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GETAWAYS!

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- Nadesar Palace
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The cottage in the hill

Far from the city limits in the hills of Nainital sits the Taradale Cottage. There really isn't much to do here—eat and live well, take walks in the wilderness, listen to bird songs, calm your city nerves and just breathe in the mountain air. By GAURAV GUPTA & MANON KINNET

There are always two sides to the coin. The fact that Delhi heat was oppressive was obvious, and yet I must confess that we drove out of the great metropolis frightened by the prospect of finding ourselves lost among a sea of tourists. Nainital and the surrounding region is among the most popular getaways in North India—and when a large chunk of vacationers head in this direction, chances are slim that you might find the peace and quiet you sought. Yet, our destination, the Taradale Cottage in Ramgarh (35 km from Nainital) was to provide us that and more.

We arrived at Taradale at dusk, after a rather long but pleasant eight hour drive from Delhi. It was a sweet discovery—a charming little property, half way down the hill overlooking the valley. The cottage is named after Major General Tara Singh Bal and run by his descendants. There are many old black and white photographs of the General, which gives the cottage a quaint,

nostalgic mood. We were warmly received by the staff, and after we had settled in, we sat down to enjoy a delicious home style dinner by candlelight. While everything on offer tasted good, what stood out was the cream of onion soup and the marinated grilled chicken.

All the rooms are tastefully furnished and decorated in a charming colonial-era mode. Finally, sold on the spectacular view, we settled for a valley-facing room. The next morning, as we sat over a sumptuous breakfast, we enjoyed the breathtaking view of the mountain range and sloping green hills.

Going against the grain of luxury that most travellers get accustomed to, there were no in-room TVs. And once you get used to the idea of not reaching for the remote control, the silence and the music of the atmospherics gets addictive. There was one television in the resort though—placed in the living room where guests could come together and unwind by the fireplace, accompanied by a small library with a decent collection of books and several board games, and a pool table near the dining area.


While the resort pulled us in with simple comfort, the experience got better as we stepped outside—to pluck peaches and pears straight from the trees and take a leisurely walk surrounded by lush greenery and wild roses with birds providing a subtle and beautiful background score to this lovely setting.

The next few days we visited the nearby destinations such as Bhimtal and Naukuchiatal. But a place that will stay with me is Tagore Top, the trek to which was simply breathtaking. This was


where Rabindranath Tagore spent a few months in 1903 and though not much remains of the house where he stayed, it makes for an interesting excursion. Another interesting trek is to Mahesh Khan, near Bhowali, 20 km from Nainital. However, you could also opt for gentle walks around the cottage area itself.

If you wish to stay put at the cottage, you will find enough to do. On the last day of our trip we made the cottage our base, reading, taking pictures and sitting out in the lawns under the mild sun, comforted by cool mountain breeze. The gracious manager, Mr Omi, arranged for a lovely Italian dinner of hot soup, pasta, fried chicken and delicious caramel custard. Flavourful, simple and yet utterly soul fulfilling. Taradale is perfect for spending time with friends and family surrounded by the beauty and wilderness of the valley.

AT A GLANCE

 **Getting There:** The easiest way to get to Taradale Cottage is to take a train from Delhi to Kathgodam and then hail a taxi for Ramgarh (approx 50 km). It is an eight hour drive from Delhi to Taradale.

 **Stay:** WelcomHeritage Taradale Cottage, PWD Rest House Road, Borakot, Ramgarh, District Nainital, Kumaon, Uttarakhand; tel: (05942) 281 198 www.taradalecottage.com Cost: Room rents start at approx ₹5,000 per night.

 **See:** Visit the Museum of Mahadevi Verma, named after the famous poet and freedom fighter. It houses many of her personal belongings. Take a day trip to Mukteshwar (25 km from the cottage), and see the ancient Shiva temple. A visit to the sunset point is a must. Stroll through the old bazaar and enjoy a picnic with the view of snow covered peaks.

SECRET

Tagore Top

Few people know that Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore has a house in Ramgarh. After the death of his wife, Tagore, with his two children, temporarily moved into a house on a hill in Ramgarh in 1903, later known as Tagore Top. Many of his literary works were written here, including the collection of poetry—*Shishu*. Though the building doesn't exist anymore, you can climb to this point to take in stunning views of the Ramgarh Valley

1. Taradale—Alluring and full of character;
2. A cosy corner to read;
3. Meals are both wholesome and appealing;
4. Panoramic vistas of the Kumaon Himalaya

