lounge tents