



THE ROYAL CALL

Predominantly drawing in international tourists, The Lallgarh Palace in Bikaner, is undergoing changes as new facilities continue to add to its repertoire of offerings to enhance guest experience with a simultaneous focus to attract more domestic travellers through promoting the rich culture and heritage of Rajasthan

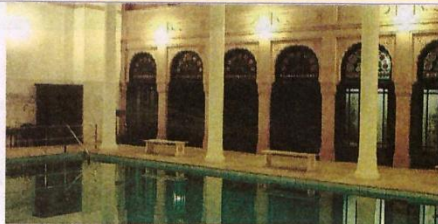
Built by Maharaja Ganga Singh in the memory of his father, Maharaj Sri Lall Singh in 1902 A.D, The Lallgarh Palace is a red sandstone palace displaying Indo-saracenic style of architecture. The Rajput exterior of The Lallgarh Palace contrasts dramatically with the occidental décor within. The intricately dexterous carving on red stone is a hallmark of local craftsmen. Operational since 1974, the property is located in the city of Bikaner, Rajasthan and is spread across an area of eight acres having lawns and fountains with peacocks. "The property was under ITC Welcome Group from 1993-2003. However, the collaboration did not last and we also felt it's best for us to run the hotel ourselves. This is the main reason that even today we have never felt of associating ourselves with any hotel group and we see this as an opportunity for us to maintain the heritage of our hotel," says Govind Rathore, senior executive manager, The Lallgarh Palace.

The property comprises of 60 rooms including presidential suites, suite rooms, deluxe room double and deluxe room single. The interiors of the rooms are beautifully done

with hand block printed floral fabrics inspired by ancient wall paintings and murals. The open corridors of the property run the length of the halls and rooms are lined with a rare collection of old prints and vintage copies of ethnics. The corridors are decorated with pictures reflecting the life events of the royal family. Open courtyards host cultural programmes offered by the hotel. The property comprises of - The Padam Mahal restaurant serving multi-cuisine dishes, Sadul Niwas Courtyard, an open air dining space, a bar and the Durbar Hall, a royal venue which previously held state banquets, official functions and formal darbars is now used for conferences and banquets. To enhance the

guest experience further the property has undergone recent changes. "We have upgraded all the rooms to provide better facilities and comfort to our guests. We have also created an infrastructure for weddings and film shoots by allowing access to gardens and lawns which were not being utilised earlier. Our main focus has been on accommodation services but with these changes we plan to expand the services we offer," opines Rathore.


Offering guests with recreational activities, the hotel comprises of a spa, tennis court, badminton court, billiards room and an indoor swimming pool. Stained glass windows and carved white marble benches surround the



indoor swimming pool. "Plans to come up with an outdoor pool are underway and we are also working on the heating of the indoor pool", says Rathore. The hotel also provides Camel Safari and guided palace and city tours.

Global attraction

The property, which is under a charitable trust, has become one of the most popular choices of tourists in Bikaner today. According to Rathore, the property has always witnessed more of foreign tourists than domestic. However, now they are working to bring domestic tourists to their property which is en-

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abling them to make people aware of what they have to offer. Their market strategy has been on focusing and promoting the rich heritage and culture of Rajasthan and enhancing the charm of the heritage property. "Today we have our sales office in Delhi and have our branches in Mumbai and Ahmedabad as well. We want to focus on domestic tourists as well since today we receive approximately 85 per cent of foreign tourists and 15 per cent of domestic tourists. The peak season lasts from October to April. However, today the trends have changed. We receive tourists even during the months of August and September but that applies more to the foreign tourists," adds Rathore.