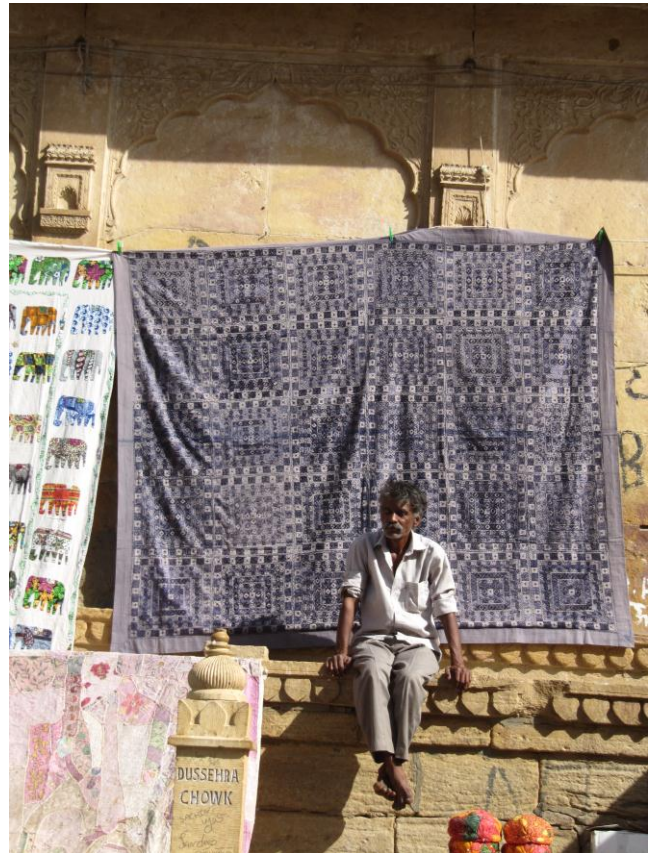


### Part 3 Jaisalmer to Bikaner

Once we reached Jaisalmer we had another very imposing fort to explore, followed by a walk down into the old town to see some of the exquisitely carved stone houses. These were homes of Jaisalmer's wealthy merchants when it was an important stop on the Silk Route between China and eastern Europe. Now most have been converted into hotels or museums.



*The first of many gates into Jaisalmer Fort*



*One of the hopeful traders inside the fort*

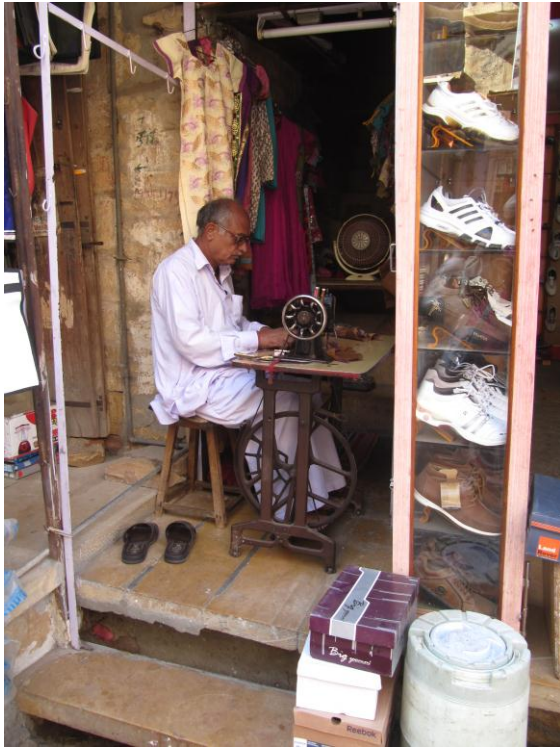


*Part of the Maharajah's palace inside the fort.*



*Carved stone merchant's house*



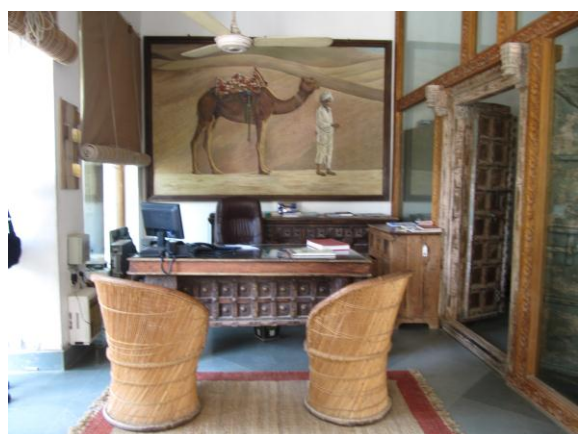


*Two tailors shops near each other down an alley in old town Jaisalmer*

After one night, it was off on another long drive to Bikaner which was founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with another fort to hold off the invading moghuls.



*A lovely hotel we stopped at for morning coffee in the garden on our way to Bikaner*

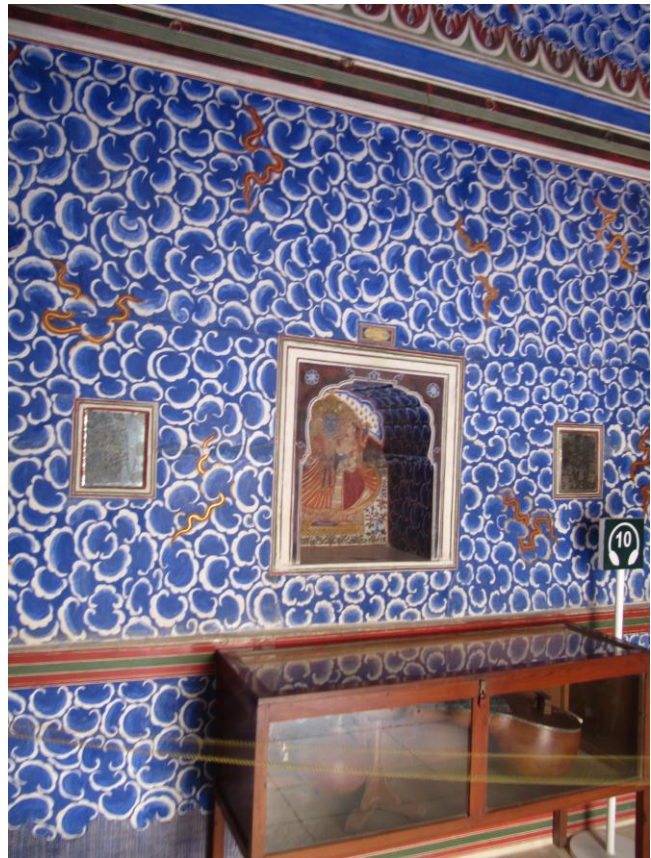




The fort at Bikaner was the palace of the local Maharajah and is now a museum. It was very intricately decorated inside. This fort was not on a hill, but on the same level as the rest of the city which has now grown to 500,000 people around it. We stayed in an amazing hotel which has been created by the Princess daughter of the last Maharajah of Bikaner from her father's palace, built in 1902. She and her family still live in a private wing of the palace.



*The palace inside Bikaner Fort*



*Decorated waiting area*



*Decorated bedroom*



*Screened off harem quarters – the ladies could see out but not be seen.*

Both Jaisalmer and Bikaner are fairly near the Pakistan border and according to the guide “the roads are good” because they need to be used for army manoeuvres and convoys of tanks and other armaments just to keep the Pakis on their toes. Although our guide says India is not worried about a war with Pakistan - they are more worried about a possible conflict with China. The only thing they hate is losing to Pakistan at cricket. If these roads are good, then we don't want to travel on any bad ones. It takes hours to travel anywhere because most traffic travels at about 80kph so that they can avoid any cows on the road. If you hit and kill a cow you must make a solid gold one to give the priest. I don't know what the penalty is for injuring one, except that it is expensive!