

MOBILITY



Reduce your carbon footprint by staying over at Lakshman Sagar



THE GREEN MAKEOVER

Eco habitats

As Indian travellers indulge in responsible holidaying we rediscover the charm of shaking hands with all things natural & green

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M O B I L I T Y

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hasing deadlines vs running after butterflies. Breathing in the toxics vs smelling the flowers. Climbing up the corporate ladder vs exploring the wilderness. Plugging in headphones vs indulging in silence that talks. Braving through traffic snarls vs. following uncultivated winds. Choosing between the nondescript and the popular. Here's a chirpy green leaf from the latest addition to the young holiday lovers' book. Some have titled it the rage of eco-tourism, a few call it sustainable holidays and many are content

with the simple term, natural getaways. As for us, we prefer the term real holidays. We make a stopover at some real destinations to join the green revolution. Are you coming along?

The charm of a village

Why would anyone who has the riches to fly to the exotic choose to walk miles in a quaint village? You would not ask this question if you were to go to Dhanachuli, a non-descript village in Nainital. When Sumant Batra, a corporate lawyer, discovered Dhanachuli during one of his expeditions to Uttaranchal, he made a promise to himself to return. The result, he built up Te Aroha, a boutique resort, in the village. What encouraged him to leave behind the urbane? "The winding hill roads that run amidst the pine and oak forests, snow-capped peaks, countryside dotted with wild flowers and apple orchards, et al," he says. Needless to add, once here you'd be

tempted to leisurely stroll in the village, go on a challenging trek or go riding a bicycle with the breeze for company. "It is a destination for those seeking solitude and tranquility," says Sumant, "Also, we have retained the original structure of the summer house while building the resort."

Sumant took the meaning of eco-tourism a step beyond by training the village boys and girls to serve the guests, "Eco-tourism is not just a catch phrase here. A simple step like having the villagers work as staff is a giant leap towards providing sustainability to the local community."

Where? Te Aroha, Mukteshwar, Nainital

Get in touch: 87550 80736, 87550 80737 or write to info@tearoha.in

A recycled luxe palace

Gunny bags for cushion covers, an old rickshaw for a two-seater, waste leather shavings for rugs and more. Don't be in a hurry to label The



Farm, Jaipur a recycled wonder, for it is a lot more. What's now a boutique hotel surrounded by fields was once the home of the family of Pratap Bhanu Singh, a member of the Rajput warrior-caste nobility. So when his son, Surya and his wife, Ritu, began building The Farm, they made sure that the family heritage was preserved. "We decided to incorporate various parts and pieces of the palace into the property to retain its distinctive character," they say. Soon the duo got addicted to the process of reuse, recycle and repurpose, "We began to enjoy it." Next, they visited the *kabadiwallahs* with the remains to lend it a fresh life and stopped over at the old city streets to find objects that could be translated into their scheme of things. "Soon we had carpenters, welders, painters, tailors, etc. contributing towards the project." And in this process they learnt an important green lesson, "Awareness about the environment is the need of the hour and one needs to remember that the damage once done cannot be reverted."

There's a lot to do at The Farm though the owners suggest you do nothing. "Wake up to the sound of birds, walk to the fields or interact with the villagers," they say. For those willing to move a limb there are many options; take a swim, learn how to cook by watching and talking to the chefs at the live kitchen, spend time at the books and DVD library, indulge in a game of pool or billiards, go cycling, et al.

Where? The Farm, Ajmer Road, Jaipur

Get in touch: 9828023030, 9982223060 or write to mail@thefarmjaipur.com

A home amid the fields

"I wanted to set up a homely stay amid forest and fields where those tired of the high-strung city life could unwind themselves. I then zeroed down on creating this in the crisp freshness of a Himalayan hamlet," says Anurag of Ek Chidiya. Located in the small village of Nathuakhan it is ideal for those looking forward to spending some time away from the cosmopolitan noise. "Also it works as a perfect getaway for

(Facing page)
Fall in love with the greens at Te Aroha. The Farm is a luxe meets recycle destination



ROMANCE THE GREENS, indulge in the quiet, contribute towards the welfare of locals or eat an organic meal



those interested in cultural observation of the way of life in this part of India. It is situated on the hushed outer flanks of the village, where the traditional stone and wood houses and step cultivation can be seen,” he adds.

The green experience extends to the platter too. The cottage serves farm-fresh food prepared mostly from vegetables and herbs grown in and around the cottage, including herbal teas, homemade butter and fruit preserves, and Himalayan poultry eggs. “The peach, plum, apple and pear trees around are a big attraction for children, as are the edible wild berries like Hisalu and Kafal,” says Anurag. And if you don’t want to sit back with a book then you can trek to the nearby stream, village temple or even head

for a daylong walk to and back from the reserve forest of Mukteshwar.

Where? Ek Chidiya, Nathuakhan, Uttarakhand
Get in touch: 7500974466, 9810169522 or write to ekchidiyacottage@gmail.com

A green resort

Not a single tree was chopped while building Aamod, Shoghi. And this in itself explains the dedication and passion of the team behind this eco-tourism resort located in the small suburb in Shimla. The resort boasts several green angles. To begin with it is built on the land provided by the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department under its ecotourism policy. The team takes pride in the fact that the cottages were built with

minimal interference to the surroundings, “The cottages are pre-fabricated structures, which are in tune with the environmental norms.” And while you would love to sink into couches we’d say step out under the skies; fly between trees using pulleys, climb the Burma Bridge, go rock climbing or give rappelling a try. After-which, let the aromatic oils and massages at the spa relax you. The spa too is carved out of bamboo and stone. Activities like planting a sapling or informative sessions on local flora and fauna are designed to make you part of the green drive.

Where? Aamod at Shoghi, Kandaghat, District Solan

Get in touch: 0177-6532020 or write to shoghi@aamod.in



(Left) Culture, environment and adventure await you at The Kikar Lodge. Experience serenity in serendipity at Ek Chidiya (Right)

tour. And of course if you miss the seclusion, remember it is just a step away in the comfort of the spa, the nature trail walks or shade of kikar trees. Now, who could think that there was more to Punjab than pregnant mustard fields?

Where? The Kikar Lodge, Ropar

Get in touch: 01887 252218, 252219, or write to jschopra@thekikarlodge.com

Preserving for the posterity

Once a hunting lodge now an eco-resort; Lakshman Sagar, Raipur encapsulates centuries of history and local Marwari traditions. So how was this secluded green beauty created? Lakshman Sagar was built in the 19th century by the then Thakur of Raipur, Lakshman Singh Ji to host noble families and British emissaries and today's resort is just an extension of the tradition of hospitality. Kunwar Manavjeet Singh Raipur envisioned a getaway much like his forefather, though with a conservationist view of his heritage and surroundings. He teamed up with green architects Revathi and Vasant Kamath, who ensured that everything at the resort was designed around the natural flora and fauna of the area.

To reduce the carbon footprint all materials used for construction were locally sourced. The resort follows the concept of Zero Kilometer Design, whereby all furniture and products has been inspired through an understanding of local products used and produced locally. Indulge in nature walks, jeep/horse safaris, muzzle gun shooting, meals on a floating deck, etc.

Where? Lakshman Sagar, Raipur, Rajasthan

Get in touch: 11 26494531 / 32 or write to reservations@sewara.com

A forest retreat

Get up, close and personal with the wild, zip across dense forests, listen to the chirping of birds or simply place yourself in a room on a hillock. There are many green ways to enjoy your stay at The Kikar Lodge, Ropar. Claiming to be the country's first private forest reserve, it is home to some 300 species of trees and flowering plants. As for the bird lovers some 250 species of birds await you. And if you are lucky you'd even spot a deer or sambhar during the night safari. "The place is for those travellers who want a little thrill along with the serenity," says Amarindar Chopra, the director. And the thrill amidst other activities like quad biking and rappelling comes from Asia's longest zip line

