

DON'T JUST TRAVEL, TRAVEL WELL

**lonely planet**  
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# Walk into the **WILD**

## **TANZANIA**

If it has spots, stripes or a purple tongue, you'll find it here: it's the place for wildlife

## **AGUMBE**

Not for the faint-hearted: this is King cobra country

## **MAURITIUS**

Go beach-bumming with a bunch of endangered animals

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

- Dr Anish Andheria shows you how to photograph the wild
- Bhaskar DK braves the cold to bring us the polar bear story

PLUS

**5** EASY  
WEEKEND TRIPS  
PACK UP AND GO!



**PULL OUT AND KEEP** fantastic pocket guides for free

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Each room at Rokeby Manor is styled differently, but stone walls, old fireplaces, and old-world charm remain a constant

LUXURY  
SPLURGE!

5

## Rokeby Manor, Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, Time-out in the hills

### WHY GO

Do this from The Highlands area at Rokeby: stretch out on a recliner. Look up at an impossibly bright, blue sky. Lower your gaze to the resolute snow-capped mountains in the distance, holding their own in summer. Lower still to houses perched on steep, green slopes. Now closer, to your cup of tea, cookies and that delicious novel you've been wanting to read but haven't had the time for. Deep breath. Take a long sip of that tea. Yeah, life is good.

If you love the hills and all that

Julie Andrews sang about, and what Ruskin Bond writes so wonderfully about, Rokeby Manor is quite a good spot to enjoy it all from. Built in 1840, the beautiful stone building passed through several hands, British and Indian, and played several roles (holiday home, boarding house, guesthouse). It is now a very warm host to travellers from the world over. Any misgivings you have about it being an uppity, stuffy place (as most exclusive properties

GREAT FROM  
Delhi

are) are dispelled immediately when the grinning staff helps you past the madly cosy living room (ooh, bookshelf!), and into your charming old-world rooms with stone walls, iron bedsteads and a merry fireplace. A piece of advice: don't go to Rokeby alone. You will want to enjoy the quaint, old-fashioned corridors, cosy corners, the bubbling Jacuzzi and many beautiful views with someone. More so when you take the short tours it offers.

Walk the forest trail to the top of **Witches' Hill** (approx 45 mins) or try the longer **Flag Hill** trek (approx two hours), where the beautiful rhododendron is in full bloom and if you're lucky, the guide may point out some barking deer. The hill got its name from the phosphorous that would light up the trees in the monsoons, giving it an eerie look. It's a fun way up, meeting locals, smiling kids making the long hike up to deliver milk from the nearby villages, especially the amusing **Dhobi Ghat** (15-20 mins away), where clothes from



Rokeby Manor is full of quirky and colourful details

Left: Tea time at The Highlands comes with the best views

Below: The forest trail at Witches' Hill is full of interesting flora

Below left: Grinning kids walk long distances to help their parents

### GO NOW

To get away from the oppressive heat of the city and to watch the rhododendrons at their blooming best.

all the schools come for a wash. Rokeby is made delightful by tiny details. Be it the antique telephone in the living room, or the colourful cupboards in the restaurant, or the stories the staff will tell you about Mussoorie (called Mansoori by locals, after the *mansoor* shrub),



and how you cannot leave without visiting **Sanji**, the corn village, less than two hours away. Sanji's like nothing you've seen before: bright orange corn cobs hanging to dry in bunches outside every ancient house, and vast fields of mustard swaying gently in the wind. The feeling of immense well-being continues at **Happy Valley**, a Tibetan settlement that houses the Tibetan Temple (the first-ever one built in India by the Dalai

Lama and Tibetan refugees in 1960). The views from here are extraordinary and the feeling of peace completely reiterates the name of the place. But the best bit is that you don't really need a vehicle if you're fond of walking. Walking here is hardly like dodging crowds, potholes and cars in the city. Here, the only things you've got to watch out for are the monkeys. Enjoy the stroll to places like Camel's Back Road, Mall Road, **St Paul's Church** (you could attend mass if you're there on a Sunday), and

**Chukkar** (a sort of a figure 8 around Rokeby, passing the Landour Language School, cemetery and Lal Tibba). And what might stump a city person for a bit is that everyone smiles at you for absolutely no reason all the time. Don't be suspicious and check if you've forgotten to wear your pants or anything. Mussoorie is really home to a bunch of most happy people. And, with views like those, that's hardly a surprise.

WORDS SEJAL MEHTA

PHOTOGRAPHS JEREMIAH CHRISTANAND RAO



## FACT SHEET

### GETTING THERE

**Closest metro: Delhi** (269km, seven hours). You could rent a taxi from Delhi (around ₹ 6,000). Rokeby Manor organises pick-ups from Delhi Airport (₹ 6,500).  
**Closest city: Dehradun** (40km)  
**Closest airport: Jolly Grant Airport** at Dehradun (35km, two hours). The pick-up from Rokeby costs ₹ 2,500. Jet Konnect and Kingfisher Red fly between New Delhi's Indira Gandhi Airport and Dehradun's Jolly Grant Airport almost every day. Air India flies this sector on a few days in the week. Return economy fares start from ₹ 5,500.

**Closest railhead: Dehradun Railway Station** (34km, two hours). A pick-up from Rokeby costs ₹ 1,500. Take the 12017 **Dehradun Shatabdi** (leaves New Delhi Railway Station 6.50am and arrives Dehradun Station 12.40pm; ₹ 470 AC Chair Car), and return by the 12018 **Dehradun Shatabdi** (leaves Dehradun Station 5pm and arrives New Delhi Railway Station 10.45pm; ₹ 545 AC Chair Car).

### GETTING AROUND

The best way to see anything is on foot. But you could ask the hotel to arrange for a car or call a cab for you. The rates depend on where you want to go. A trip to Mall Road will cost you ₹ 300 (Rokeby rates). If you come back from Mall Road in a local cab, expect to pay ₹ 200. Happy Valley will cost ₹ 700, and expect to pay around ₹ 2,000 to Sanji. These rates are excluding guide charges (half day: ₹ 1,000, full day: ₹ 2,000 approximately). Witches' Hill is approximately ₹ 1,500. You could also hire cycles (half day: ₹ 300, full day: ₹ 600) or scooters (half day: ₹ 500, full day: ₹ 1,000).



Sanji, the charming corn village, is completely worth your time  
 Right: Chandellers hang outside an antique store on Mall Road



### WHERE TO STAY

**Rokeby Manor** is ideal for a relaxing holiday in the hills (00-91-135-2635604/ 05 /06; rokebymanor.com, reservations @rokebymanor.com; Landour Cantt; doubles ₹ 8,000 onwards, single rooms ₹ 5,000 onwards and the Rhododendron Suite ₹ 10,000 onwards. All prices include breakfast. There is a jacuzzi on site for use [₹ 2,000 for three hours; do inform the staff 12 hours in advance]).

### WHAT TO EAT

Rokeby Manor has a lovely restaurant – **Emily's** – which serves Indian

and continental food, both veg and non-veg (mains ₹ 150 onwards). If you want to eat out, visit **Char Dukaan** (a 10-minute walk away), a local cult hangout for Wai Wai or Maggi noodles, bun-omelette and *chai*. If you're in the mood for *momos*, walk down to Mall Road and eat at **Kalsaang** or **Rice Bowl**, both local favourites (meals for two approx ₹ 300).

### WHAT TO PACK

Walking shoes, a torch and a light jacket for nights. While summers are warm, it rarely gets too hot in the mountains. If you forget

your books, you can borrow one from Rokeby. Pick a book by local author Ruskin Bond and ask to see his house nearby.

### SHOPPING



People usually like to buy antiques and woollens from Mall Road. Try **Himjoli Products**, a small store selling woollens, organic jams, handmade artefacts, etc (pawan.shukla@himjoli.org). Also try the **Tibetan Market** off Mall Road.

### CLEAN LOO GUIDE

The Mall Road has restaurants with loos, but the day trails don't really have much on the way. The good news is that nothing is too far away, so it is entirely possible to find a loo that's acceptable soon enough.

### SAFETY

Mussoorie is very safe, and Rokeby more so. No one seems interested in your belongings.

### MEDICAL AID

The closest hospital is **Landour Community Hospital** (00-91-135-2632541; Landour). Rokeby will help you get to them.

### CHILD-FRIENDLINESS

There's a lot for kids to do around the hotel. There are games on the bookshelf, and bikes to ride, though they shouldn't ride on the road; the hair-pin curves are frightening.

### GOOD TO KNOW

♦ Flights from Dehradun to Delhi are known to get cancelled at the very last minute at the airport.