

Tenting-out in a tropical forest, in the desert, on a hill and by the river is passé...A move over them all is camping-out at a heritage 18<sup>th</sup> century Mughal garden. Rising like a mirage across the tawny desert landscape is the tented camp of Mool Sagar near Jaisalmer. Just step in!

# Mughalesque Mool Sagar

If you're amongst those who have camped at WelcomHeritage's Royal Camps at Nagaur, set up especially during the annual festival, then you would probably think that the Mool Sagar Luxury Camp, would be a similar experience. But, you are in for a surprise... as the Marudhar Hotels-promoted luxury tented camp, inaugurated two months ago is a revelation.

Owned by the Jaisalmer royal family, the Mool Sagar Luxury Camp, six kilometres from Jaisalmer, is right out of a Mughal miniature painting. It offers the rare opportunity to step into the opulent royal life depicted in these paintings, where splendid gardens provide a backdrop to music and dance, while offering a sanctuary, after wandering through the fort and the old city or camel trekking through the desert.

Laid down two centuries back by Maharawal Mool Raj Singh, the site perhaps is the biggest draw as it is a 18<sup>th</sup> century Charbagh-style garden. Spread over two acres, the Charbagh features four stone-carved pavilions, a *jahlra* (step-garden with fountains) and three bylanes. Backed by the expertise of Marudhar Hotels which has set up camps at heritage sites like the Nagaur Fort and with Shivranjani Rajye at the helm, the royal garden has been restored painstakingly.

Rajye informs that this has been done in conjunction with an INTACH team led by Mughal Garden expert Priyaleen Singh. The heritage doesn't stop here, the

## THE BIG EYE

by DISHA RATHORE



garden complex houses two 14th century Lord Shiva Temples. Around the garden, 18 spacious tents, handmade by traditional artisans, recreate the early 20th century camps of the Jodhpur Maharajas. The cotton canvas tents designed in typical Jodhpur-style are naturally dyed and have *Mandore* motifs all over.

Each tent features an ensuite bath-

room and a private verandah, and is air-cooled or heated, depending on the desert winds. The tents have been refurbished by merchandise locally sourced from Jaisalmer and Jodhpur. The *durries* (rugs) used in the tents have been made by the famed Jodhpur durriemakers.

One of the *Baradaris* (pavilions) has been restored using lime mortar and is now used for private dinners and meals. A must-try here is the step well, which is used as a dining location. Relax under the star-studded desert sky and be entertained by fine local artistes who belong to the local flute tribe, *Alkora*. An experience at Mool Sagar, unlike any other place, is the candle-lit *Jahlra*, which is used for informal cocktail parties and folk performances in the evening.

Rajye says that the camp is ideal for those looking to set base outside the city, while holidaying in Jaisalmer. The unusual setting of the desert camp also features a swimming pool, a shop and a small business centre. The shop is a makeshift one which has been put together in

one of the four Pavilions.

Reminiscent of medieval times, Mool Sagar is an oasis in the desert, but not clichéd, as where else would you find fountains, landscaped gardens, colonnades and sand dunes all together. ♦

*Mool Sagar Luxury Tented Camp, Jaisalmer. Call: 0291-2572 321/26. Email: info@moolsagar.com www.moolsagar.com*