



Aalia Hotel and Resort Haridwar

BY TINKU RAY

On my first trip to Haridwar I was looking forward to an adventure and some real R&R. A time to reflect on life and be pampered a little. But I wasn't going to find this in the hustle bustle of the holy town. My destination was 12 km outside Haridwar at the Aalia Hotel & Resort, run by the friendly and ever smiling manager Dheeraj Chauhan and his staff. A five-acre property with 12 villas on the western side of the River Ganga, Aalia is an oasis of peace and serenity. Perfect for unwinding and rejuvenating. The Shatabdi Express from New Delhi Railway station is a convenient way to get there.



ACCOMMODATION

There are 12 separate villas with 3 spacious rooms within them, the Chila, Garden, and River suites. Each has its own terrace or a garden. The Aalia villas are special as they can also be rented as self-contained units, and have a living room, dining room, library and kitchen. Many of the rooms have direct views of the River Ganga.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

There is just one restaurant, and the menu has a limited choice of dishes. But Chef Vikas's food is well prepared and tasty. I



recommend the Khumb Palak with mushrooms, which is to die for. It's creamy and full of taste that bursts in your mouth. Chef Vikas, who is a Garhwali, made me a lunch with local dishes, as I requested. There was pumpkin raita, sesame seed chutney, vegetables with potato, chicken curry, and black lentil dal. I soaked it all up with *mandua ki rotis*—a wholesome roti made of dark wheat flour that is a staple in the Uttarakhand region. I washed it all down with a smooth sweet lassi. The resort has a full liquor menu with foreign and Indian spirits.

OTHER FACILITIES

For some real quality, pampering try the spa, which has a good choice of treatments to rid you of all the stress and worries of living in a big city. The two treatment rooms are clean and a haven to escape to. The resort is in the process of adding more rooms. Free yoga sessions in the morning are also a good way to start your day. For the more adventurous there are ATV rides, safaris in Rajaji National Park and river rafting on the Ganga. On-site there's an infinity pool by the river, play room for kids, archery, badminton, football, and croquet. The resort also does its own *aarti* in the evening.

AT A GLANCE

Address: Aalia Hotel & Resort, near Rajaji National Park, Chila Range, Shyampur Noamabad, Haridwar, Uttarakhand. **Website:** www.aalia.net
Tel: (0) 98999 75469.
Price: Double room: ₹12,500-16,500, Aalia villa: ₹45,000
Getting there: Daily Shatabdi Express from New Delhi to Haridwar. Or catch a flight (daily) from Delhi to Dehradun (90-minutes from resort).



If you want to experience some local nomadic Gujjar culture, you can take a 2.5 km trip to a village in the forest where the Muslim community lives. You can also go on a trek, bike, or take an ATV. The families are friendly and ready with tea and snacks to welcome you. If that isn't appealing then enjoy a jacuzzi, available only in some of the resort's rooms, on request.

