

JULY 2016

Sterling



A Sterling Holidays Magazine

WORLD

It's a wonderful world!



Responsible Tourism

Tourism and ecological concerns—
Mussoorie strikes a perfect balance

Destination

Tread the off beat path in Ooty

Heritage n Hills

—a reel world view

Explore Agra's historical charm at Regal Vista,
capture the mystique of Kufri at The White Ridge



A view of the Himalayan mountain range with our newest resort Kufri - The White Ridge in the foreground.

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From MD's Office



Dear Sterling Members and Guests,

Namaste!

I am delighted to write to you at a time when most of our resorts have been upgraded to best-in-class standards and announcement of new resorts and locations is on the anvil, across several interesting destinations. Exciting times ahead!

As a part of our efforts to offer you newer and more exciting experiences, we have recently upgraded a host of our properties across Darjeeling, Kodai, Manali, Mussoorie, Ooty and Yercaud. We have also added two new resorts to our expanding destination network. Visit Agra – Regal Vista and soak in the rich heritage of India. Kufri – The White Ridge is guaranteed to offer you a splendid experience of the Himalayas. For the adventure lovers, we have also recently acquired Nature Trails, a nature, adventure and city getaway company based in Maharashtra with resorts at Durshet, Sajan, Kundalika and Dabhosa, all at drivable distances from Mumbai, Pune, Nashik and southern Gujarat.

We are always on our toes to turn your holiday experiences into memories you will cherish forever. We have introduced cycle trails in association with TI Cycles for those of you who are cycling enthusiasts. Foodies can try the exquisite ‘flavours of the land’ delicacies on offer at every resort and experience the local cuisine.

Social media has shrunk the world and brought us all closer—to our extended family, friends and batchmates—so much so that people are getting together to reminisce their old days and create new memories. Our latest offering, REUNIONZ (www.reunionz.in), takes care of all that you might desire in such a get-together and helps plan and customise it to your requirement. For members, the rooms can be made available against their membership, as per the norms.

As I write this note, the rains have spread all over the country, washing the land and turning it into brilliant hues of green. Monsoon has its own charm and from Daman to Darjeeling, Dindi, Goa, Lonavala, Munnar and Puri, there is a whole new season waiting for us. Come celebrate this season at our resorts!

And we will help create more memories!

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ramesh Ramanathan', written in a cursive style.

Ramesh Ramanathan

“To travel is to take a journey into yourself.”

- Danny Kaye



Heritage n Hills

—a reel world view

Agra and Kufri may be miles apart, but they share an uncanny link—the silver screen.

Text: Supriya Sehgal

She is a freelance writer, and curator of Mint's 'Weekend Getaways' column.

Though the lure of seeing the Taj Mahal on a misty morning remained undiminished, I also wanted to add parts of the old city of Agra to my itinerary. You see, a fleeting visit makes one miss the subtleties of the city's many hues. Contrary to what the 'Golden Triangle in a flash' itineraries would suggest, Agra offers so much more than the Mughal monuments along River Yamuna. While it is exciting to imagine how much wealth the royal coffers would have emptied on grand structures, an equal charm lies in the parts that look far from imposing.

I could not have found a better companion than Waseem Khan, as he pedalled me on his rickshaw through the slim lanes of Taj Ganj. I had arrived the same morning and climbed to the rooftop restaurant of my hotel, Sterling's Regal Vista, for a bird's-eye view. The city sprawled in colourful Lego-like blocks below me. The Taj rose from the labyrinth of these unexceptional buildings, occupying most of my camera memory. But now, bobbing along the narrow lanes on a rickety rickshaw, I was wedged right in the middle of this modest topography; however, I was way more

trigger-happy than in the morning. Each building seemed boundlessly characterful. The narrow lanes were like capillaries that made way through seemingly impenetrable swathes of old crumbling homes.

We stopped and climbed the terrace of one such home to survey the area from a vantage point. Waseem proclaimed how he was the first to spot Arjun Kapoor amongst the chaos of the shooting of the 2015 movie, *Tevar*, in this area. He wistfully remembered how he almost got a chance to be an extra on the set, but then missed it as he arrived late. He momentarily drifted into the world of glitz and glamour, but then snapped back with a fresh agenda for me. "Why don't I take you through all the places where Bollywood movies have been shot?" Now I am the most hesitating Bollywood student ever, but it seemed heartless to kill Waseem's idea. After all, I wanted to keep away from the expected itinerary and sure, this would allow me to have a filter that I never imagined.

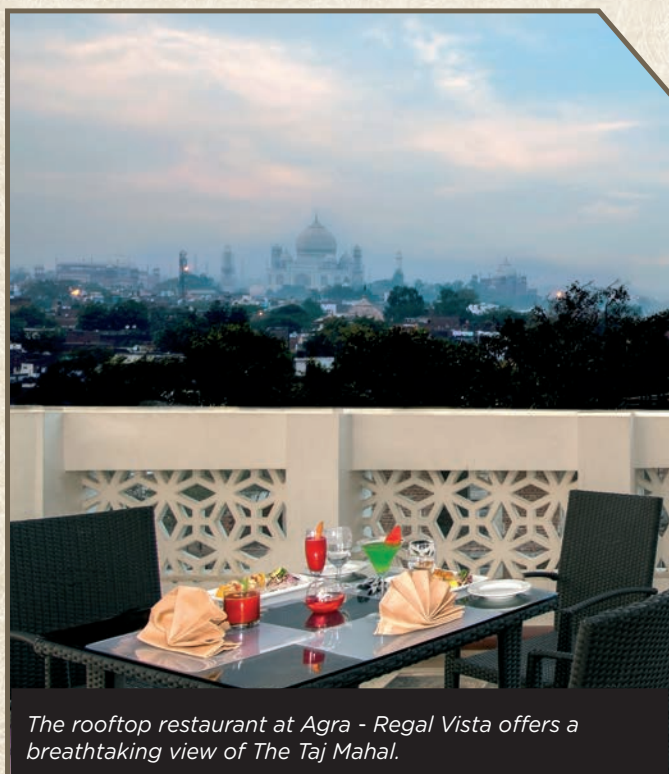
I would imagine that the Taj has been a celebrated backdrop to cement the commemoration of many a love story. Waseem corroborated that it was true for not only films like *Youngistaan*, starring Jacky Bhagnani and Neha Sharma, but also Hollywood blockbusters. No surprises there. We went about town

spotting buildings and hotels where actors had regaled local onlookers and stayed in Agra—*Ek Deewana Tha, Mere Brother Ki Dulhan, Yamla Pagla Deewana, Jhoom Barabar Jhoom*—the list went on. When I asked Waseem of his favourite film that had been shot in his city, "*Bunty aur Babli*," pat came the reply.

At the end of the day, when I flopped onto the comfortable bed at the hotel, the impact of Bollywood and its percolation in the minds of the people really began to sink in. Bollywood orientation must have etched a place in the recesses of my brain more than I imagined, as long after I had left Agra, I inadvertently started noticing some of the spots in the cities that flashed a familiar feeling. "I must have seen it in a movie," I would tell myself.



The magic of Taj Mahal has been captured in many a movie.



The rooftop restaurant at Agra - Regal Vista offers a breathtaking view of The Taj Mahal.

AGRA

- Admire the picturesque view of the Taj Mahal while indulging in a delicious buffet spread at our rooftop restaurant, Zaica. Choose from a wide range of affordable meal packages and savour the flavours of India.
- Enjoy à la carte delectable dishes from across the world at our multi-cuisine restaurant.
- Open from 7am to 7pm, the swimming pool is the perfect place to splash around and have a fun family time.
- The in-room dining facility available 24 hours a day lets you relish a scrumptious meal.
- The holiday activities centre offers a thrilling experience for all age groups. One can play games—pool, carom, chess, table tennis, dot shooting, etc.—or choose from a variety of arts and crafts options, such as glass and canvas painting, and paper flower making, among others.
- There is a Kids Corner for our little guests.



AGRA
REGAL VISTA
a sterling holidays resort



Kufri, with its cool climes, is an ideal getaway.

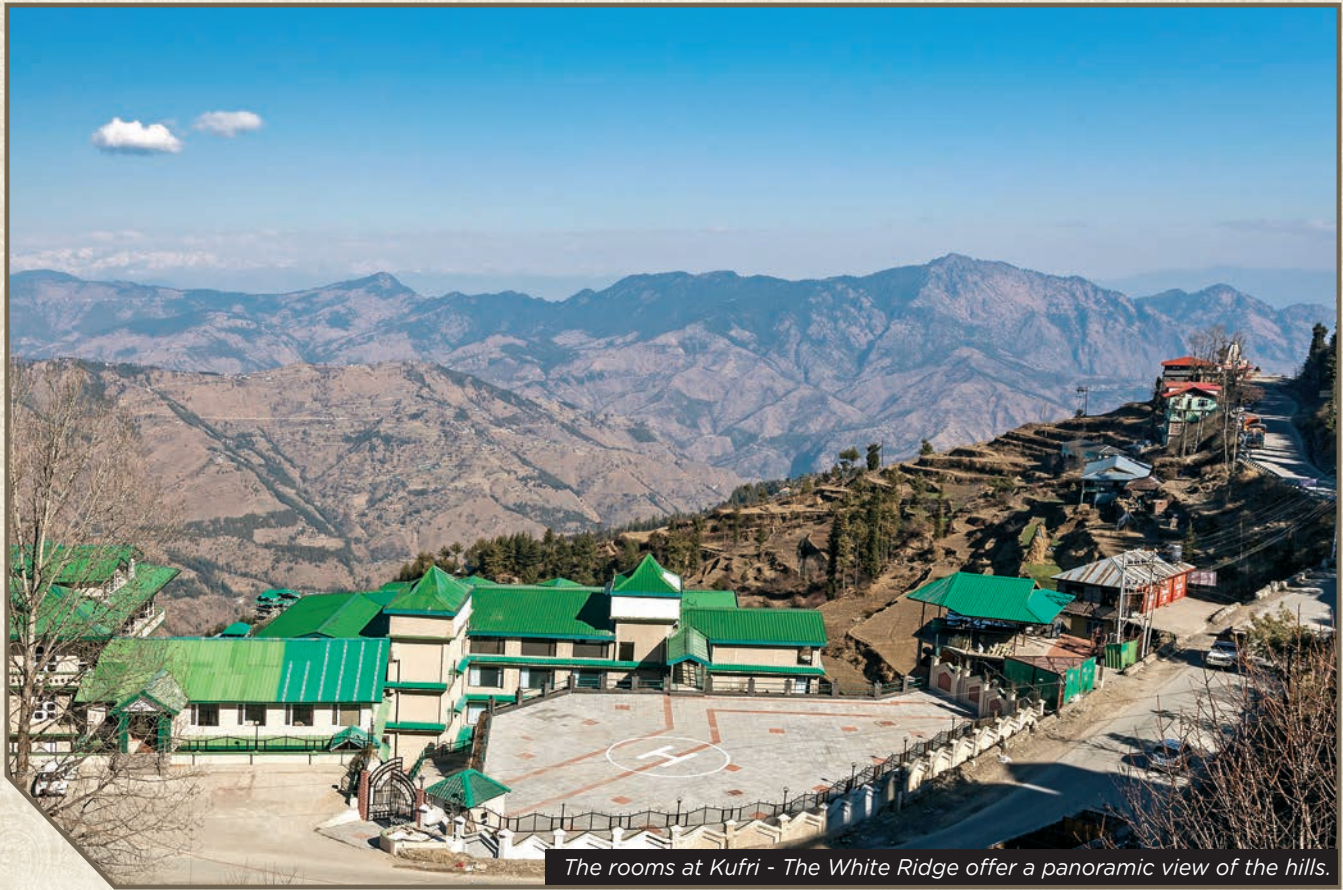
When the searing summers descended on the capital, it was time to rush to the hills. I chose Shimla and Kufri, over other lesser known destinations, to relive the memories of my childhood holidays. I settled in at Sterling's resort, Kufri - The White Ridge to stay at a safe distance from the throngs of crowd in Shimla, yet close enough to visit when I wanted to. Discovered by the British in 1819 as a veritable way to escape the plains in the summers, Kufri offers quieter confines in the company of hills. Though skiing, yak and horseback rides, and the highest go-karting facility in the country are a large draw for tourists in different seasons, there are plenty of nature walk trails that can occupy the more aloof travellers. I was out on one such trail by myself when I bumped into Ganga. He lay on a hill looking up at the sky with Tom Sawyer-esque abandon, whistling Bollywood numbers, while his yak munched on the green pastures, not glancing up even once to see who had intruded into their space. I must have huffed louder than I intended to, as it convulsed Ganga from his Zen-like bubble.

A cheery grin and an introduction followed soon. Ganga doubled up as a ski instructor in the winters, offered yak rides in the summers, and was the 'best guide in Shimla' by his own admission. Since I had another day in the town, he appointed himself as my guide who would show parts of the city that others did not know about. The next morning was nothing short of déjà vu when Ganga rattled off the films that had been shot in the region. *Bang Bang* was his favourite; *3 Idiots*, *Jab We Met*, and *Black* held equal sway for

those who cared to listen. We walked around in Kufri spotting exact spots where actors had etched a mark and craned our necks to peep into buildings where scintillating scenes were shot.

My mind immediately travelled back to Agra. Though divided by distance and culture, Waseem and Ganga had an uncanny resemblance—not in their features, but in Bollywood blessings in their hometowns.





The rooms at Kufri - The White Ridge offer a panoramic view of the hills.



Skiing, yak and horse rides are some of the adventure activities in Kufri.

KUFRI



- The buffet spread 'Flavours' is sure to tantalise your taste buds without burning a hole in your pocket.
- The multi-cuisine restaurant offers a variety fare—Pan-Indian, Asian, and Continental.
- In-room dining facility gives you the pleasure of enjoying their meals from the comfort of their rooms.
- The in-house bar, Pint O' Fun, offers a wide selection of drinks and cocktails.
- Enjoy a range of activities, from games such as pool, carom, badminton, chess, arrow-shooting, etc., to painting and video games.
- The Kid's Corner has been designed to cater to our young guests. There is a football play zone too.

Ooty-allure

of the hills

Once the salvation of British officers seeking relief from the hot Indian sun, Ooty is today one of the most popular hill stations in India. Located in the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, this picturesque resort town is fragrant with the smell of eucalyptus trees and dotted with tea, coffee, and spice plantations. Here is what you can do to make the most of your visit to this charming town.



LONGWOOD SHOLA RESERVE FOREST, KOTAGIRI

Spread over a bare 116 hectares, this Shola forest is small as far as forests go, but it plays a major role in attracting rain to the region. It is home to a rare kind of stunted evergreen vegetation, and a wide variety of flora and fauna, many indigenous. This tropical evergreen forest is a reserve—to visit, prior permission will be needed from the District Forest Officer/the Eco Tourism Development Centre at the Range Office near the entrance to Longwood Shola.

THE NILGIRI LIBRARY

Built in 1867, this colonial library houses over 30,000 titles, many of them rare British journals from the 19th century, and books on the Nilgiris and its hill tribes. Visitors can access the reading rooms with temporary membership. One can also admire the buildings with Gothic architecture.

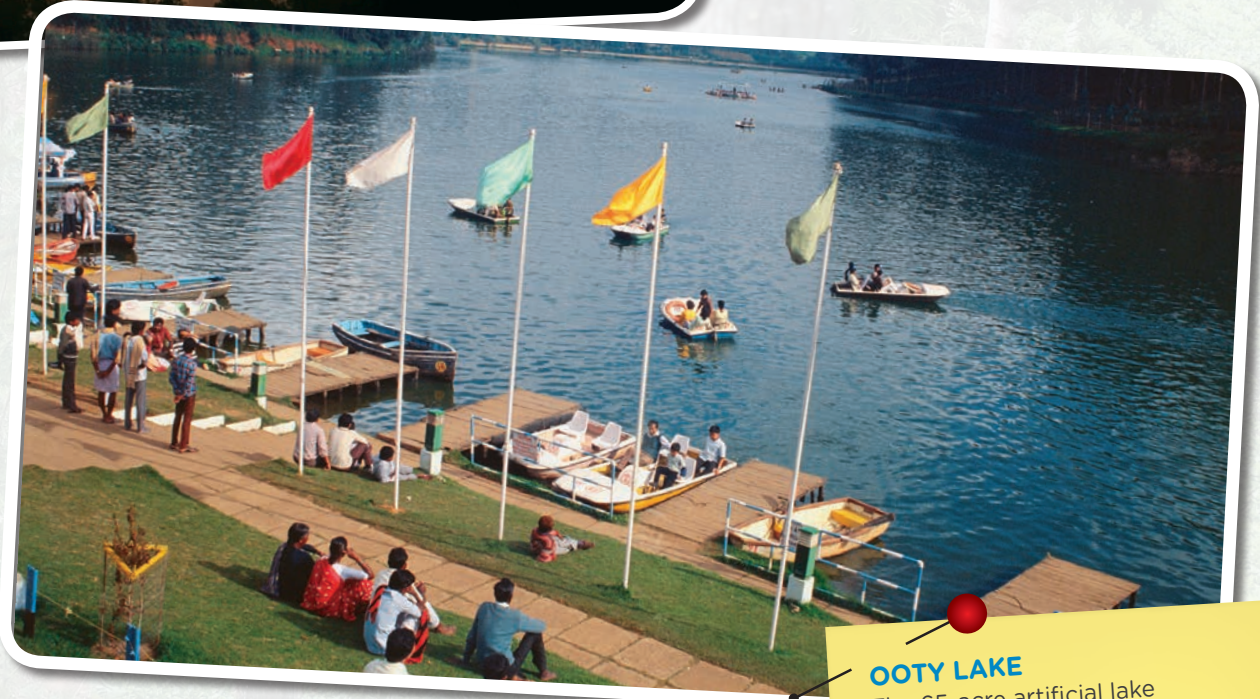


LOCAL TEA SHOP

After a long day of traipsing all over the hilly countryside, take a break to sip some tea and eat some *varkey* at a local tea shop. What makes the chai special is the fact that it is brewed from locally grown tea. The *varkey*, made from wheat, butter, and sugar, is specific to Ooty, and can be found at any local bakery or tea stall.

STONE HOUSE

Home to John Sullivan, Stone House was the first concrete house on the hill station. Called 'Kal Bangala' by the locals, since 'kal' means stone in Tamil, it is today the residence of the Principal of the Government Arts College of Ooty. An old oak that stands in front of the house is called Sullivan's Oak.



RACECOURSE

The racecourse at Ooty is a remnant of the British era and is over 125 years old. The traditional horse racing season is between April and June. Drop in to watch a race and even place a bet, legally, on your favourite horse.



VEGETABLE FARMS

The hillsides of the Nilgiri mountains make for pretty terrace farms—they require special attention and farmers have come up with interesting ways to water the fields. Watch the effort put into terrace farming to grow common vegetables like carrots, cabbage, potato, lettuce, cauliflower, and strawberries. The Nilgiris are also well known for horticulture.

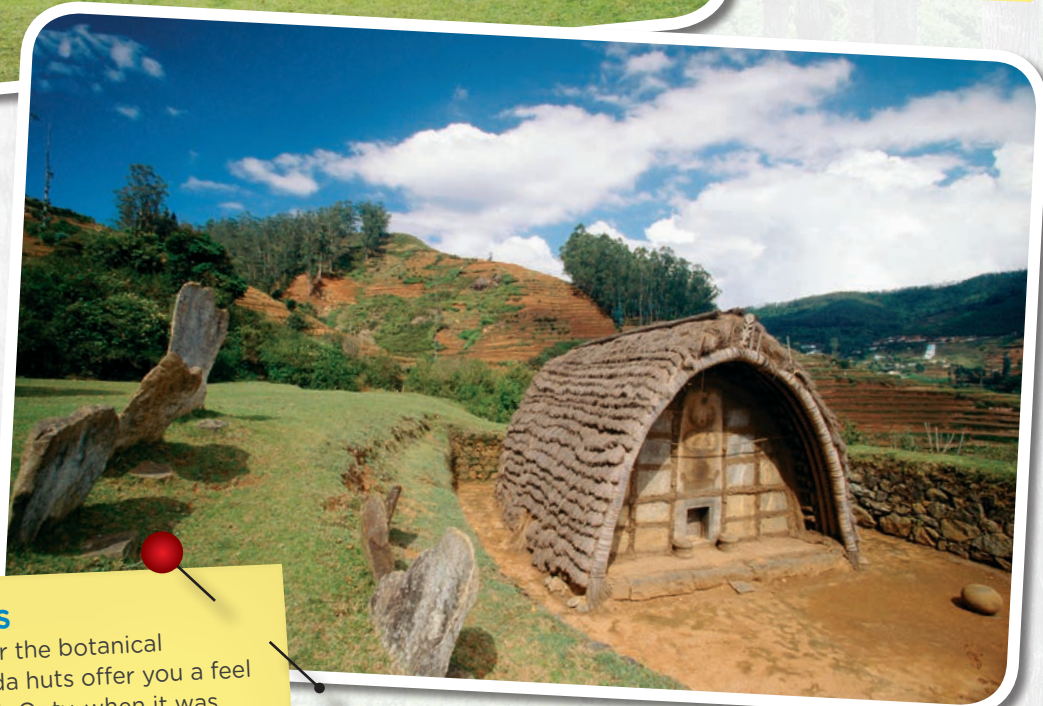
OOTY LAKE

The 65-acre artificial lake was created by John Sullivan, founder of the British settlement in Ooty, in 1824. It is surrounded by eucalyptus trees and has a railway line running along one side. There are boat rides on offer, but another way to enjoy the scenic beauty is to cycle around the lake. Nearby, there is a small garden and a deer park too.



BOTANICAL GARDENS

The Government Botanical Gardens in Ooty is home to thousand-odd varieties of plants, trees, medicinal herbs, and rare trees such as paper bark, monkey puzzle, and cork. Its centrepiece is a fossilised tree trunk that is estimated to be 20 million years old. This treasure trove of plant life is beautifully laid out in the numerous lawns lined with flower beds, lily ponds, and an Italian-themed garden.



TODA HUTS

Located near the botanical gardens, Toda huts offer you a feel of pre-British Ooty, when it was inhabited by indigenous tribes. These thatched huts are shaped like half barrels and command great anthropological interest. Toda lands have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, and are a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, designated by UNESCO as an international biosphere reserve.

TEA AND COFFEE PLANTATIONS

Nothing beats the sight of endless mountain slopes covered by a moss-like veneer of tea and coffee plants. Round it off with a visit to the tea factory—where you get to learn about the stages involved in tea-making, different kinds of tea, and even get to sample them.



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Being responsible with Mussoorie



10

Blending tourism goals with ecological concerns has never been easy. But Mussoorie scores high on this count, striking a perfect balance.



Handwoven shawls in the local markets are a riot of colour.

Holidays are great escapes—a welcome break from our monotonous lives, when we get a chance to embrace a new place, its people, and their culture. But travel stories often highlight only the exciting experiences these distant lands have bestowed on us. Hardly a few think of the impact we have on the places we leave behind.

There are so many unsung heroes in these destinations who make our experience more meaningful, joyous, and memorable, and more often than not, they depend on tourism for their livelihood. This should get us thinking, and encourage us to adopt a more responsible approach. Lack of awareness and apathy among travellers could leave many adored destinations without their pristine charm.

The concept of responsible tourism is aimed at making places better to live in and magical to visit. It, therefore, requires that governments, the hospitality industry, the locals as well as tourists shoulder equal responsibility and work towards making tourism more sustainable. When we talk of sustainability, the focus naturally shifts to ecotourism and promotion of local culture. Ecotourism focuses on how to minimise the negative economic, environmental, and social impact on nature. And promotion of local culture demands the inclusion of native traditions, cuisine, handicrafts, folklore, and so on, while designing tourism packages. With a distinct emphasis on such positive impact, Mussoorie has set a new benchmark for responsible tourism. Tourism is the most significant contributor to the economy of this quaint hill station in Uttarakhand's Dehradun district. As evident in the way the buildings and infrastructure have been planned, the local administration has struck a balance between modern demands and the richness of the past.

Mussoorie is literally nature's bounty, and its waterfalls, eco-parks, and sanctuaries are top on the must-see list. Located about 15km from Mussoorie on Yamunotri Road, and nearly



Jabarkhet is one of the few remaining natural forest patches near Mussoorie with connections to the Sivalik Hills and the middle Himalayas.

Courtesy: Jabarkhet Nature Reserve



Gun Hill offers spectacular views of the Himalayan range.



Flowers in full bloom at Company Bagh.

1,370 metres above sea level, is the 40-foot Kempt Falls. A trek to its source through the dense forests is worth the effort. Another exciting option for thrill seekers is the cable car ride up Gun Hill, the second highest peak of Mussoorie. Nearby, about 2,000 metres above sea level, is the Benog Wildlife Sanctuary—a fir and pine forest expanse rich in rare Himalayan bird species such as the mountain quail and red-billed blue magpie. There is an observatory set up by Sir George Everest on its periphery. Perched on top of Benog Hill is the Jwalaji Temple dedicated to goddess Durga. It is a must-visit not only for the religiously inclined, but also for nature lovers since it offers a panoramic view of the Himalayan peaks and the Doon Valley.

For horticulture buffs, Company Bagh (or Municipal Garden) offers a virtual treat, with its unique collection of fauna. It is an ideal picnic spot, with its well-manicured garden and an artificial mini lake with paddle-boating facilities.



The imposing Tchechen Choling gompa at Happy Valley.

At an altitude of 2,250 metres on the Mussoorie-Chamba road is the picturesque hill station of Dhanaulti. The main attractions here are the eco-parks 'Amber' and 'Dhara', about 200 metres apart. For developing these parks, the Forest Department of Uttarakhand roped in local youth who are now employed as guides, gardeners, and ticket collectors. The eco-huts here, built with green technology, showcase the ways in which ecological concerns and tourism goals can be combined. The first privately-owned and operated wildlife sanctuary in Uttarakhand, the Jabarkhet Nature Reserve, is another example of responsible tourism. The property owner partnered with a conservationist to protect this 100-acre plot rich in biodiversity.

In addition to addressing its ecotourism concerns, Mussoorie protects and promotes the richness of its local culture too. Catch glimpses of Tibetan culture at Happy Valley and visit the Thangka paintings gallery. Do not miss the region's famous Pandava dance, involving the narration of the *Mahabharata*.

Local markets showcase a wide range of handicrafts, including bamboo baskets, wooden sticks, bowls, trays, handcrafted jewellery boxes; on the Mussoorie-Dhanaulti road, one can shop for authentic handwoven shawls, stoles, and scarves made of wool, eri silk, or pashmina.



Thangka paintings are rich in Buddhist imagery.

The changing profile of travellers, government's commitment to the green cause, and the involvement of locals in preserving their natural heritage has made responsible tourism the order of the day. Mussoorie, with its rich biodiversity and unparalleled natural beauty, has hit the right note.



MUSSOORIE - DANCING LEAVES

Mussoorie - Dancing Leaves, a Sterling Holidays resort, is located 42km from Dehradun, 72km from Haridwar, 72km from Rishikesh, and 3km from Mussoorie town.



**MUSSOORIE
DANCING
LEAVES**
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FACILITIES AVAILABLE:

- ✦ The rooms overlook the Doon Valley.
- ✦ The Travel Desk will help you with travel arrangements and sightseeing plans. The Front Desk is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ✦ The internet cafe helps you stay connected.
- ✦ Play area for kids and a well-equipped club stacked with loads of indoor and outdoor games.
- ✦ Bonfires, party games, barbecue nights, and music are organised during weekends.
- ✦ The Doon Diner is an all-day dining, multicuisine restaurant. If you are in the mood for Chinese, visit Ambrosia for lunch and dinner. Pint O' Fun, the soon-to-be-launched bar, will provide premium service.



Abundant in trout, the cascading waters of Kempty Falls are a big draw.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A TOURIST?

It is easy to be a responsible traveller and help protect the communities and culture of the places you visit.

- Do your homework on the city or town you are planning to visit—the culture, the customs, the language, etc. Find out whether there are any local conservation or social projects on which you could gather information on, during your trip.
- There is shortage of water in many places, so it is advisable to use it judiciously. If you are staying for a long time, ask the hotel to not change your sheets and towels every day. Carry eco-friendly products, and switch off lamps and other electrical equipment when they are not in use.
- Try native dishes in local restaurants and contribute to the town's economic growth.
- Use local transport when possible or hire a guide; it is a great opportunity to interact with people and learn about their history.
- Choose eco-friendly excursions. The best way to discover a new place is to travel by foot or go cycling.
- Respect local customs and traditions and help preserve the heritage.
- Do not litter.
- Be a conscious shopper. Do not buy products made from endangered species or plants. Buy locally produced goods and services.
- Protect the flora and fauna. Avoid trips that entail disturbing wild or captive animals.

Remember: good manners are universal. A responsible tourist is polite, positive, and eco-sensitive.



The charm of Dhanaulti Eco Park is its rich biodiversity and serene landscape.

Gear up for the outdoors

Holidays help you rejuvenate, be it a family trip or indulging in adventure activities. But for today's tech-savvy generation, no vacation is complete without gadgets. Here is the lowdown on a few travel essentials.

Text: Prakrit Dhondiyal

He is a tech writer, and travel enthusiast.



Courtesy: Scosche

ROLL IN THE DEEP ▲

Do not let the boomBOTTLE confuse you—this is not a flashy water bottle, it is just shaped like one. This sleek gadget is a set of portable Bluetooth speakers for audiophiles. The speakers are IP67-certified, waterproof, and dustproof. If the IP67 certification was not good enough for you, it is also designed to float on water—an excellent feature if you drop it in a pool or lake. If it falls into a fast-flowing river though, you may consider letting it go. But if you do decide to risk your life, it should still be intact, considering it is shockproof. ■



Courtesy: Eyefi

WI-FI YOUR CAMERA ▲

Ever been in a scenario where you really want to take that perfect picture of the magnificent white tiger, but you have run out of memory card space? Not anymore. The Eyefi MobiPRO is a nifty little modification to your standard SD card. It includes built-in Wi-Fi that connects your camera to any other gadget. It transfers photographs via Wi-Fi and saves them on the desired device. ■

COMPRESS YOUR BOTTLE ▶

Bottles are bulky and cumbersome to carry, especially on outdoor jaunts—even an empty bottle takes up space in your already jam-packed rucksack. Enter, the Hydaway—a pocket-sized water bottle that is easy to carry. Fill it up when you need it, and when empty, fold it into a 1.25 inch piece of plastic that can slide in anywhere—your pocket or backpack. The bottle is watertight, odour and taste free, and comes with a handle. This is a more convenient and eco-friendly alternative to plastic bottles. ■



Courtesy: Hydaway



Courtesy: Subwing

SURFING WITH THE FISHES ▲

The SUBWING consists of two separate wings connected by a rotatable swivel. By grabbing the grip on each wing, it can easily be controlled in all directions. You can manoeuvre in the water as you please by tilting the wings to different angles. It is easy to learn how to control the SUBWING even if you are a beginner. For those uncomfortable with diving, the SUBWING makes for a great guide. Making this nifty gadget your water companion can boost your cool factor. ■

THE PERFECT TRAVEL JACKET

SCOTTteVEST is a company run by Scott Jordan, who has taken it upon himself to make the backpack, a product of the past. All the items one would carry in a backpack—phone, music player, tablet, sunglasses, water bottle, wallet, etc.—can fit in one jacket or vest, without appearing bulky. Some of their jackets even go as far as providing an RFID-blocking pocket to protect your credit card and passport from being hacked wirelessly. ■



Courtesy: SCOTTteVEST

THE ALL-IN-ONE TENT

Campers often face the problem of carrying a tent. It is heavy, time consuming to set up, and one needs to carry a sleeping bag too. Say hello to the Blue Ridge! Not only does this tent weigh below two kilograms and double up as a sleeping bag, but also can be strung up as a hammock. It comes complete with a netted cover flap to protect you from insects and rainflies in case of a sudden shower. ■



Courtesy: Lawson Hammock

POWER NAP ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

The Ostrich Pillow by Studio Banana Things is a simple product that redefines comfortable sleep for travellers. The pillow lets the user wear it as a hat, covering the head completely, but leaving the nose and mouth open for comfortable breathing. It also has pockets on the top in case you feel like wearing it and planting your head on the table for a short nap. So the next time when you are travelling in a crowded overnight bus or camping, this device will ensure your sleep is not disturbed. ■



Courtesy: Studio Banana Things

PROTECTING THE PHONE

Vacations involving water activities come with the additional task of keeping all your gadgets safe. Hence, we have Overboard, a company that specialises in waterproofing your precious gadgets. Their waterproof phone cases fit several popular phones and safeguards them from getting drenched. Making calls, texting, taking photos—none of your activities need to stop even if you step into water. ■



Courtesy: Overboard



Sterling Holidays has been creating exceptional getaways for its members. Its staff ensures every experience is memorable and unforgettable. Gunasekar is one among them.



Yercaud's multitasker

Born in the picturesque and charming hill station of Yercaud, I have been a nature lover since childhood. I decided to pursue my passion and joined the Botanical Survey of India's Orchidarium and Garden located in Yercaud. This stint helped me hone my skills and expand my knowledge of gardening. I then joined Yercaud-Rock Perch in 2004 as a gardener and have been associated with Sterling Holidays for a long time now.

During my initial tenure at Sterling Holidays, I introduced bonsai and ornamental plants at the resort. Simultaneously, I worked with the house keeping department too. All was well until 2008 when I had to unfortunately stop working owing to health issues. On my recovery, I was keen to rejoin Rock Perch. I approached the management and they readily agreed to take me back. But this time, I opted for a different job profile—I wanted to be involved in resort management and be part of the Holiday Activities team.

Famous for its coffee plantations and orange groves, Yercaud is also an adventure enthusiast's delight, given its rugged mountainous terrain. Besides taking in the sights and sounds of this quaint hill station, most of our guests at Rock Perch also want to indulge in activities such as trekking, bird watching, and dirt biking among others. So I make it a point to take them along new trek routes that are more thrilling and exciting. Also, I take utmost care of my guests' safety.

At Sterling Holidays, employees are given opportunities to work across various teams—along with planning various holiday activities, I also manage the resort's gift shop. I have also worked in the F&B team as a steward and as a bell captain for the front office. We at Rock Perch are a close-knit team and I enjoy a good rapport with my colleagues, who address me as 'kuttty'. I have also gained the nickname of 'Lady Nightingale' for my ability to sing in a female voice. I enjoy every moment of my life—being a member of the Sterling family, keeping my guests happy, and staying in touch with nature.

Being born and brought up in Yercaud, Gunasekar is well versed in the heritage of this charming hill station and shares a deep connect with the place. As a result, he is able to offer our guests a unique and unforgettable experience which they will cherish forever.

Amarnath Bakshi,
Resort Manager,
Yercaud - Rock Perch.



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Put your *chefs* hat on!

While reliving your holiday memories, you could relish the culinary experience too. Want to try your hand at local dishes from Ooty or Himachal Pradesh? Our chefs tell you how to recreate the magic!

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Rajesh Kumar,
Ooty - Elk Hill

Beetroot Cashew Kola

100gm beetroot
50gm potato
20gm cashew nut
10gm ginger
10gm garlic
10gm green chilli
10gm mint leaves
10gm coriander leaves
5gm methi
10gm garam masala
25gm gram flour
Salt as per taste
Oil
50ml fresh cream
1 lemon

Recipe

Tangy cream

Beat the fresh cream until its consistency is thick, then add some lemon juice along with chopped mint and coriander leaves, chillies, and salt.

Kola balls

- Mix boiled and grated potatoes and beetroots in a bowl with some finely sliced ginger, garlic, and chillies.
- Add chopped mint, coriander, and fenugreek leaves to the mixture along with adequate gram flour and salt.
- Mix gently until you have a smooth dough to effortlessly roll into equal-sized balls.
- Make sure you place a cashew nut in the core as well as on top of each dough ball.
- Deep fry in low flame until the cashew turns golden.
- Pour the tangy cream all around and serve.





Lakshmi Narayanan

Himachali Momos (Siddu)

- 350gm wheat flour
- 3gm yeast
- Salt as per taste
- 50gm cottage cheese (grated)
- 10gm green chilli
- 80gm green peas (fresh and crushed)
- 10gm garlic
- 5gm turmeric
- 10gm coriander leaves

Recipe

- Add yeast to a mixture of lukewarm water and wheat flour. Knead well until smooth and leave it for two hours to ferment.
- While you wait for the dough to get ready, chop green chilli, garlic, cottage cheese, and coriander leaves. Mix them well.
- Roll four equal-sized balls of the fermented dough, filling the insides with the green mixture.
- Steam these balls for 25 minutes; garnish with mint chutney and desi ghee and serve.

Reunionz-celebrate togetherness

Fix a date, re-explore the relationships of the past, relive your memories, and refresh your photo albums. Plan a reunion now!

Life is all about myriad relationships and the meanings we find in them. However, our fast-paced lives rarely allow us to reconnect with friends and relatives. That is when you think of reunions—the best possible way to revisit the past and create fonder and newer memories for the future.

The idea of reunions is getting popular by the day, and Sterling Holidays too has caught up with the trend with

To plan your
next reunion with
family/friends
visit
www.reunionz.in or
call 1800 3000 2727

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Reunion holidays strengthen bonds across generations.



Best way to catch up with your friends and classmates.



Today, as a result of social media, everyone is connected to their extended family, friends, and batchmates in the virtual world more than ever before. This is prompting people to get together once again to create new memories that connect them in the future. This is what Sterling Reunionz is all about.

- Mr. Ramesh Ramanathan,
Managing Director, Sterling
Holiday Resorts Limited

its Reunionz concept. You can choose from a wide array of activities ranging from camping and trekking on one hand to themed dinners, carnivals, and bonfire parties on the other, and completely customise your itinerary. Reunionz options are available at most of the Sterling Holidays' resorts.

In August 2015, Kodai - By The Lake (KBTL) and Kodai - By The Valley (KBTV) jointly hosted a reunion for a group of Hashers. (Hashing is an age-old activity involving non-competitive running and socialising.) This session was immensely successful and highly appreciated, and the testimonial below is proof of this.



Reconnecting with friends and reliving memories.



Thank you so much for the warmth, hospitality, and courtesy extended to us during our stay and for taking care of us so well. I greatly enjoyed the interaction with you and appreciate the efforts made to ensure that South India Super Hash 2015, jointly organised by Madras, Bangalore, and Hyderabad Hash, is a great success. Many of the hashers with whom I interacted, both from India and abroad, spoke highly of all the arrangements and highlighted their comfortable stay and excellent meals. Thanks for making this happen!

- Haresh Gidwani



Visit www.reunionz.in

Easy breezy FASHION

Looking dapper has never been so easy with comfort being the go-to word this season.



Text: Nishat Bari

She is a fashion blogger, and curates a number of fashion and lifestyle blogs.

There is an easy comfort to the current crop of fashion with fluid silhouettes, mule slippers, and even trackpants making the cut. For those of you who prefer more structure, fear not, everything does not go the anti-fit way. Think sharp suits in deep green, monochromatic cropped tops with long skirts, even a touch of retro with polka-dotted dresses. There is a wide array of options to pick from—lush floral prints to monochromes, shoulder-baring jumpsuits to breezy tunics, dapper bow ties to

casual chinos. No matter what your aesthetics lean towards, you will be spoiled for choice.

Bring out the shiny new whites and get into play mode with cut-outs, layered looks, and interesting detailing. It is a sure-shot way to play up all those fun accessories tucked away in a corner of the closet. Make it as spunky or subtle as you like with sunglasses, neckpieces, armbands, and stilettos.

Men can upgrade from the classic white t-shirt and jeans to an off-white linen shirt, a current must-have. We are not asking you to ditch those denims just yet, but find a pair of jeans that are distressed washed and pair them with a polo shirt. A whole range of new colours have breathed new life into these evergreen collared shirts, making them hugely popular all over again.

For both men and women, prints can be friends too. Let a pop of colour be your canvas in the form of floral prints, keep it structured with bold monochrome stripes, find dresses with modern interpretations of the classic tie and dye, and think not twice before draping yourself in colourful batik. Floral print shirts go rather well with slim-fit chinos, finished off with a pair of boat shoes that will go effortlessly with most of your formal and casual wear. For the men who are not yet ready to go down the floral route, try shirts with micro prints, ranging from animals to paper planes to musical instruments.

And if there ever was a time for girls to buy that off-shoulder blouse, it is now. So go on and shop for such dresses, blouses, jumpsuits, and shirts. You will be amazed at the number of styles that are incorporating this trend. You can be doubly stylish in an off-shoulder tunic. Tunics are all the rage this season and every girl should have at least one. They are comfortable, come in every length, shape, size and colour, and can be adapted to just about any occasion. In fact, reams could be written in ode to the versatility of this garment.

Men should not start to feel left out of the comfort fashion bandwagon because sweatpants have finally made an entry into the hallowed halls of fashion. With 'fit' being the new sexy, the day was never far when sportswear would become trendy. Tailored sweatpants are not only great while working out, but no one can turn their nose up at you if you wear them outside the gym. But bear in mind that it must be a complete ensemble, accessorised with wristbands, bracelets, and appropriate footwear. Another fashion must-have is a baseball cap.

Fashion is all about experimenting and there are a lot of styles to play around with. If the wild fauna-inspired prints are not something you would like to wear, pick and choose from pastel colours and soft shades. Green is, hands down, the colour to be seen in and the darker hues are finding favour in sharp suits, satin dresses, bags, and bow ties. But do not let that stop you from trying out the myriad other shades of green.



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- Good-quality cottons and lightweight silk
- Silicone-washed fabrics that are stainproof
- Gabardines
- Synthetic blends
- Nylons and chiffons



Guest *Speak*

Some pleasant memories made at Sterling Holidays...

The bullock-cart ride is by far the best experience I had in Thekkady. More than just a ride, **it was an opportunity to connect with village life** and experience rural culture, which can be an eye-opener for those from the city like us. We got a chance to visit various farms and see vegetables and fruits being cultivated. We even drove the cart for a while which was very exciting. All in all, it turned out to be an amazing experience and much more than what I had expected. I am grateful to Mr. Mahesh for having organised the ride.

Ketan Chandgothia



I am thankful to your staff at Casa Tesoro for **providing us makeshift accommodation on short notice**. My wife was taken ill and had to be hospitalised on December 24, 2015; so, we checked out the next day. Later, despite the short notice, the resort staff managed to provide us accommodation on December 26. All of them were cooperative and understanding—Mr. Sujit, Mr. Sumesh, Mr. Kamlesh, Mr. Chinappa Das, and chef Ajay.

G Doraiswamy



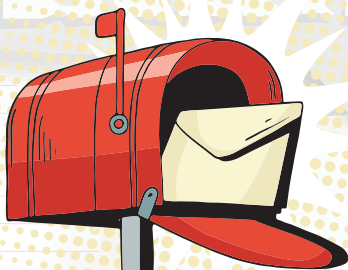
My first stay at Casa Tesoro with my husband was memorable and I would like to thank the entire staff for the wonderful experience. I had the pleasure of meeting F&B manager Mr. Simarjit Singh, and resort manager Mr. Ramesh Jadoun. Mr. Singh is one of the most approachable, patient, and truly prompt managers I have ever met! Mr. Jadoun is committed to providing outstanding customer service and I am sure that under his leadership, the resort will attract more visitors. We were also touched by Mr. Kamlesh's thoughtful gesture of calling us multiple times to enquire about our safety and convenience. **I truly enjoyed the ambience created by the poolside for the Awadhi dinner.** I could not have asked for a more enjoyable time—decorations were marvellous, food was delicious, and the staff exceptional.

Sonia Bajaj



We have been members of Sterling Holiday Resorts for the past four years and have developed a special bond with the staff at their resorts. I would like to highlight the hospitality at Bhawanipur Greens in Nainital. In March this year, we had gone to Binsar for two nights and from there went to Nainital on March 19, which also happens to be my birthday. When we reached Bhawanipur Greens, after a three-hour drive, we were pleasantly surprised. The hotel manager, along with the other employees **received us with broad smiles, a birthday cake**, and welcome drinks, with the 'Happy Birthday' tune playing in the background. We were really touched by this thoughtful gesture, and will cherish the memory forever. Our visit to Nainital had a special reason—we had celebrated our honeymoon in 1960 in Belvedere Hotel and were keen to revisit it after 55 years. Sterling Holidays' staff helped us locate it. Bhawanipur Greens is well-maintained, and located just 5km from Naini Lake. We would strongly recommend other members to visit the resort and enjoy both the scenic beauty and the grand hospitality.

Surender Mehra



Join the "Garbage to Green" movement

Reddonatura India Pvt Ltd is one of the foremost players in the area of Integrated Waste Management. We are primarily the producers of R-Nature - India's premier Fully Automatic Organic Waste Convertor Machine. With a marquee list of Clients and Partners across India we have successfully rendered the journey of Garbage to Green seamlessly.

With more than 300 installations of the OWC's in varied capacities from as low as 25kgs to a massive 10 Ton per day capacity. The R-nature fully automatic OWC is aptly suited to handle food and plant waste. Whats more it requires minimal/no human intervention and is available in both standard as well as customized capacities.



What can you compost?

Leftover cooked food like vegetables, fish, bread, rotis, curry, meat and bones, garden waste and other compostable items.

What can you NOT compost?

Metal, plastic, glass, large bones, large shells, petrochemicals and stones.

How long does it take to decompose?

24-48 hours

How often should the compost be removed?

Typically every 7-10 days

Will there be any harmful discharge?

No leachate, water or harmful gases will be discharged. Only carbon dioxide and water-vapour are released.

Where to use the compost?

It can be used in gardens or in fields, by mixing it with the soil.

Does the composting machine need a large space?

No! An OWC with 250 kg capacity needs only 32 sq. ft. of space for composting and curing.

Does the machine need constant attention?

Not at all! Actually, it needs no human intervention.



Garbage to Green

Join the "Garbage to Green" movement If you would like to get an R-Nature Fully-automatic Composting Machine, get in touch!

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