

JetWings

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BEYOND SRINAGAR Portraits of a valley

**Himalayan
warm-up**
Heritage and
ancient temples

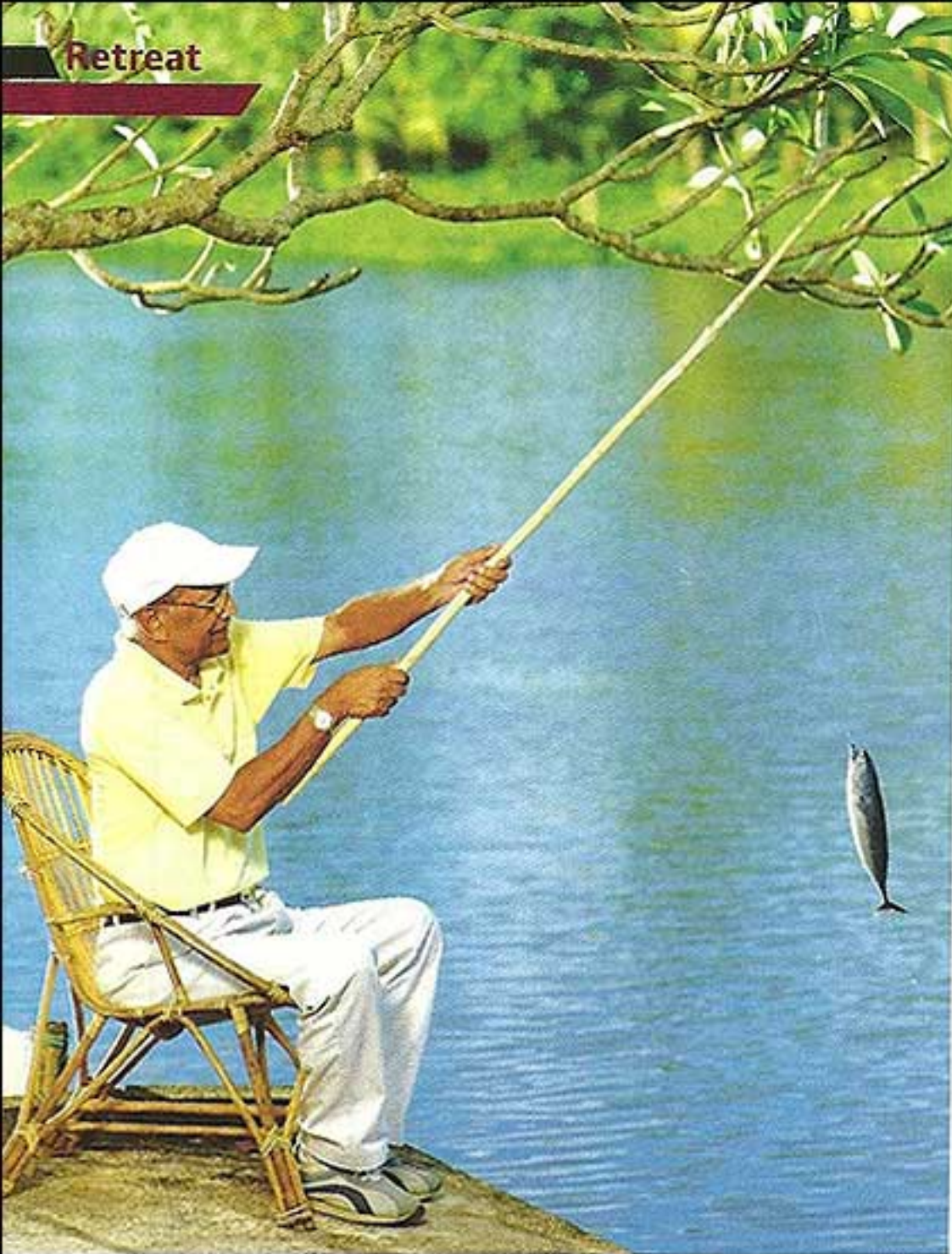
**Amritsar
for foodies**
A culinary
treasure hunt

**24-HOUR
GUIDE TO
TAIWAN**

Pure white magic
Spiti Valley in winter

JET AIRWAYS 

MALAYSIAN GRAND PRIX • REALTY SPECIAL



Ever wanted to take a break from the overwhelming luxury of five star hotels? Experience magic, warmth and personal hospitality in charming heritage homes converted for your comfort.

TEXT AISHIK BARUA

Closer to the hearth

Travelling down twenty-five stories in the lift car of a five-star hotel could get boring. Having to go through a lengthy check-in and check-out routine could get tedious. The whole process makes you feel like you are actually a tourist. The charm of experiencing a place by feeling one with it could get lost in the concrete walls of internationally acclaimed hotels. To break free from the monotony of posh foyers leading to huge marble-floored reception areas, a few heritage houses built during the colonial era have been renovated to give the affable feeling of being at home away from home. Here are a few must-visit ones.

ROKEBY MANOR

Think Mussoorie and the first images that come to your mind are snow-capped mountains, a bright sun behind the fog and mist, and cool breeze through your hair. But the growing popularity of this small town tucked away in the hills of Uttarakhand, has marred the natural beauty thanks to commercial establishments that rake in the moolah from tourists.

But, there is still hope. On the highest point of Mussoorie lies Landour – an area secluded from the usual hubbub of the marketplace. And it is here

that the quaint yet majestic Rokeby Manor stands proud. Built in 1840 by an English army captain, this heritage house has passed through many hands over the decades. Currently, having been restored to its original 19th-century enigma, this house serves as a guesthouse for those who want to enjoy the hills in all their peaceful glory.



Retreat

A variety of rooms with handpicked English furnishings and calming colour schemes line the two floors of the manor. One can choose from Rustic Rooms, Traditional English Rooms, Valley View Rooms and the royal Victorian-style suite with a private balcony, named the Rhododendron Suite.

The crisp clean mountain air ensures a healthy appetite and the manor duly provides travellers with several options for a great meal. Emily's is a cosy dining room that serves gourmet Continental and Indian cuisine while the Tea Garden is set outdoors with an actual tea garden where a hot cuppa is accompanied by delicious varieties of confectioneries. The Highlands is a stunning and versatile outdoor venue surrounded by pine trees, available for an impromptu party under the stars.



Getting there: Mussoorie is a train or bus ride away from Delhi. A short car drive further to the top of the mountains brings you to Landour and the Rokeby Manor.

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VIVENDA DOS PALHAÇOS

Goa is the ultimate destination to chill, relax and vacation in, regardless of season. Sure, partying with the crowds on Goa's beach shacks is also a big draw, but there are times when all one wants is respite from the crowd – a peaceful, quiet evening



giving way to a calm morning. The century-old Vivenda dos Palhaços provides that much needed respite.

Nestled in a quiet cul de sac in the village of Majorda and just a kilometer of the longest beach in the state, this stately manor is a sight to behold. The front of the manor is a modest Portuguese mansion that was built way back in 1929. It has a hall and two large bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms. The sitting room leads out to a verandah and a large dining room that can seat twenty. Behind the Portuguese mansion is the Hindoo House, made out of thick earth walls. At the back of the house lies the main garden lined by a 12m swimming pool, a private dining area, a sun-bathing area and a self-contained cottage.

The signature meal at Vivenda is a grand feast—suckling pig, iced gazpacho topped with lobster drizzled in paprika oil. Excellent steak and gooey chocolate dessert are also served, among other tasty fare. Dinner though, needs to be booked in the morning so as to relish the full course.

Getting there: Vivenda dos Palhaços is half an hour away by car from Goa's airport at Dabolim and twenty minutes from the Margao railway station. Jet Airways has regular flights to Goa from Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

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THE VERANDAH IN THE FOREST

A prominent hill station in western India, Matheran has been a tourist attraction since Englishman Hugh Malet discovered it in 1850. 100 km from the Mumbai airport, this scenic destination remains unique because no fume-spewing vehicles are allowed to be driven in the town. Here, amid lush surroundings, stands The Verandah in the Forest, skirting the pristine Charlotte Lake. Like many British architectural highlights of Matheran, this manor is also ably maintained.

Restored and renovated to serve as a guesthouse, The Verandah in the Forest, is one of the finest heritage hotels in Maharashtra. The interiors of this colonial bungalow create the charm of being at home. One can choose from among 11 rooms within the bungalow that have been divided into four sections – Luxury Suite, Suite, Grand Room and Room. Each room has its own individual persona starting with a unique name. With air-conditioning