



SUVIR SARAN
NEW YORK-BASED
CHEF & FARMER

GROW. REAR. EAT.

Back to basics in food is the new luxury

INDIA TODAY
Spice

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Volume: 12 Number 2, February, 2016
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Editor: Kaveree Bamzai
India Today does not take responsibility for returning unsolicited publications material.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This is the crossover month. You are not quite comfortable with the 2016 tag, yet 2015 seems like it upped and left a long time ago. As we make plans for the coming year and look for exciting ways to spend our wealth, *Spice* goes window shopping across the globe and brings you the mood and the madness that is likely to define this year as part of our trends issue.

Our cover story focuses on a man who straddles two worlds; he is Indian but has lived in the United States long enough to call it home. Chef Suvir Saran represents a growing breed of food enthusiasts who are looking to create goodness and wealth as they buy and consume locally and give the term healthy eating a new spin. His 87-acre farm in upstate New York is a space where he rears his own animals, grows his own food and gives the whole farm-to-fork movement a leg up. This remains one of the biggest trends in food this year and he also shares insights on other big food trends we are likely to see.

From jewellery to cars, fragrances and overall spending patterns, our columnists chronicle the rise of luxury spending as we know it today and the exciting new trends reflect the affluent Indian's desire to consume global products and experiences that are hot and happening. We also take a closer look at luxury brands and how they have evolved as we go for the unveiling of camera brand Leica's latest beauty. While the brand continues to experiment with what the world of images today demands, it remains true to its philosophy of designing cameras that are classic and timeless.

The first month of the year is also a good time to pencil in your vacation plans for the coming twelve and if you like boutique, tucked-away spaces, *The Khyber* in Gulmarg is an incredible example of a space where you can take a luxurious break in the shadow of crushed white snow and pine, far from civilisation.

Those who love their beer would also do well to travel to Belgium, where you can say cheers with ale in a hundred different ways. We look at what makes this region a beer drinker's delight and also pick our favourites.

And as we wrap up the first issue of the year, the world of fashion and art collide to give rise to what is called wearable art. The collections are sexy, inventive and make you think about the seamless overlap between the two genres.

The year is slated to be unbelievable and excess remains your prerogative. Keep the glass of bubbly full as you experiment with the trendiest finds of 2016.

(Aroon Purie)

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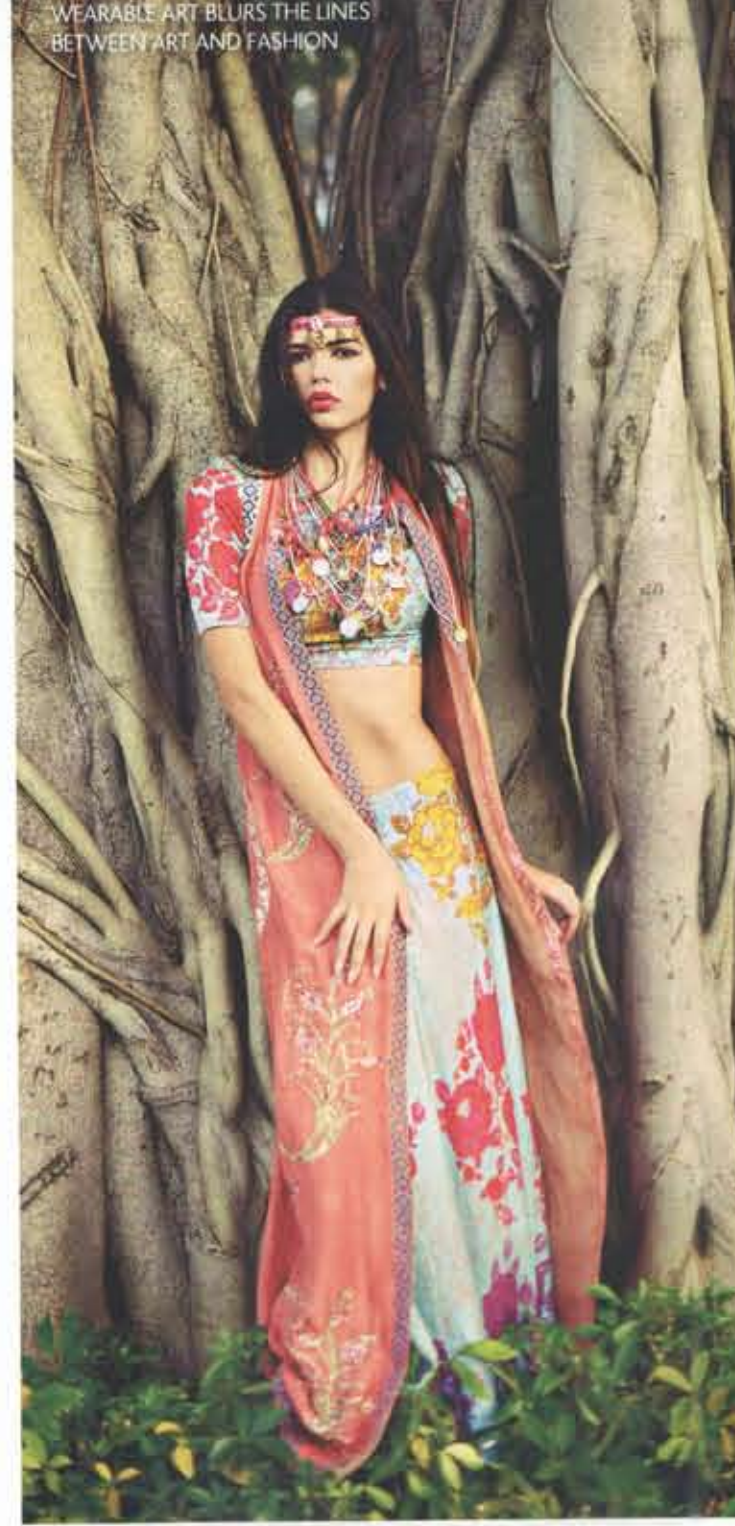
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WHITE WONDER

GULMARG'S FIRST LUXURY RESORT IS A LANGUOROUS SPRAWL OF BEAUTY, WARMTH AND SHEER INDULGENCE
BY CHUMKI BHARADWAJ

Much like the first stirrings of desire, it springs up on you when you least expect it, overwhelming with beauty, magic and sensuousness. What more can you say about a bower of wanton love, cosseted by pine and slate, that offers glimpses of hills festooned by silver snow comes. That it's Gulmarg's first luxury resort. That it looms solitary and stunning at an elevation of 8,825 feet in the Pir Panjal range of the Himalayas. That it represents the finest of Kashmir that has made royals and minstrels gasp in verse and cliché.

Enter *The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa* and the first sensory awakening is an olfactory stab of sharp pine and warming *kahwa*. Minutely designed in an all-wood interior, the cavernous lobby is a artful orgy of Moorish influences with lanced-window frames, colourful panes and ornately painted



THE SNOW DRAPED FACADE OF THE KHYBER HIMALAYAN HOTEL & SPA

HOTEL | PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

glass chandeliers as well as heavily carved furniture in walnut. The walls are splayed with massive photo prints that capture the changing moods of Kashmir through a feast of seasons. Clearly, Kashmiri pride is a recurrent motif throughout the property, with carefully crafted floor-seating nooks that resonate with traditional settings in Kashmiri households.

The lobby terminates in a wall of glass, where the panorama of the pine forests hemmed by the Afarwah peaks, offer both a chance to soak in the view as well as the delectable *kahwa*. This is the Chaikash Tea Lounge that also houses a tiny patisserie which may not offer an army of choices but does well to sate the mountain air appetite. The Tea Lounge opens on to a terrace that leads down to a series of cascading terraces, perfect to enjoy the bracing outdoors, if you don't find the nippy mountain air daunting.



READY RECKONER

LODGING 80 rooms (₹ 21,460-30,960). Four luxury cottages (1 and 2-bedrooms; ₹ 40,000-60,000). Presidential Cottage (3 bedrooms; ₹ 1.5 lakh). Per night rates that include breakfast and taxes.

LOCATION 65 kilometres from Srinagar airport; 90-minute transfer by car

COORDINATES Address Near Gondola Cable, Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir 193403 Tel +91 954254666, +91 9596767888; Fax +91 1954 254660 reservations@khyberhotels.com

ACTIVITIES Gulmarg is among one of Asia's five best ski destinations. The resort is an easy walk from the Gulmarg Gondola, the highest ski lift in the world. Trekking in the forests in the summer or teeing off at the world's highest golf course.



The rooms, like the rest of the resort, are an ode to the artistic expressions of Kashmir: Namdas in felted wool, silk carpets from local looms, furnishings embellished with crewel embroidery, carved walnut panelling, teak floors and papier-mâché accents. Warm and homey, the rooms open out to balconies that flirt with the outdoors; vegetating on sprawling deck chairs here is almost a moral imperative. The en-suite bathroom is a pampered space that makes room for a sunken tub by a window where early birds can catch the first rays of daybreak and nocturnals can enjoy twilight glimpses of shadowy peaks drizzled with silver.

While drinking in the mountain air can be intoxicating, if alcohol is your poison, you'll be left wanting. The resort does not serve alcohol, but does allow you to carry and drink your own. Blistery cold nights, even if ensconced in toasty interiors, are definitely served better with a single malt. Choose Calabash, the cigar and sheesha lounge, for evenings that allow for the flow of soul. Light up a Montecristo® or any other coveted brand from a carefully



THE LOBBY AT THE KHYBER IS A MOORISH-INSPIRED SPACE WITH KASHMIRI ACCENTS

curated humidor. An assortment of flavoured tobaccos in the *sheesha* is another option for those who want to dive into the Moroccan-inspired intimacy of this space.

Naturally, such aching beauty spurs all kinds of appetites; food may not be the first distraction but it's an essential one. At Cloves, the multi-cuisine restaurant, indulge in pasta, mezze or dim sums, but what holds good on every boast is their *wazwan* (Kashmiri wedding spread). It may be a calorie counter's nightmare, but every oil-soaked, spice bursting morsel is worth risking a heart attack. The only problem is the service, which moves at a glacial pace; probably a nod to the spirit of languor that the resort naturally radiates.

If the resort vibe is meditative and reflective; the Khyber Spa by L'Occitane is all about romantic and reinvigorating; a monument to sheer indulgence. Encased in all glass, well-trained therapists work magic, in a cloud of aromas and scents, to knead your problems away. Need I say more? From age-defying facials to energising massages to body scrubs and wraps that promise you a new lease on al-

most everything, shape up or simply ship out in a bliss-induced coma.

But eating, relaxing and luxuriating aren't the only resident thrills (see box). The resort also offers a private movie theatre that can be booked for a small party of five for an exclusive matinee experience. The movie choices may not be exhaustive but offer value from every possible genre.

The only question is, would you trade star gazing at an impossibly clear sky for watching stars on celluloid and spend time being part of make believe when you can live a dream? Who knows? Desire is a strange beast.