AN UNCONVENTIONAL TRIP TO HARIDWAR

Haridwar is not exactly a destination you think of when you look for weekend getaway options near the capital city. Aalia Resort in Haridwar gives you a reason to pick the city for your next holiday. **Abhinav Sahni** tells us more about the resort and the destination.

Haridwar – the land where the Ganga emerges from the Himalaya. It's the holiest Hindu city, where hordes of devotees line up to seek spiritual solace. A religious destination, it unsurprisingly is almost never an option for a city dweller looking for a relaxing getaway to unwind.

But what if we tell you that it is in fact a great choice for a quick retreat? No, I am not professing visit-ghats-and-temples kind of a spiritual sojourn. On the contrary, I am talking about a rejuvenating weekend to just relax and unwind and perhaps finish that book you haven't been able to get your hands on. Aalia resort at Haridwar is the perfect solution for quickly recharging your batteries.

THE RESORT

Set in the beautiful Shyampur village in Haridwar district, the resort offers a reprise from the hustle bustle we usually associate with Haridwar. The road to the village is new and welcoming; it is, however, narrow and adventurous. A section of this road has actually been constructed by the resort, a definite boon to the village economy.

Aalia is a beautiful property. A river side resort with villas, beautifully landscaped lawns and a backdrop of green farmland, one feels one is standing inside a picture postcard. The staff is warm and welcoming. The rooms been built in separate villas. Each villa has three rooms, a leisure room and a reading room – ideal for family outings. The resort also offers a butler service. The rooms are comfortable and offer outside seating space as well. The views from all the rooms are simply majestic. Feel free to meditate as the sun rises from behind the hills. Nature is simply at its best. I thoroughly enjoyed the view from the balcony of the restaurant while dining there. Lush green fields with fresh mustard satiated my aesthetic appetite.

With a spa, a swimming pool and a helipad, the resort claims to offer five-star facilities.

ACTIVITIES

Although the resort is ideal for simply kicking off those boots and subjecting yourself to a weekend

of relaxation and luxury, the resort offers adventure activities as well. The activities range from your standard badminton and croquet to adventure trails and jungle walks. With its proximity to the Rajaji National Park one's quest for thrill and adventure can be easily fulfilled. While I was not lucky enough to spot a leopard, it was enthralling to closely observe Asian elephants and sambhar along with hyenas, wild boars, barking deers, and jackals.

There are other ways of getting adrenaline rush on this holiday. You can take off to Rishikesh for white water rafting. I recommend staying here and enjoying off-road adventures on ATV provided by the resort or mountain biking or going for a nature walk.

Those looking for spirituality, can enjoy the Ganga aarti at the resort itself.

And if you're looking to really unwind, go for a massage at the spa. Be warned, the spa area consists of two cabin-ish rooms and not a lavish space. However, the therapists are well trained and ensure complete relaxation.

FOOD

A must-have here is the club sandwich and mutton burger. Other than that the food at the resort is not one of its USPs. The menu has all the options to please international palate but the taste is not. More flavour in the dishes is just what it needs. The ambience, however, is delightful. Enjoy breakfast watching the green fields and enjoy bonfire on a winter evening with snacks and cocktails. The resort can also arrange for a private romantic dinner by the pool. Replete with butler service and breathtaking décor, it has all what you need on a romantic getaway. (It can be arranged for Rs 5000 onwards).

With run of the mill resorts mushrooming everywhere, Aalia feels like a breath of fresh air. The resort is priced a tad on the high side and the same theme seems to be trending on the food. Barring that, Aalia makes for a perfect stop for a peaceful weekend.●

WEDDINGS AT AALIA RESORT

Imagine your wedding near the holy Ganga. Encompassing a spiritual experience, Aalia Resort offers space for an intimate wedding of about 180 pax. While the resort can accommodate about 105 pax, you can find hotels in close vicinity for other guests. The lush green lawn provides for a wonderful venue for celebrations and the sound of water flowing by (rainy season onward) adds a magical touch.

FACT FILE:

Location: Shyampur Noamabad, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, 249408

Reservation: reservations@aalia.net, + 91 9899975469

Tariff: Rs 16000 for 2n/3D onwards