



Dear Industry Colleagues,

We are thrilled to announce that beginning today (February 14, 2022), India has eased the travel guidelines for international travelers. The highlights are:

1. Travelers are **no longer required to quarantine at home on arrival**. Instead, they can self-monitor their health for 14 days.
2. **Fully vaccinated travellers from a set list of countries do not have to take an RT-PCR test prior to their flight** and can just upload their vaccination certificate on the government portal.

The detailed list of guidelines is available and regularly updated on our website - click [here](#) to view or download it.

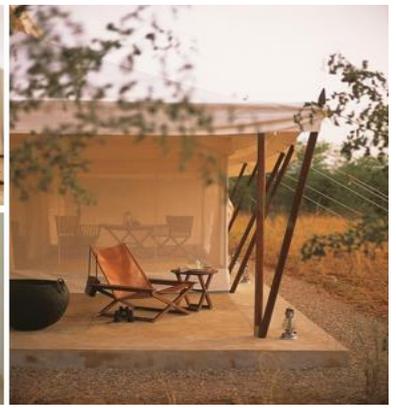
My team and I more than ready to welcome you and your clients. We hope the revised guidelines fuel your wanderlust for India and urge you to lock your clients' travel plans for the year. Also, our **flexible booking and cancellation policy\*** is available for travel through **September 30, 2022** so, don't forget to take advantage of it.

In the meantime, here's a little something for you to read to beat those Monday blues and start the week on a high note.

Sincerely,

Anil Pathak





## Discovering wildlife, an ancient ghost town, remote villages and hidden stories with Aman in Rajasthan

As things quietened in the fourth quarter of 2021, I decided to take a break with my wife (after several months of both of us working from home, you could say I am a glutton for punishment – hopefully, she does not get to read this newsletter!). We knew we wanted to go a little off-the-beaten-track and decided to visit the Aman properties in **Ranthambore** and **Ajabgarh**.

### Aman-i-Khas

It's a short flight from Mumbai to Jaipur and then a rather agreeable three-and-a-half-hour drive to the **Aman-i-khas** at Ranthambore. Upon entering the resort, we were welcomed with an interesting rose lemonade, made from fresh rose petals grown in Aman's adjoining organic farm.

The Aman camp is located at the edge of the Ranthambore park with an inventory of 10 splendid tents that take glamping to another level altogether. With vaulted canopied ceilings, a lounging area separate from the bedroom, a verandah to just sit and contemplate and a vanity space, the accommodations are spectacular.

Ranthambore is famous for its wildlife safaris, but you could be forgiven for just wanting to explore the Aman camp. There's something for everybody – explore the organic farm, take a treatment in the spa, sit and leaf through your book in the quiet of the jungle, or even get the barber to give you a traditional straight-razor shave under an old tree by the pool!



We did manage to tear ourselves away from the camp and went on three game drives. I am not normally an early starter, but Aman knows how to make the drives as comfortable as possible. The early morning drives in an open jeep can be chilly, but we were handed woolen ponchos, hot water bottles and blankets for our feet as we headed for the park with Pankaj (our naturalist) and Jitendra (our driver). Tiger sightings at Ranthambore have been spectacular and several. We were fortunate enough to track Noori, a tigress that had recently given birth. She put on quite the show for us – from marking her territory and rolling in the grass to making a half-hearted attempt at chasing a young sambhar. But, as Pankaj showed us, there is so much more to Ranthambore – spectacular fauna, birds of various hues (Pankaj knew all the names), a variety of smaller deer and of course, as we stopped for a picnic breakfast, well camouflaged mugger crocodiles sunning themselves on the edge of a watering hole!

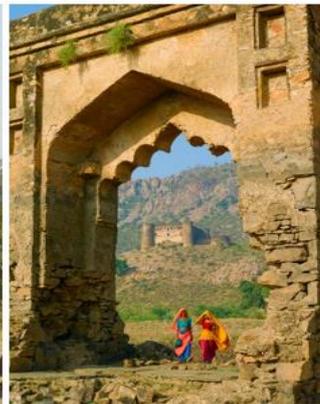
The food at the Aman is incredible. The menu exists in name only. The staff will be happy to put together a meal of your choosing. We spent a lovely evening with Anand Shekhawat, who is the head honcho for Aman's India properties. He is quite the raconteur and regaled us with stories of the area and the wildlife. We also had some superb picnics, including breakfast on the ramparts of the Ranthambore Fort and tea and sandwiches while watching the sun go down from a nearby hill. However, the highlight has to be an al-fresco breakfast of local stuffed flatbreads, and vegetables in a guava orchard.



### Amanbagh

Just three and a half hours away – the drive is extremely comfortable - the Aman has its other property, **Amanbagh**, on the edge of the old, abandoned town of Ajabgarh. The hotel has 22 Haveli Suites and 15 Pool Pavilions and is an amazing oasis of tranquility in the middle of nowhere.

After the hustle and bustle of Mumbai, it was quite a change to take a walk through the nearby villages where we were invited into people's homes and asked to stay for a meal. The head of the house even pulled me aside and offered to share his *hookah* (a waterpipe, used to smoke tobacco)! As we walked back to the hotel, the sun started to dip, and we saw people making their way home from the fields. It was the magical hour of Gaudhuli, or cow dust hour, when the returning cattle kick up dust to form a gentle mist over the countryside. By the wayside, people were performing small rituals to welcome the night and ward of the dark spirits. This is a rare opportunity to see life in rural India.



The next day, we visited Bhangarh, an abandoned medieval city that at one time was a vibrant settlement with magnificent bazaars, palaces, gardens, temples and bathing pools. The ruins have been excavated and as you walk through what used to be a shop-lined market street, you can almost transport yourself back to what must have at one time been a bustling city. The massive royal residence is equally impressive, and it is worth climbing to the top to get a view of the ruined city. Later, we stopped at one of the small, deserted temples to have a cup of tea as Sitaram, our guide told us the story of how the city was abandoned after it was cursed by an evil court sorcerer. Often, it is the little stories, passed down through generation that bring the destination to life.

Again, the food at Amanbagh is generally outstanding, but when we had dinner with the affable General Manager, Hemendra Singh, the Murgh Mussalam (a traditional stuffed chicken created by the Mughal invaders) was simply the best I have ever had. I would go back just for that dinner!

On our last day, we trekked to Somsagar Lake. Accessed through a ravine, the lake serves as a watering hole for the surrounding wildlife and birds. The walk up the valley makes an interesting trek, and the near the lake is a shrine which was built at about the same time as the lake was completed. The shrine, called "*Sagar Ki Bahu*" or the 'lake's bride', was built as a reminder of the Hindu belief of life in all forms.

The trip was over way too soon and it was time for the two-hour drive back to Jaipur Airport. India is a country of magnificent forts and palaces. It is also a country of villages and little stories and superstitions. But mostly, it is a country of extraordinary people who truly live the Sanskrit phrase "Atithi Deo Bhava" – the Guest is God!

*For further details and to book your clients trip, get in touch with us at [marketing@peirceandleslie.com](mailto:marketing@peirceandleslie.com)*