

# stay

HOTELS,  
HOSTELS AND  
NOTHING LIKE  
HOME

THE BHEEMLI RESORT 68

THE LEELA PALACE, JAIPUR 69

★ At its dedicated, state-of-the-art spa facility, Araiya Palampur offers Western, Oriental and Ayurvedic therapies to work your stress away. Or just take long, leisurely walks in the cosy sprawl of the resort and savour the stunning view from the al fresco bar area

## THE HILLS HAVE Sighs

This hideaway may just have everything we want in a calming hill staycation

### PALAMPUR

As I clamber up and scamper down the cobblestoned alley, less than inebriated but certainly overcome after a swig of the local *sauji*, this whole place feels faintly reminiscent of an old European town though you aren't likely to find any taverns or Christmas film crews here.

And that is because Araiya, Palampur's latest soak-it-all-in resort sprawls in the serene corner of the Kangra Valley. Here mountain dogs thrust their muzzles into your pajama pockets and the beneficent Dhauladhars watch over you like towering grandfathers. I am already dreaming about settling into one of those window seats at the all-day diner and digging into the sumptuous breakfast spread.

At evening, sipping the Neugal Flow cocktail and taking in the darkening forest on the faraway hill, you almost forget you're at a resort where each one of your demands have been met. Even if all you do is flit from your cosy suite to the spa and the bar—cheekily named The Old Fox—and back, you will know Palampur.

And if your bubble is greater than that, Sandeep, the Manager, will promptly arrange a day of café-hopping in Dharamkot and Bir or a peaceful village walk (both done courtesy the very capable Exsul Travel team).

The accommodation options (deluxe rooms, deluxe and executive suites, and duplex suites) spell luxury throughout; the only pandemic here is *jôle de vivre*—to be spread among friends, family, and coworkers, thanks to the superb banqueting options available. I hope I return in better times, when I can stand in the pool and gaze away at the hills.

—PRANNAY PATHAK