

On Grant Gibson's don't-miss list: Hawa Mahal, or the Palace of the Winds.



JAIPUR, INDIA

Interior designer Grant K. Gibson experiences a life-changing journey

by MARY JO BOWLING photography by GRANT GIBSON

For interior designer Grant K. Gibson, principal at Grant K. Gibson Interior Design and author of the forthcoming book *The Curated Home: A Fresh Take on Tradition*, traveling to India has been a lifelong dream. After years of planning, he recently made the journey. He fell in love with Jaipur, the capital of the Indian state of Rajasthan in the northern part of the country. For the designer, it was a life-changing event, and he plans on returning soon.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: An Indian woman draped in colorful saris in Jaipur; the dining room at 47 Jobner Bagh Hotel is home to a traditional portrait; the blue-and-white dining room at Bar Palladio is the designer's choice for lunch.



"THERE ARE ALSO WONDERFUL ARCHITECTURAL GEMS—INCLUDING PALACES WITH ARCHES, FRESCOES AND SECRET MIRRORED ROOMS."

Why did you want to go to India?

My mother was in the fashion industry, and during my childhood, she would travel there to produce textiles. Going myself has long been on my list. I feel like other trips I've taken in recent years—to Mexico, Istanbul and Morocco—were just warm-ups for this journey. Even though some friends offered to go with me, I chose to do it alone. For my first trip, I wanted to learn about and discover the culture at my own pace.

How did you plan for the trip?

I started planning a year in advance, and I began by talking to friends. People had interesting reactions—some of them very negative. But other people were very supportive, and steered me in hiring a driver and booking hotels.

What were the negative points people brought up?

It's not an easy trip—it involves two 12-hour flights, and that nearly killed me. Once you are there, it feels like the complete opposite of the United States. The highs and lows of society in India are so

much more dramatic than what we are accustomed to seeing, and I saw a lot of poverty in the streets. However, the people I met there are the nicest I've ever encountered. It was striking how welcoming, friendly, positive and helpful people were.

What was the highlight of your trip?

I fell in love with Jaipur, where I spent a lot of time exploring the factories where textiles are made. I started by contacting the vendors I've worked with in my design business. I've dealt with many of these companies for years to produce fabrics and rugs. I connected with them and let them know I was coming to India and asked them if we could meet. Seeing the factories in person was amazing, and I discovered some capabilities and options I didn't know they had. It was eye-opening and inspiring to see the kinds of embroidery and block-printing they could do in person. In one case, I was able to see a rug that is being woven for one of my clients.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The designer suggests the mural-studded dining room at Caffé Palladio for lunch; designer Grant K. Gibson stands in front of the Taj Mahal in Agra; a vibrant blue-and-white pattern covers nearly every surface in the City Palace space.

FAVORITES:

HOTEL

47 Jobner Bagh,
jobnerbagh.com

RESTAURANTS

For lunch, Caffé Palladio;
for dinner, Bar Palladio;
for a lassi (an Indian
yogurt drink), Lassiwala

SEE

Visit City Palace and the
palace Hawa Mahal. Hike
up the hill (don't ride the
elephants) to Amer Fort
to see another amazing
palace and stunning view.

SHOP

Saurashtra Impex has
block prints, cashmere
and vintage pieces. Kishor
Maheshwari is the owner
and is happy to help you.

READ

Love Jaipur, Rajasthan by
Fiona Caulfield



Does Jaipur have other features you recommend?

There's a wonderful shopping scene there. In the markets you can buy a multitude of spices, housewares and fabrics. Some of the markets are geared toward tourists, but I'd encourage visitors to look beyond those. There are also wonderful architectural gems—including palaces with arches, frescoes and secret mirrored rooms. I had a lot of luck asking about shopping destinations at the hotels where I stayed. I found the guidebook

information to be more hit or miss.

Do you plan on going back?

Yes, and I want to go with people this time. I'm starting a venture that will lead designers and design-minded consumers through the factories, textile mills and markets. The idea will be to go with a specific project they'd like to work on—maybe developing a rug or a fabric. My plan is to take what I learned on my trip and lead small groups of people through the process. You can find more information on my website, grantkgibson.com.

