



IN LIVING SPLENDOUR

Treat yourself to a plush weekend at this royal getaway

A quick three-hour drive outside New Delhi is Karnal, a place that's a gateway to popular Himachal destinations. While the city has never really featured on our travel radar, we were pleasantly surprised to discover that it is peppered with some hidden treasures. One such great discovery was the Noor Mahal, Karnal, a palatial hotel that offers all the trappings of a royal getaway with its ornate decor and heritage Mughal and Rajputana architecture.

As we drove up a long-winded driveway leading up to the entrance of Noor Mahal, the ivory domes and gold spires that silhouette the hotel gleamed in the afternoon sun. We were welcomed in grand style with thick garlands of marigold and cool rose sherbet, before being escorted to our suite. Every corner of the palace property was reminiscent of an opulent bygone

era. From the vintage furniture coated in gold and silver that decorated the lobby area, to the white marble flooring intricately crafted with semi-precious stone inlay work, and the high-domed ceilings ornamented with larger-than-life crystal chandeliers. We suddenly felt like Alice in an architectural wonderland.

While we did expect the palatial theme to extend into our room, we weren't quite prepared for the sheer extent of it. The Khwabgah suite, which is the most exclusive 'royal sleeping chamber' the 125-room property has to offer, is a veritable museum. It houses a sprawling living room decked with antique furniture and historical artworks procured from artists in Rajasthan, windows that date back to the Mughal era, a bar area and two princely bedrooms that opens out to a massive private terrace overlooking the cityscape. Did we mention the suite also comes with a private butler who would serve us in-room meals, escort us obligingly around the massive property, and make sure we never had to move an inch to help ourselves to anything.

Surrounding the hotel is acres and acres of greenery, mostly agricultural land. We set out for a long walk early next morning to explore the fertile grounds of the property. It was a pleasure to saunter through the lush fields and take in the fresh air and let our eyes rest on the soothing greens.

Given the palatial architecture of the hotel with its open courtyards, terraces,

multiple banquet halls and sprawling lawns, Noor Mahal is an exceedingly popular wedding destination for out-of-towners. We were told there were five weddings taking place simultaneously, which is a rather small number in their books.

Of course, there's every imaginable service you can think of to tick all the boxes, from a spa, to a sauna, a gym, salon and everything in between. Their fine dining restaurant, The Frontier Mail, is modelled on the first train that journeyed between Mumbai and Peshawar, with train compartments doubling up as cosy

We decided to take it up a notch on our last night by opting for an in-room spa experience, and topped it off with an intimate meal under the stars in the comfort of our stunning terrace. It's not every day that we get the royal treatment, but let's just say we're counting down the days to reliving all the extravagance. **EW**

Words RADHIKA SEN



The lobby area is resplendent with colossal marble arches and domes



Antique furniture and historical artworks deck the Khwabgah suite