



connect resident

THE REAL JAIPUR

Jaipur, the centuries-old home of Rajasthan's royal family, is beginning to embrace the cutting edge. **Samir Andrea Kasliwal**, an heir to the 166-year-old Gem Palace jewelry store, explains.

as told to Victoria Gometsky

P EOPLE ARE A LITTLE confused when they meet me, because I have an Indian name but my accent is Italian. My father is from Jaipur, but I was born in Bologna, where my mother is from. In 2010, I moved to Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. There aren't many half Italian half Indians in India; I think I know all of them by now.

My family's business, the Gem Palace, is located on Mirza Ismail Road (people here call

it M.I. Road), in central Jaipur. Our family has owned the jewelry store for nine generations—and the decor hasn't changed since it opened in 1852. People are amazed when I show them Jackie Kennedy's signature in our guest book. But that's nothing compared to the jewelry

we make. Much of it features different motifs that are characteristic of Indian designs: elephants, peacocks, lotus flowers. The gems are the real standouts—everything from 20-carat Colombian emeralds and strands of natural pearls to diamonds from the legendary Golconda mines near Hyderabad.

I spent a lot of my childhood in the store, though I really started adapting to the local culture when I moved here to be more involved in the business. Jaipur is more conservative than Delhi or Mumbai, mainly because of the city's history as the seat of Rajasthan's royal family. People here are very attached to tradition and heritage.

But over the past decade, the capital has become much more cosmopolitan. Jaipur International Airport is being renovated and will have direct flights to and from London. Already we have nonstop flights to Dubai and Bangkok. People who visited Jaipur just 10 years ago are shocked to see how rapidly it has transformed into a metropolis with an interesting skyline. There are more cool places now, run by a young creative crowd that's able to look beyond the borders of India. They've had a huge influence on the shopping scene as well as the food scene, which is improving every day.

Jaipur has always needed more places where people can spend recreational time. This is what a new generation of restaurants and shops, like Parampara Jaipur, are aiming to provide. The boutique is a gallery shop that showcases art, fashion, and photography. These are places where, yes, you can shop and eat, but where you'll also find good music and green space.

The royal family of Jaipur is the most prominent custodian of the cultural, artistic, and architectural heritage of the city, but we're all—old residents and new—working together to promote the city.

I have friends who, whenever they come to Jaipur, change their return ticket once, then twice, because they want to stay longer. And it's because of the vibe we've created. The city is the capital of fun right now.

As a ninth-generation heir to Jaipur's Gem Palace, **Samir Andrea Kasliwal** is responsible for maintaining ties with the royal family—and with other celebrity clients (hi, Oprah).



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARA HYLTON

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The Gem Palace

"Our store is a shop, but it's also a meeting place for friends. On a typical day, I'm either creating designs based on the gemstones I have available or I'm entertaining clients. You never know who's going to walk in. It could be Kendall Jenner or Oprah or Hillary Clinton." gempalace.com

Jantar Mantar

"I love going to this 18th-century observatory to study the way the light hits the buildings. The geometric shapes of Jantar Mantar find their way into my designs, especially in the *jaali* filigree work—intricate gold and silver designs—on the back of our jewelry." jantarmantar.org

Suján Rajmahal Palace

"This was a summer home belonging to the royal family of Jaipur before it was converted a few years ago into a boutique hotel with just 13 guest rooms. The terrace is the perfect place to enjoy an afternoon tea in a Wes Anderson-type atmosphere." sujanluxury.com/raj-mahal

Parampara Jaipur

"Virginia Borrero de Castro, a Colombian designer, recently opened this boutique. For her brand, De Castro Moda, she uses handloomed fabrics and embroidered textiles from local artisans. She also stocks pieces from designers around the world." *Mani Mahal, Panch Batti, M.E. Road*



Suján Rajmahal Palace



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