

Summer Time Gladness

As the nip in the air is slowly replaced by a stifling stuffiness and the proverbial beads of perspiration begin to form on your brow, you know summer cometh and that can only mean one thing: it's time to escape. Make like the angry lords and ladies and pop up to the mountains (or near them) for a spell, where you can be sure the heat will be staved off for just a while longer and you can pretend the hot months are still far away.

CONTINUED BY SHRUTI HULSAINI

LAST-MINUTE HOT

CLICK ON THE
LINKS TO FIND
OUT MORE!



THE VILLA HIMALAYA, SONAMARG, JAMMU & KASHMIR

At The Villa Himalaya, you are the most important person on the planet. Or that's how they make you feel, anyway! Run by a local family, the motto here is that, at the end of his long day of travel and travail, a guest should be able to come back and have things just the way he wants them. Perfect, no?

The rooms at The Villa Himalaya overlook the Sindh River and have frontal views of the Sonamarg Valley. Delight in the pleasures of a hot cuppa on a chilly morning, and, as the day progresses, stretch your legs with a walk through the valley. You can even go fishing and horse riding, if that takes your fancy. But whatever you do, make sure you're having a good time, because the owners demand that you do! →

i Closest airport: Srinagar International Airport (60km)
Make it happen: www.thevillahimalaya.com;
from ₹ 6,500 with breakfast

GREAT
WITH
FRIENDS

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2 ANCHAVIYO RESORT, WADA, MAHARASHTRA

Unbeknownst to many a Mumbaier, there's a little secret hideaway sitting just 90km away from the housing city. Set among grass, mango and chickoo trees, the luxury chalets and tents at Anchaviyo Resort in the little hamlet of Wada are ideal enough that you feel like you're on holiday, but homely enough so you don't feel like you're left your comfort zone. Actually, scratch the homely bit, because the chalets are pure indulgence. One of them has a terrace pool, another an open-air jacuzzi that looks out upon the Vaitarna River, and yet another has a little swing that sways over a gurgling stream. The tents are charming, too, and they overlook a football field. Yes, that's right, a whole football field! The resort has a bunch of activities for guests, including outdoor games in a fenced-in football field, kayaking, donut boat and motorboat rides on the river, cycling, and a mini theatre with squishy chairs that you can book for your own private movie screening. There's a less active mini pool, in case you were wondering. And did we mention there's a football field? Wada you know!

Closest airport: Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (180km)

Make it happen: www.anchaviyo.com, tents from ₹6,000, chalets from ₹12,000 with breakfast

**3 FRINGEFORD, WAYANAD, KERALA**

When the people at Fringeford tell you to get lost, they mean well. They want you to lose yourself in the jungles of Wayanad, an area so close to nature it shares its boundaries with the forest. Set in a plantation of cardamom, pepper, vanilla and all kinds of other stuff, the estate is close to the Wayanad and Thodipuzha forest, making it one of the best remaining strongholds of the Malabar rain forest. A large part of the ground is long covered by wild flora, making it the perfect setting place for elephants, squirrels and leopards. The Fringeford bungalow is low-slung and cozy, with heavy wooden floors and wide windows, perfect for forest watching. Premium streams gurggle along the property and evening bonfires flicker over trees in the chilly night air.

Closest airport & railhead: Calicut International Airport (52km), Mysore Junction (130km)

Make it happen: <http://fringeford.com>, from ₹4,500 with full meal

4 VERANDAH IN THE FOREST, MATHERAN, MAHARASHTRA

Keeping with the theme of floods and ladies, it doesn't get any more engrossing than this. Verandah in the Forest in Matheran is the quintessential cottage in the hills, complete with 19th-century English names, four-poster beds and high-ceilinged reading rooms. Still, some cottages do have decidedly Pami names, and there's no denying an old-world English charm that pervades the place. Built by one Captain Barrin the days of the British Raj, the cottages are quite reminiscent of India's colonial past.

Leaving on the spiciest verandah is the order of the day here. And when the cool evening breeze flutters through the curtains and the sunlight throws gentle patterns against the walls, you can take a stroll down to the nearby Charlotte Lake, armed with a picnic basket to see if you find Elyon something to write home about.

Closest railhead: Nashik Railway Station (24km)

From here, you can take the toy train up the hill to Matheran.

Make it happen: <http://the-verandah-in-the-forest.naamvanahotels.com>, from ₹4,000 with breakfast

VERANDAH

PHOTOGRAPHY: (1) FOR LIAISON/SHUTTERSTOCK; (2) ANCHAVIYO RESORT; (3) FRINGEFORD; (4) THE VERANDAH IN THE FOREST; (5) THE HIMALAYAN VILLAGE

**5 THE HIMALAYAN VILLAGE, KULLU, HIMACHAL PRADESH**

There's a lot to boast of rustic settings up in the mountains, but it doesn't hurt to have a little luxury thrown in for good measure. The people at The Himalayan Village understand that perfectly, blending the traditional, ancient Kathkuni style of construction (the dry stacking of stone and wood without cement) with modern amenities. The cottages here have taken inspiration from the various districts of Himachal, each with a distinct characteristic and color. Some even have personal lawns and all are surrounded by the towering deodar trees typical of the Himachali landscape. The property is 10km from Manikarn, famous for its hot water springs on the banks of the icy River Parvati. And for those who like to squeeze some activities into their holiday time, there's no dearth of them here. Chances from river crossing, rappelling, nature walks, jungle excursions, rock climbing, mountain biking, trout angling, trekking, orchard picnics, rafting... A hard day of activity is well rewarded with some pampering, perfectly style. At the spa equipped with hot sauna, steam sauna, jacuzzi, aroma bath therapy, a cup of massage. Round it all off with a hearty Himachali meal and dip into bed knowing there's no place you'd rather be. Oh, and there's one of her important things: The Himalayan Village is a pet-friendly resort, so feel free to take your best friend along with you!

Closest airport: Chandigarh Airport (210km)

Make it happen: <http://thehimalayanvillage.in>, from ₹8,800

6 BRIAR TALAYAR VALLEY TEA BUNGALOWS, MUNNAR, KERALA

'Chukka!' is the buzzword at the Briar Talayar Valley Tea bungalow in Munnar. Teak and rosewood interiors speak of an elegance by and, in the partial bungalows here, it's easy to feel yourself less thinking you're a worker. It's a beautiful land and here you about slapping drugs on your nose as you expect to be as you rock back and forth in your hammock, settling down for a snooze after a hearty lunch. Or be a little more adventurous and strap on your hiking boots and set out on a trek through the woods. The spacious property is surrounded on all sides by mountains, making you feel like you're cocooned in a towering bear hug.

CHAI FOR COFFEE

Since the property is in a tea plantation, one of the biggest draws here is the mini tea workshop. Venture out into the tea garden with a bamboo basket strapped onto your back and learn how to pick the right leaves for your brew. Then head back to the factory, where you will be taught the various stages in the tea manufacturing process before attempting each step yourself. Finally, take home the tea you made and enjoy many a cuppa with the satisfaction of knowing you made it yourself.

Closest airport & railhead: Cochin International Airport (110km), Aluva Railway Station (12km)

Make it happen: <http://briarjungles.com/talayar-valley-bungalows-munnar>, from ₹6,000 with breakfast and activities





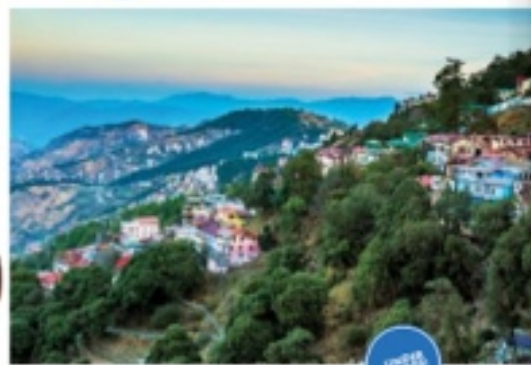
7 VAN SERAI, JAGESHWAR, UTTARAKHAND

As you drive to Van Serai, the Kumaoni Range presents itself to you. The lodge slowly comes into view, peeking out of the hills in a way that makes it seem like it was meant to be there. Paying attention to detail and adherence to the Kumaoni architectural style have ensured the lodge fits seamlessly into its surrounds. Once you're ensconced within its walls, you'll feel like you fit in, too. Deciduous trees are gently in the breeze, and warm sunshine floods the veranda, on which guests are encouraged to laze. The lodge is a short walk from the Jageshwar Temple Complex, a cluster of temples thought to be more than 2,500 years old. The kitchen serves delicious vegetarian food, respecting its proximity to the pilgrimage site.

Closest airport & railhead: New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (34km) | Kathgodam Railway Station (13km)

Make it happen: <http://jageshwar.in>, from ₹ 4,500 with breakfast and dinner

YES!



8 PRIMROSE VILLAS, CHIKMAGALUR, KARNATAKA

High up in the mountains of the Western Ghats is a place that, once you've seen it, will make you want to leave the city for good. Primrose Villas, in Chikmagalur, has an allure that's almost hypnotic. Jacobson- and Victorian-era furniture sits neatly inside stunning villas, some of which have entire glass walls that make you feel like you're outside the whole time. Any city-dweller, accustomed to cramped spaces, will love the high ceilings and the feeling of openness that the villas offer. The sounds of silence here would make Simon and Garfunkel go dizzy. The calm is a soothing balm for frazzled urban nerves. Activities on offer include coffee estate walks, treks through the surrounding hills and trips to nearby Primrose Farm. Come now, because you can choose to eat under the stars or have a private barbecue in your villa, while the sounds of the mountains echo around you.

Closest airport & railhead: Bangalore Airport (265km) | Kolar Railway Station (11km)

Make it happen: <http://primrosevillas.com>, residences from ₹ 11,000, villas from ₹ 17,000



9 SANJIV'S AIRA HOLME RETREAT, SHIMLA, HIMACHAL PRADESH

The Aira Holme estate, owned and run today by Billy and Sanjiv, dates way back to 1870, a time when quaint cottages in the hills were all the rage. Now, more than 140 years later, the little cottage on the estate has undergone many changes, but retains its charm in a way that only old houses can. In the heart of Chhota Shimla, this little place has a kind of tranquillity that's hard to come by. There are only two rooms here, both of which overlook the surrounding valley. This means that even if the cottage is full to capacity, you only have to share it with a handful of other people.

Afternoons are meant for lazing in the quiet attic where Billy's extensive book collection lies waiting to be devoured. And, if Billy's books feed the soul, Sanjiv feeds the body with her delicious, homey food cooked right there in the kitchen. Apricot and deciduous trees rustle in the cool breeze that blows through this cute B&B and the setting is as idyllic as it gets.

Closest airport & railhead: Chandigarh Airport (125km) | Kailash Railway Station (85km)

Make it happen: <http://sanjiv-aira-holme.blogspot.in>, ₹ 5,000 with breakfast

PHOTOGRAPHS: VAN SERAI, JAGESHWAR, UTTARAKHAND; PRIMROSE VILLAS; AIRA HOLME RETREAT, SHIMLA



10 SINNA DORAI BUNGALOW, VALPARAI, TAMIL NADU

The Sinna Dorai Bungalow in Valparai has something to boast about. Well, many things, actually. If you've ever wondered what it was like to live like a plantation owner (and trust us, they had it good), one night here will make you wish you'd lived in that bygone era and owned a couple hundred acres of tea plantation. Sure, there was no Wi-Fi back then, as there isn't here now, but, sometimes, that can be a good thing. This place is all about morning walks through the tea gardens, bird watching, animal encounters and busy, fast-paced

afternoons spent skipping tea on the veranda, trying very hard to work up an appetite for a dinner that's bound to be just as, if not more, fulfilling than lunch. Local cuisine is what you'll find on your plate here, and you'll be the gladder for it, because it will be served with the gracious hospitality that planter's homes are known for and it will taste delicious. Cozy rooms that are perfect for curling up with a book in a beautiful view of the Valparai Hills in every shade of green, imaginable are just some of the other perks of this place. >>

Closest airport & railhead: Coimbatore Airport (20km) | Pollachi Junction (63km) | <http://sinna-dorai.com>, ₹ 8,500 with meals

11 BARA MANGWA FARMHOUSE, DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL

If you're looking to give back to Mother Nature a little, eco-tourism is the ticket for you, and at Bara Mangwa Farmhouse near Darjeeling, they point the way at every step. This Himalayan farmhouse makes no bones about what it can and cannot provide its guests and even tells you on its website:

how bad thereads are, but it goes about its business with such a humble and honest air you can't help but fall in love with it. While you will definitely not get fish every, a wide variety in food, tea, vision, or even hot water in the bath room, the trade-off isn't so bad because, in short, you get panoramic views of the Himalayas, organic food, and, most importantly, no dull hosts and tranquillity. The hosts also encourage

involvement with the locals, improving their technical skills as they have a better shot at life. They're all round good guys who just want to give it back to nature and their community, and once again you're in a part of the process. What's not to love?

Closest airport & railhead: Bagdogra Airport (BDB) Near Jajpuraj Junction (JBJ)

Make it happen: <http://baramangwafarmhouse.com>, from ₹1,200



12 BINSAR FOREST RETREAT, BINSAR, UTTARAKHAND

Looking out over the gorgeous Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary is a little eco-friendly homestay that the locals fondly refer to as Sidhgar. The Binsar Forest Retreat, as it is formally known, got its cute nickname from the fact that the land was once owned by a Major Edin, a big shot from the colonial era. Run by solar power and supplied with water from a nearby spring, this self-sufficient homestay gently pushes you to be more environmentally aware and conscious of your consumption. There aren't even any plug points in the rooms, forcing you to put your gadgets away for a while and just enjoy what nature has to offer instead. Kumaoni fare makes up the meals for the most part, served in the warm dining room. Walks through the forest here are exciting because you're actually treading through the sanctuary in ghore/jourmangal and leopard territory. There are a bunch of quaint rooms and even Swiss cottages to choose from, each offering something special, whether it's unobstructed views of the snow-capped peaks or the rhododendron trees outside.

Closest airport & railhead: New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) Kathgodam Railway Station (90km)

Make it happen: www.binsarforestretreat.com, from ₹3,000 with all meals and weekly nature walk, tents from ₹700



13 BILLING TERRACES, NAINITAL, UTTARAKHAND

There's no denying that there's something rather cute about the singular Chestnut House at Billing Terraces. It's hard to say what it is that makes this place so endearing, but there's something all right. Maybe it's the quaintly decorated rooms that somehow manage to look like something out of an interior decorator's catalog, maybe it's the fact that a curious Kaibadi Dali peeks at you while you enjoy your meals in the common dining room, or maybe it's just the whole coziness. Scrumptious meals made from locally sourced produce appear on the table at midday, the scrumptious evening late, and guests gather around like much to a flame. A wonderful late, and it's the perfect spot for a game of tea, and, for those who want to venture further, there's a mountain trail nearby. It's all together quite charming. This place will give you a good time.

Closest airport & railhead: Bagdogra Airport (BDB) Kathgodam Railway Station (100km)

Make it happen: www.billingterraces.com, from ₹2,000



14 SITLA ESTATE, MUKTESHWAR, UTTARAKHAND

While we do agree that tea and coffee plantations are awesome, making it way down south to see them may not always be easy, depending on where you are. Luckily, up north, we have the gorgeous Himalayas coming to the rescue. Sitla Estate takes advantage of the behemoth mountains, making it one seriously pretty place to stay. Coconed in the Kumaon Range, it's a short enough ride from Delhi to make it accessible, but further enough away to have no city vibes whatsoever. At 7,000 ft above sea level, it offers glimpses of the greater Himalayan snow peaks like Nanda Devi, Panchachuli and Trishul. The house itself is 150 years old, almost a Himalayan legacy in its own right. Eco-friendly, self-sufficient and conscious of local culture, the property makes sure you're comfortable with the still looking after the revision menu. You'll soon find that the two German chaplains that pad around make the best company, as do the fluffy rabbits and the clutch of chickens that peck about the property. Most times are arguably the high light here, with dishes turning up on the dining table that you'd hardly expect in a place so remote. Delicious Kumaoni food is also often served, and is thought to be the best in town.

Closest airport & railhead: New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) Kathgodam Railway Station (67km)

Make it happen: www.sitlaestate.com, from ₹1,800 with breakfast



SPURGE

15 THE CHUMBIMOUNTAIN RETREAT, PEELUNG, SIKKIM

Here's your chance to experience traditional Sikkimese culture in its own way. The retreat at the Chumbi Mountain Retreat has an all-inclusive theme, and each of its locations in its own way. On your road to discover the traditional Sikkimese ways, immerse yourself in local flavors at the in-house restaurant, where the food is made from organic and locally harvested veggies. Sitll into the traditional Sikkimese living room complete with a yak hair (how not to) and a traditional Tibetan or have a cup of coffee at the Basu Camp cafe, modelled along the lines of a high-altitude trekking hut complete with yak hair ropes and sheep-wool drapes. You can even just let it all hang out and relax in a hot tub or traditional hot stone bath native to Sikkim. Kicking back in the mountains never felt so good.

Closest airport & railhead: Bagdogra Airport (BDB) Near Jajpuraj Junction (JBJ) Make it happen: <http://thechumbimountainretreat.com>, from ₹10,300 with breakfast



16 WOODY VU STOK HOUSE, LEH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Imagine stepping out onto your balcony and being surrounded by some of the world's tallest mountains, their snow peaks so close you feel like you could walk there and back in a wink. At Woody Vu Stok

House that's exactly what you get. Rooms offer unobstructed views of Khardung La (even from the bed). Stok Kangri and Leh. Trekkers looking for a challenge will find this a good base from which to set off on their trek up the Stok Kangri (14,000 ft) – Sept), one of the highest treks in India, popular

among pro hikers. The rooms are cosy and have a warm feel so them that can only be described as a delicious.

Closest airport: Leh (10 km) Kushok Bakula Rimpoche Airport
Make it happen: <http://woodyvu.com/leh/woodyvu-stok-house/index.html>, from ₹ 8,400 with breakfast



17 CHONOR HOUSE, DHARAMSHALA, HIMACHAL PRADESH

In the Norbulingka Institute of Tibetan culture, a few gifted students are working to revive the lost arts of Tibet. The goal here is to return Tibetan art to its former glory, and workshops are conducted in wood carving, painting, weaving, Thangka painting and statue-making. Visitors are encouraged to come to the institute to experience the practice of these traditional arts first hand. As soon as you enter the gate, it's like being transported to the Tibet of old. Immaculate Japanese-style gardens have streams bubbling through them and birds flitting in and out of the branches above. The old Tibetan architecture is the icing on the cake, most of the structure having been built by artists from the institute themselves. Come bed time, you can retire at Chonor House, where plenty of differently styled rooms await. Each room has a different theme, with beautiful traditional murals on the walls and views that make waking up in the morning a pleasure.

Closest airport: Dharamshala's Gaggal Airport (15 km)
Make it happen: www.norbulingka.org/chonor-house.html, from ₹ 4,500

18 ALMOND VILLA, SRINAGAR, JAMMU & KASHMIR

When you're in Srinagar and you've heard all that there is to hear about the place, you kind of expect to have an orchard all to yourself wherever you choose to stay, and, if you don't, you feel kind of short-changed. Good thing, then, that Almond Villa has exactly that. Surrounded by apple, cherry and plum orchards and overlooking Dal Lake, with the gorgeous Zabarwan mountain range in front. The main house was built more than 80 years ago and is a gorgeous shade of red. The independent Walnut Cottage is a little way away from the main house, perfect for those seeking seclusion. Every May, the large back garden becomes the setting for the Dara Shikoh Festival of the Arts, a week-long series of workshops, seminars and evenings of performances. But perhaps the highlight is the fortnightly farmer's market held here, where local organic produce, seasonal fruits, food products and jams, chutneys and herbs are sold.

Closest airport: Srinagar Airport (15 km)
Make it happen: <http://almondvilla.in>, Almond Villa from ₹ 7,000 with breakfast, Walnut Cottage from ₹ 8,000 for two rooms with breakfast



19 TATA PLANTATION TRAILS THANEERHULLA HERITAGE BUNGALOW, COORG, KARNATAKA

Within the Tata coffee estates in Coorg lie a handful of beautifully restored bungalows, some built more than a hundred years ago. One of them is the Thaneerhulla Heritage Bungalow. The house is surrounded by thick green vegetation and, in the early mornings, a thick blanket of mist descends. The bungalow, named after an idyllic pond nearby, has beautiful wooden floors, a cosy fireplace in the common living room and spacious rooms that overlook the garden or the forest. There's even a butler on call for that extra dash of extravagance. Hot meals are served in the common dining area, where guests gather round to exchange stories from the day, and some evenings see a barbecue spitting sparks into the night. The plantation attracts hungry elephant herds, and it's not uncommon for the animals to wander close to the bungalow, so don't be surprised if you find yourself being woken one morning by loud trumpeting.

Closest airport & railhead: Mangalore Airport (182 km), Mysore Junction (100 km)
Make it happen: <http://plantationtrails.net/thaneerhulla-bungalow-coorg>, from ₹ 11,500 with breakfast

PHOTO: JANG, NARAYAN (HILL & HALL), GETTY IMAGES (HILL & HALL)



20 HIMALAICA, UTTARAKHAND

A holiday home in the mountains, Himalaica promises its guests freshly-brewed coffee whenever they walk in. Stocked with all the goodies you could care for while on holiday, this place pampers you silly. Playing at MasterChef is a popular activity here, and guests often find themselves in the kitchen rustling up a meal with fellow visitors. Those in the mood for a good leg-stretching can set out on a nice

long walk into the surrounding forests. The bedrooms, spread out over two cottages, are cosy and warm, opening out onto fresh green lawns. Himalaica is all about pausing and reflecting, and taking a moment to just be. And when the setting is so gorgeous, it really isn't that difficult.

Closest airport & railhead: Pantnagar Airport (80 km), Kathgodam Railway Station (30 km)
Make it happen: <http://himalaica.com>, ₹ 4,500/ person with all meals

