

MYSTIC ART RETREATS



&

SAMANTHA BUCKLEY

PRESENT

# Art of the Royal Courts

A Journey Through the Miniature Painting  
Traditions of Rajasthan



FEB 1 - FEB 14 2027  
RAJASTHAN, INDIA

# Art of the Royal Courts

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*A Journey Through the Miniature Painting Traditions of Rajasthan*

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## ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

Welcome to an immersive 14-day artistic pilgrimage that explores the exquisite world of Rajasthani miniature painting, one of India's most refined art forms. This retreat offers a rare opportunity to study this ancient tradition in its birthplace, while traveling through the magnificent landscapes and royal cities where these paintings first flourished.

Art of the Royal Courts is not merely an art tour; it is a profound cultural immersion designed for those seeking authentic connection with traditional Indian painting techniques and the rich heritage of Rajasthan. Under the guidance of acclaimed miniature painting teacher Samantha Buckley, participants will explore three legendary cities—Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur, visiting working artist studios, historic palaces, and museums that house some of the finest examples of this tradition.

This retreat combines:

- 🎨 Intensive instruction in traditional miniature painting techniques with Samantha Buckley
- 🎨 Visits to master miniature painters' studios
- 🎨 Exploration of Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur's artistic heritage
- 🎨 Museum visits featuring historic miniature painting collections
- 🎨 Hands-on practice using traditional materials and natural pigments
- 🎨 Immersion in Rajasthani culture, architecture, and artistic traditions

## THE ART OF RAJASTHANI MINIATURE PAINTING

### A Living Tradition of Royal Patronage

The tradition of Rajasthani miniature painting represents one of the most vibrant and distinctive schools of Indian art. Developing between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries in the princely states of Rajasthan, this art form reflects the region's royal culture, religious devotion, and an extraordinary love for colour and intricate storytelling.

The rise of Rajasthani miniature painting coincided with the establishment of Rajput kingdoms across Rajasthan. Rajput rulers were great patrons of the arts and commissioned paintings to glorify their lineage, record court events, illustrate literary classics, and express devotion to Hindu deities. While the tradition evolved locally, it was profoundly influenced by Mughal miniature painting, especially in techniques such as portraiture, composition, and the use of perspective. Photo Credits (below): Samantha Buckley



## Historical Development

The roots of miniature painting in India can be traced to the 9th-10th century Buddhist Pala period palm leaf manuscripts of eastern India and the Jaina palm leaf manuscripts of western India. With the introduction of paper in the 12th century, illustrations on paper manuscripts of larger format began to flourish.

The art of miniature painting arrived in its most refined form when the Mughal emperor Humayun invited skilled Persian artists to his court in the sixteenth century. Under Emperor Akbar's enthusiastic patronage, these Persian masters established workshops and trained Indian artists, creating a synthesis of Persian refinement and Indian aesthetic sensibilities.

The Rajasthani school of painting emerged at the end of the 16th century in Mewar, building upon earlier traditions of Jain manuscript illustrations that had evolved in the Marwar-Mewar region around the early 15th century. Over time, various distinctive painting styles developed across Rajasthan, with the most celebrated schools including Mewar, Marwar, Kishangarh, Bundi, Kota, and Bikaner.



Photo Credits: Samantha Buckley

## Characteristics of Rajasthani Miniature Painting

Rajasthani miniatures are characterised by their brilliant colours, intricate detailing, and subjects drawn from mythology, royal court life, festivals, and the natural world. Unlike the more formal Mughal style, Rajasthani painting emphasises emotional expression, devotional themes, and depicts the romantic ideals of courtly love.

Key features include:

- 🍷 Use of vibrant natural pigments derived from minerals, vegetables, and precious stones
- 🍷 Intricate brushwork with extremely fine detail, often requiring brushes made from single squirrel hairs
- 🍷 Preparation of traditional wasli paper—a specially prepared surface for miniature painting
- 🍷 Gold and silver leaf work for royal and divine subjects
- 🍷 Depiction of raga-mala (musical modes), seasons, festivals, and episodes from epics
- 🍷 Strong connection to the artistic traditions of Ajanta cave paintings

## Contemporary Revival

- Today, Rajasthani miniature painting continues as a living tradition, with master artists maintaining centuries-old techniques while also exploring contemporary applications. Cities like Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur remain vibrant centers for this art form, where skilled painters continue their ancestral craft in family studios, some of which have been practicing the art for multiple generations.
- The art form has experienced a renaissance in recent decades, with renewed appreciation both in India and internationally. Contemporary artists are finding innovative ways to honour traditional methods while bringing miniature painting into dialogue with modern artistic concerns and global audiences.

## Your teacher: Samantha Buckley

Samantha Buckley is an internationally recognised master of Indian miniature painting, known for her



exceptional technical skill and her ability to translate this ancient art into contemporary contexts. Originally trained as a ceramic designer and printer, she created hand-painted etchings that were sold through Liberty's, Christie's Contemporary Art, and published as cards and posters by leading art publishers.

She later earned an MA with distinction in miniature painting from The School of Traditional Arts which is part of the Kings Foundation, followed by a year-long stay in India deepening her study of the tradition. Her professional commissions range from the Kirtim Flower chinaware for Traditional Arts Limited to highly successful product lines for The Highgrove Shop at the estate of King Charles, including The Highgrove Hen, Magnificent Pigs, Summer Flowers afternoon tea china, and fern designs for jewelry and glassware.

Alongside her studio practice, Samantha teaches miniature painting on the MA program at The Prince's School of Traditional Arts and leads workshops, evening classes, and popular online courses that make traditional techniques accessible to contemporary students. Her outreach work has taken her into schools, museums like the Victoria and Albert Museum, and community regeneration projects, where she uses traditional arts to enrich everyday life.

Internationally, Samantha has contributed to prestigious projects such as The Book of Flora in AIUla, Saudi Arabia, where she produced botanical studies of local flowers. Her work has been exhibited in renowned galleries in the UK and abroad, including the Aga Khan Gallery and Jonathan Cooper Gallery in London, and Ojas Art in New Delhi.

At this retreat, she offers not only profound mastery of miniature painting but also a warm, generous teaching style, creating a space where ancient visual wisdom meets modern creativity.

## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

### Day 1 – February 1 (Sunday): Arrival in Delhi

Arrive at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi. You will be met by our representative and transferred to your hotel in the heart of New Delhi. After check-in and time to rest and refresh from your journey, we gather in the evening for a welcome dinner and orientation session.

Samantha will introduce the history and techniques of Rajasthani miniature painting, and we shall review the exciting journey ahead through the royal cities of Rajasthan.

🍷 Overnight: Delhi (4-star plus hotel)

🍷 Meals: Lunch & Dinner

Krishna lifts Mount Govardhan by Ustad Sahibdin. Bikaner, c. 1690. British Museum.



## Day 2 – February 2 (Monday): Delhi to Jaipur

After breakfast, we depart Delhi for Jaipur (approximately 4-hour drive). Known as the Pink City for its distinctive rose-colored buildings, Jaipur was founded in 1727 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II and represents the pinnacle of Rajput urban planning.

Upon arrival, check into our heritage hotel and enjoy lunch. In the afternoon, we visit the City Palace complex, which houses an exceptional collection of Rajasthani miniature paintings in its museum. We'll spend time studying the royal collection, examining painting techniques, colour palettes, and compositional elements that we'll explore in our own work.



Evening at leisure to explore the local markets of Jaipur, famous for traditional crafts, textiles, and jewellery.

- 🏨 Overnight: Jaipur (heritage hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 3 – February 3 (Tuesday): Jaipur – Artist Studio Visits

### Meeting the Master Painters

This morning, we visit the studio of Ajay Kumar Sharma, a celebrated master of Indian miniature painting with a career spanning over four decades. Since 1984, Ajay has run his own studio in Jaipur, where he produces an array of miniature and mural paintings across styles such as Mughal, Rajput, Kota, and Jaipur School painting. We'll observe his working process, learn about traditional pigment preparation, and see his collection of historical works and contemporary commissions.



After lunch, we visit the Albert Hall Museum, which houses one of Rajasthan's finest collections of miniature paintings, including examples from various schools and periods. Samantha will guide us through the collection, discussing the evolution of styles and techniques.

Evening includes a demonstration of traditional brush-making techniques and preparation of wasli paper—the specially prepared surface used for miniature painting.

- 🏠 Overnight: Jaipur (heritage hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 4 – February 4 (Wednesday): Jaipur – Amber Fort and Local Exploration

### Architecture and Inspiration

Morning visit to the magnificent Amber Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site perched on a hilltop overlooking Maota Lake. This 16th-century fortress palace exemplifies the grandeur of Rajput architecture and houses stunning examples of decorative art, including frescoes and mirror work. The fort's Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace) and painted chambers provide inspiration for understanding the architectural context in which miniature paintings were created and displayed.



Afternoon visit to Jantar Mantar, the 18th-century astronomical observatory, and a walking tour through the old city's bazaars. We'll visit shops specializing in traditional materials—natural pigments, handmade papers, and fine brushes gathering supplies we might use in our own practice.

Evening free for personal exploration or rest.

- 🏠 Overnight: Jaipur (heritage hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 5 – February 5 (Thursday): Jaipur to Jodhpur

### The Blue City Beckons

After breakfast, we depart for Jodhpur (approximately 5–6-hour drive), the "Blue City" dominated by the magnificent Mehrangarh Fort. En route, we stop for lunch and to stretch our legs.

Upon arrival in Jodhpur, check into our heritage hotel. Late afternoon, we take an orientation walk through the blue-painted streets of the old city, soaking in the atmosphere of this historic Marwar capital.



Evening gathering to discuss the Marwar school of miniature painting and what we'll explore tomorrow.

- 🏠 Overnight: Jodhpur (heritage hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 6 – February 6 (Friday): Jodhpur – Fort and Museum

### The Marwar Tradition

Morning visit to the imposing Mehrangarh Fort, one of India's largest and most impressive fortresses. The fort's museum houses an extraordinary collection of miniature paintings from the Marwar school, including royal portraits, court scenes, and illustrations of raga-mala. We'll spend the morning studying these masterworks with Samantha, who will guide us through the distinctive characteristics of Marwar painting.

After lunch, we visit the Umaid Bhawan Palace Museum, which contains additional examples of royal Rajasthani art and provides context for understanding palace life and patronage.



Late afternoon visit to a local miniature painting studio where we'll meet contemporary artists maintaining the Marwar tradition and observe their working process.

- 🏨 Overnight: Jodhpur (heritage hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 7 – February 7 (Saturday): Jodhpur to Udaipur

### Journey to the City of Lakes

After breakfast, we depart for Udaipur (approximately 5-6 hour drive), often called the most romantic city in Rajasthan. The drive takes us through the Aravalli hills and rural Rajasthani landscape.

Arrive in Udaipur and check into our lakeside hotel. Evening at leisure to enjoy the beautiful setting of Lake Pichola and the city's white palaces reflected in its waters.



We gather for dinner and Samantha will introduce the week ahead, outlining the intensive painting workshop that begins tomorrow.

🏠 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)

🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Photo Credits below: Samantha Buckley



## Day 8 – February 8 (Sunday): Udaipur – Introduction to Miniature Painting Workshop

### First Brushstrokes

This morning marks the beginning of our intensive miniature painting workshop with Samantha. We establish our studio space, and she shall introduce the fundamental materials, tools, and techniques of traditional miniature painting.

Topics covered include:

- 🕒 Appreciation of Wasli Paper
- 🕒 Introduction to natural pigments
- 🕒 Basic brush techniques and brush care
- 🕒 Traditional design principles and composition
- 🕒 Understanding scale and proportion in miniature work

We begin with simple exercises in brush control and paint application, learning to work at the small scale that defines this art form. Lunch break, then afternoon continuation of workshop practice. Evening demonstration of gold leaf application techniques.

- 🕒 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)
- 🕒 Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 9 – February 9 (Monday): Udaipur – Miniature Painting Workshop Day 2

### Developing Technique

Full day of intensive workshop practice. Morning session focuses on drawing and transferring designs, learning traditional methods for creating precise outlines that will be filled with color.

We explore classical motifs common in Rajasthani miniature painting:

- 🕒 Floral and botanical elements
- 🕒 Geometric borders and patterns
- 🕒 Animal figures—peacocks, elephants, horses
- 🕒 Human figure proportions in the Rajasthani style

Afternoon session introduces color mixing and the layering techniques that create the luminous quality characteristic of miniature painting. Each student begins work on their first complete miniature composition under Samantha's guidance.

- 🕒 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)
- 🕒 Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 10 – February 10 (Tuesday): Udaipur – Workshop Day 3 and Palace Visit Mewar Heritage

Morning workshop session continues development of individual miniature paintings. Samantha provides one-on-one guidance as each student progresses through the layering process.

After lunch, we visit the magnificent City Palace of Udaipur, the largest palace complex in Rajasthan. The palace museum houses an exceptional collection of Mewar school miniature paintings, considered among the finest in Rajasthan. We'll study examples of court paintings, hunting scenes, festivals, and devotional works that exemplify the Mewar style. Photo Credits below: Samantha Buckley



The palace visit provides both inspiration and deeper understanding of the context in which these paintings were created and displayed.

- 🏠 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 11 – February 11 (Wednesday): Udaipur – Workshop Day 4 and Artist Studio

### Contemporary Masters

Morning workshop session focuses on refining details and learning finishing techniques. Samantha demonstrates fine line work, highlighting, and the application of decorative elements.

After lunch, we visit a renowned miniature painting studio in Udaipur. The city is home to several master painters who maintain family traditions spanning multiple generations. We'll observe their working process, see examples of commissioned work, and have the opportunity to ask questions about maintaining traditional practice in contemporary times.



Return to our hotel workshop space for evening practice session. Students continue work on their paintings with Samantha's guidance.

- 🏠 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)
- 🍽️ Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 12 – February 12 (Thursday): Udaipur – Workshop Day 5

### Deepening Practice

Full day dedicated to intensive painting practice. By now, students have developed familiarity with materials and techniques and today focuses on refinement and completion of work.

- 🕒 Morning session covers advanced topics:
- 🕒 Shell Gold application
- 🕒 Creating texture and depth through layering
- 🕒 Facial features and expressions
- 🕒 Textile and jewellery details
- 🕒 Creating burnished surfaces

Afternoon session allows extended time for individual work. Samantha circulates among students, providing detailed feedback and guidance. Many students will complete their first miniature painting today, while others continue to develop more complex compositions.

Evening group session where students share their work and Samantha discusses each piece, celebrating achievements and offering suggestions for continued practice.

- 🕒 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)
- 🕒 Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner



Photo Credits: Ravana, overwhelmed by grief on hearing of his son's death, sends out more forces against Rama by Sahibdin, Folio from the Mewar Ramayana, British Library

## Day 13 – February 13 (Friday): Udaipur – Final Workshop Day and Celebration

### Completion and Reflection

Our final full day in Udaipur begins with a morning workshop session focused on finishing touches and proper care of completed miniatures. Samantha discusses framing, preservation, and displaying miniature paintings.

After lunch, we take a relaxing boat ride on Lake Pichola, enjoying views of the Lake Palace, Jag Mandir, and the city's waterfront palaces. This provides a peaceful opportunity to reflect on our artistic journey through Rajasthan.



Late afternoon, we gather for a final exhibition of all work created during the retreat. Each student presents their miniature painting and we celebrate our collective achievement in learning this art form. Evening farewell dinner at a special lakeside venue, with traditional Rajasthani cultural performance.

- 🍽 Overnight: Udaipur (lakeside hotel)
- 🍽 Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

## Day 14 – February 14 (Saturday): Departure from Udaipur

### Until We Meet Again

After breakfast, transfer to Udaipur Airport for your onward journey to New Delhi for onward flights back home. For those who wish to extend their trip in India, contact Mystic Art Retreats.

We bid farewell with hearts full of inspiration and hands trained in one of India's most refined artistic traditions.

 Meals: Breakfast



Photo Credits: Samantha Buckley

## FEES & PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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*GBP 2250 with installments available (single occupancy)*

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### Program Inclusions

- 🏨 13 nights' accommodation in 4-star plus heritage hotels (single occupancy)
- 🍽️ All meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 14
- 💧 Bottled water provided daily
- 🚗 Private air-conditioned coach for all group transportation (Inter-city)
- ✈️ Airfare Udaipur – New Delhi
- 🏛️ All monument entrance fees and museum admissions
- 🎨 6 days of intensive miniature painting instruction with Samantha Buckley
- 🖌️ All painting materials, pigments, brushes, and wasli paper
- 🎨 Artist studio visits and demonstrations
- 🗣️ English-speaking local guides for cultural sites
- ✈️ All airport transfers on designated arrival and departure days

### Not Included

- ✈️ International airfare to Delhi and from Udaipur
- 🛡️ Travel insurance (strongly recommended)
- 🛍️ Personal expenses (shopping, spa treatments, laundry, etc.)
- 💰 Tips for guides, drivers, and hotel staff
- 🎨 Additional art supplies purchased individually
- 🍷 Alcoholic beverages
- 🇮🇳 Visa fees for India

## REGISTRATION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

This retreat is limited to 12 participants to ensure intimate group dynamics and personalised attention from Samantha. To register or inquire about this transformative miniature painting immersion, please contact:

Mukul Purohit  
Executive Producer & Chief Executive  
Mystic Art Retreats LLP  
Gurgaon, India  
M: +91 98101 15366  
E: mp@mysticart.org

When you are on a Mystic Art Retreats tour, every detail is taken care of so you can relax and truly experience each moment. Airfare to India is not included in the price of your trip. Please contact your local travel agency or the airline directly to make any arrangements you may need.

## WEATHER & WHAT TO EXPECT

### Climate in Rajasthan (February)

February is one of the most pleasant times to visit Rajasthan. The intense summer heat has not yet arrived, and the brief winter period is ending, creating ideal conditions for travel and outdoor activities.

### Temperature Range

Daytime highs: 24-28°C (75-82°F)  
Evening/night lows: 10-15°C (50-59°F)

## WHAT PAST PARTICIPANTS SAY

*"My first trip to India with Mystic Art Retreats was the perfect introduction to a country and culture I'd long wanted to experience. One part spiritual, one part artistic, the retreat had a profound impact on my spiritual path as well as the reclamation of myself as a creative person." —S.A.*

*"Thank you so much... It was an amazing experience and I will cherish our adventure into this mystical & magical country. One of the highlights was the opportunity to be in such amazing company with beautiful like-minded people from around the globe. I personally would love to see everyone in another future retreat." —A.F.*

*"I truly enjoyed my experience at this Retreat and thank you for making it all possible. It has been said one never steps in the same river twice, having made this crossing, I've come away with so much that will resonate for a very long time." —M.K.*

*"I just wanted to pass on my deepest gratitude for our time with Maa Kamakhya. It was one of the most truly sacred and divine experiences of my life. I'm not sure I'll ever have the words to express the grace, humility, embracing love of Maa. The retreat was so beautifully held by you. Every moment was peaceful, blissful and we moved with such ease. I feel so blessed and cannot thank you for enough for creating such a treasured time in Assam. Thank you and to everyone at the Mystic Art Retreats team. —A.C.*

## THE MYSTIC ART RETREATS EXPERIENCE

Mystic Art Retreats™ are transformative events held in locations of extraordinary beauty and power that expand consciousness, ignite delight, and elevate human potential.

These retreats typically focus on creative arts and indigenous crafts as a means for encouraging our treasured clients to renew their love of life and return home with an invigorated sense of purpose. Our events are designed to be inspiring and encouraging rather than restrictive or humbling. Beauty, delight, creative expression and spiritual wisdom are key components of every retreat.

The programming includes instruction in sacred art, fine art, and traditional spiritual practices. Immersive cultural experiences, healing connection to natural environments, and visits to locations imbued with spiritual power serve to give these teachings context and ensure our clients remain grounded. We are committed to fostering respectful and mutually beneficial connection to the cultures we visit.

The combination of intellectual stimulation, physical exertion, creative expression, and spiritual ceremony results in unforgettable moments of spiritual expansion. We believe that our retreats work best when we inspire in our participants a sense of wonder, awe, and delight in being exactly where they are in the present moment.

Transformation and spiritual growth happen naturally when we are encouraged to relax in sacred places; it is more powerful when mind, body, and spirit are marshalled together for the purpose of lasting benefit to oneself and our global community.

Our globally renowned experts from different sacred traditions host events at extraordinary venues that range from breathtaking palaces, venerable institutions, quaint rural stays, and natural stone homes. Old restrictive patterns of self-limitation are gently coaxed to unlock through skillful exposure to sensory delight, often through appreciation of traditional arts, visits to locations of glorious beauty, and exploring delicious local cuisine.

Each one of our events are unique; composed to suit our discerning clients, exceptional hosts, and spectacular locations.

