

MAKE LOVE ROMANTIC

SET AMIDST FORESTS, COFFEE AND TEA PLANTATIONS, ORCHID OR
CARDAMOM GARDENS, PERCHED BY THE LAKESIDE OR ON THE BANKS OF
RIVERS, WHETHER HIGH UP IN THE MOUNTAINS OR DOWN BY A BEACH,
THESE HOMESTAYS AND BED-AND-BREAKFASTS
HAVE THE ABILITY TO EVOKE LOVE IN ALL KINDS OF PLACES.

PRODUCED BY **RUCHIRA BOSE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ASHISH CHAWLA**
STYLED BY **STYLEDRONE BY DHWANI** MAKE-UP AND HAIR BY **KAJEE BABU RAI**
MODELS **SABRINA BOHATOVA** AND **VAIBHAV ANAND**
LOCATION COURTESY **JILLING TERRACES**

A beautiful walk through the woods from Jilling Terraces, Bhimtal, takes you to the top of the ridge, where the views are simply breathtaking.

ON HER: Jersey top by **Hemant & Nandita**; tulle top with flower embroidery by **Fendi**; Big Bang skirt by **Rara Avis**; sneakers, model's own.
ON HIM: Shirt by **Corneliani**; suede jacket with flap pockets by **Noughtone**; houndstooth wool scarf and trousers by **Sunil Mehra**; sneakers, model's own.



Exterior view and inside the White Peaks Homestay. Below: A picnic lunch prepared by their staff.

Long walks through woods, delicious local food cooked over hot coals, and evenings under a shared blanket before a crackling fireplace define the charm of these places.

UNDER THE HIMALAYAS

Between Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the hills, mountain streams, orchards, and woods create India's traditionally romantic holiday region. Earlier, the homestays here were basic but now you find tastefully decorated boutique properties, mostly owned by the Delhi-elite, perched with vantage views. Here, homeowners are working with locals to create sustainable tourism and promote local produce and craft.

Cottage Amidst Apple Orchards, Kotgarh

This pretty cottage is located in the midst of an apple orchard in Kotgarh, about 75 kilometres from Shimla.

Apart from the cosy interiors, it offers guided tours of the village and informative orchard tours. In the evenings, bonfires are lit and wonderful barbecues are arranged. While there, taste locally-grown peaches, kiwis and apples, and the cook's hearty rendition of local cuisine. If you must go out on excursions, there are lovely old churches nearby, and the Sadhu Sangh caves. saffronstays.com

The White Peaks Homestay, Gagar

The White Peaks is a quaint, pet-friendly summer home of Abhijit and Aparupa Ganguly and their two adopted mutts. It stands amidst a fragrant oak and rhododendron forest, has stunning views of the white Himalayas, and gets a generous dusting of powdery soft snow through deep winter. The owners have decorated the house with lots of character, with books, warmth, and

lovely furnishings. Come for lazy days, bask in the mellow sunshine, and to let your dogs run free in the meadows that surround. thewhitepeaks.com

Solitude in the Himalayas, Nainital

Nestled on a quiet hillside in Gagar near Nainital, Solitude, as the name suggests, provides complete solitude for the soul. Face-to-face with the mighty Kumaon Himalayas, it is so quiet here that one can actually hear a pin drop. Fresh mountain air, spectacular 180-degree views of snow-clad mountains, long walks, and warm hospitality is the hallmark of this boutique stay. There are ten beautifully designed and cosy rooms. solitude.in



IN THE WILDERNESS

The Serai at Toria is a wonderfully luxurious but earth-friendly property on the banks of the River Ken, 20 minutes from Khajuraho, and just outside Panna Tiger Reserve. A riverside setting, delicious food, and wonderful hosts make this a very special place to stay. Within the nine acres that Serai is set in, there are beautiful nooks under enormous trees to relax, while outdoor dining choices include lunch by the big tree and dinner by candle light under a star-lit sky. Book direct or with rareindia.com.



Steps lead down from Jilling Terraces to a beautiful apple orchard that blossoms in summer.

ON HER: Ruffled dress by Fendi; floral pattern coat by Hemant & Nandita; fur collar and 'Mini' by the Way' bag by Fendi; suede boots by Steve Madden.
ON HIM: Cotton shirt, textured blazer, and wind jacket by Corneliani; wool trousers and jersey tie by Noughtone; Chevron wool scarf by Sunit Mehra; denim and leather brogues by Brune Shoes.

Walk up to the top of the ridge at Jilling Terraces to see layers and layers of the snow-capped Himalayas against a stunning blue sky.

JILLING TERRACES

Originally named Chestnut House, this charming house was built in 1933 by a Sanskrit scholar for his Polish wife. Rooms named after berries and flowers, with fireplaces, high ceilings, original wooden floors, earth-coloured rugs, colonial-style verandas, Enid Blytons and dog-eared paperbacks on the bookshelves, the smell of wood-fired cooking, and picture windows with spectacular views all around, Jilling is a labour of love. Perched high up a mountainside, the owners, from the world of design and architecture, Sheela and Rajiv Lunkad painstakingly refurbished and redecorated the property for almost a decade. All materials and furniture had to be brought up on horseback or by hand. A note: You definitely need to be fairly fit and enjoy a long hike in order to get there (although they can arrange for *palkis* to carry you up.) To book, call +91/991-004-9608, or write to info@jillingterraces.com.

In the dining room and library at Jilling Terraces.

ON HIM: Linen shirt by **Noughtone**; two-tone double breasted suit by **Canali**; wool check tie by **Sunil Mehra**; tassel loafers by **Brune Shoes**.
ON HER: Cotton shirt and pleated organza skirt by **Bodice**; textured jacket by **Cue by Rohit Gandhi + Rahul Khanna**; marble necklace by **Itrana** at **Nimai**; Gabriel Soho clogs by **Clarks**.



A beach on the Konkan coast.
Below: The view from the deck at L'Attitude, Kamshet.

LAKESIDE AND FARM RETREATS FROM MUMBAI

Quiet beaches and quaint villages where you can tell the sun has risen from the golden light twinkling from within hedges, peaking through tall coconut trees, or reflecting off glassy lakes. Boutique stays and B&Bs around Mumbai have been the enterprise of the city's elite and well-travelled, so you'll find these have been designed with great taste, positioned at the weekend traveller who wants to enjoy a home-away-from-home atmosphere without the responsibility of owning and managing it.

L'Attitude, Kamshet

Imagine waking up to a gorgeous sunrise every morning and watching the sun slowly inch above a cool glass lake as it turns the sky to fire. Imagine little rays of sunshine stealing into your room, giving it a warm golden glow. Fantastic mornings like these are just some of the magical moments that unfold at L'attitude.

Located on a wooded lake in Kamshet, L'Attitude is a three-bedroom villa that boasts a 360 degree view of nature and is perfect for nature lovers looking for some quiet time together. Nestled in the backwaters of Andre Dam, this eco-friendly villa has been built with wood, mud, and exposed brick, adding a raw charm to the interiors.

The deck seems tailor-made for spending hours in quiet reflection or lingering over that morning cup of coffee. Decorated in a rich palette of greens, blues, and pink, the villa is furnished with stylish wooden furniture and delicate artifacts. For those who prefer to be outdoors, there is a small pond and a small organic vegetable patch (to encourage healthy eating) on the property itself that guests can visit.

All in all, L'attitude is a creative blend of luxury, tradition, and eco-friendly living. saffronstays.com

Atithi Parinay, Ratnagiri

A thoughtfully-designed homestay built over two acres of lush green land on the Konkan belt, just 15 kilometres from Ratnagiri and Ganapatipule, Atithi Parinay is a great escape from Mumbai. The interiors are designed in keeping with the local motifs, colours, and craft. A river runs next to the property, giving it a relaxed and natural setting. You can also drive out to the beaches of Kotawade. atithiparinay.com



TOP: SHOULTS/ALAMY



The pool at Coco Palms
Below: A room at
The Inner Temple, Goa.

GOA STATE OF MIND

Goa doesn't really require planning. It enjoys that unique status of a destination where no matter what the season, regardless of whether you have been there before or not, it'll be easy to make it happen, and it'll be immensely enjoyable.

Coco Palms, Arpora

A brightly-lit three-bedroom bungalow with an earthy vibe and a community pool, Coco Palms is nestled in a gated complex in Arpora, a short drive from Baga, Calangute, and all the happening party pads of North Goa. saffronstays.com

Wooden Chalet on the Riverbank, Raibandar

Also called Casinha Raibandar, this is a group of riverside wooden chalets on the banks of the Mandovi, and smack in the middle of the Heritage Zone of Raibandar. Built in 1730, it underwent major restoration work in 2012. Centuries ago, the first capital of Old Goa was Raibandar, but due to a plague in the area, it moved to Panjim.

The property offers views of River Mandovi, the Salem Ali Bird Sanctuary, and of adjacent islands. The upper bedrooms have a spacious wooden deck with deck chairs and a view of the river. The lower bedrooms open onto a paved

patio on the river's edge. It has docking facilities for a reasonably sized yacht. The house is well-stocked with appliances. Enjoy a barbecue on the stone patio or try fishing. saffronstays.com

Inner Temple, Moira

A luxury wellness villa with a pool and garden all designed to evoke a sense of calm and well-being. The rooms have names akin to those you'd find in spas: Shanti, Shabhala, Satvaam, Brahma, among others. It's perfect for a romantic vacation; here you can combine meditation, yoga, ayurvedic spa treatments, and organic living. theinnertemple.in



Wooden Chalet on the Riverbank offers views of River Mandovi and the Salem Ali Bird Sanctuary.



A view of the Tata coffee plantations in Coorg. Below: The Kurinji Estate in Kodaikanal.

HILLS & PLANTATIONS IN THE SOUTH

From Kodaikanal, Coorg, to Nelliampathy Hills, discover gorgeous princely stays scented with tea and cardamom hedges to colonial bungalows with fireplaces deep inside coffee plantations. There are loads of options for the romantic traveller.



RAJAKKAD ESTATE

Originally built in the 18th century, the Pallam Palace started off as a summer palace to the Maharajas of Travancore. See canopy roofs crafted from red tiles, elegant wooden pillars, and criss-crossed beams and carved panels.

To get there, you will have to travel to Dilingul, which is just outside the city of Madurai, and drive up 1,000 metres above sea level to reach the foothills of the Western Ghats. A charming garden hotel with just seven rooms, each done up uniquely, the Rajakkad Estate is a tranquil spot, far from the bustle of the city.

You can spend days discovering the forests and coffee estates that cover the Palani Hills. Book directly or with rareindia.com.

TOP LEFT: ADIL JAIN

TOP: JON ARNOLD IMAGES LTD/ALAMY

Kurinji Estate, Kodaikanal

Imagine a picturesque stone cottage set amongst the verdant foothills of Kodaikanal. Far from the bustle of the city, this charming cottage is an idyllic retreat for those looking to relax and unwind.

It is a gorgeous six-bedroom heritage bungalow built in the 1930s. Crafted using a traditional Thanjavur-style stone, Kurinji boasts of a seamless blend between heritage architecture and modern amenities. Each bedroom features a lovely fireplace, a verandah



furnished with tea tables, delicious local Tamil food, and ivy-covered exteriors. This cosy heritage bungalow offers a rare glimpse of this period. saffronstays.com

Colonial Bungalow, Coorg

Surrounded by sweeping vistas of the ever picturesque Kodagu Hills, this bungalow of yore is fit for royalty. With spacious rooms, cosy fireplaces, Victorian-style furniture, the bungalow takes you back to a bygone era. They just celebrated their 110th year anniversary and are one of the most sought-after holiday homes in Coorg. We believe some of that popularity lies in the food served from its traditional home-style kitchen. Taste Coorg delicacies like *pandhi* (pork) or *koli* (chicken) curry, *akki roti* (rice roti), *kadumbuttu* (rice dumplings), wild mushroom and mango curry. Take a romantic picnic and drive to nearby Irpu and Abbey falls or visit Nagarhole National Park, Tata Coffee plantations, or a Buddhist monastery. saffronstays.com



View of the Himalayas from Darjeeling. Below: Lakeside Cottage, Shillong.

T+L TRAVEL GUIDE
For your next weekend getaway, find more bed-and-breakfasts and homestays at travelandleisureindia.in.

EXOTIC EAST

From the tea gardens of Darjeeling to the misty Dooars of West Bengal, the Himalayan orchid gardens of Sikkim to the birding valleys in Meghalaya, the East has incredibly romantic destinations.

Heritage House, Kurseong

This is a recreated and restored British colonial home done up with a lot of artefacts of historical relevance. In the house, you will find anecdotes from British times, replicas of trains, as well as several pictures of birds found in the area. The house features three suites that comprise a large seating area, a beautiful queen-size bed, and an attic upstairs that houses another cosy bedroom with a seating area of its own. There is a private balcony as well.

The in-house restaurant dishes up local and international cuisine on request and a large open terrace right outside it provides stunning views of the mountains and the valley below. Guests can go for one of their curated heritage walks that includes a visit to a British era cemetery and monastery run by nuns, among other places.

Lakeside Cottage, Shillong

With the backdrop of the enchanting Khasi Hills, these cottages are set amidst groves of majestic pine, lush paddy fields and a small organic tea garden. The

rooms are on the banks of Lake Umiam, one of the largest lakes in Meghalaya, with blue azure waters. The architecture is inspired and derived from the original Khasi thatch huts. Each cottage and room is designed with its orientation to the east, capturing the view of the lake and the rising sun. There's a spa which is equipped with hydrotherapy equipment and offers traditional Khasi massage and herbal treatments.



You can go trekking to the legendary peaks, Lumsopetbheng and Lumdiengiei, that are a few kilometres away, for boating in Lake Umiam, or take long walks around the nearby Umih village. saffronstays.com ■

TOP 3 ROMANTIC AIRBNBS



CLIFTON (CORBETT'S FORMER BUNGALOW), NAINITAL
Located on the fairly wooded slopes of the Ayarpatta Hill, it's away from the chaotic tourist rush that now typifies Nainital. Clifton is an old world five-bedroom bungalow where Jim Corbett once stayed.



COTTAGE 1947, MANALI
A four-bedroom house perched in the hills near the famous Hadimba temple. The views from this charming colonial cottage are incredible. It's also pet-friendly, which means you don't need to leave your dog behind.



SOUTHMERE, OOTY
Southmere is a secluded 130-year-old house in the heart of Ooty, very close to the lake. The property has a lawn in the front and an organic garden in the backyard. A small path leads to the beautiful lake.