

INDIA TODAY

travel PLUS

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE. BEAUTIFUL PLACES.

SE ASIA SPECIAL

Globetrotter
SONAM KAPOOR
in Thailand

Melody in Stone
BOROBUDUR INDONESIA

Cashing in on the past
VIETNAM

All you can eat in
HONG KONG

PLUS

Rajat Kapoor in
MADRID

Short Break
COLOMBO

Luxury in
MADHYA PRADESH

ON LOCATION: IN GUJARAT WITH SOHA ALI KHAN & IRRFAN KHAN



Sinclairs Retreat Dooars, Chalsa

BY ANURADHA SENGUPTA

USP

Tea estates set in rolling hills, wildlife parks, rivers and picture perfect villages—this is the setting for the Sinclairs Retreat Dooars, Chalsa. I arrive on a partly cloudy day. The lobby has a breathtaking view of the spectacular Dooars valley and during the next couple of days I spend a lot of time here with my book. Dooars is an ideal getaway for nature lovers. Chalsa sits at the confluence of the wildlife sanctuaries of Gorumara, Jaldapara, Mahananda, Chapramari and Buxa and Sinclairs has several activities that tap into this.

ROOMS

Sinclairs has 66 air-conditioned cottage-style rooms and three suites. I stayed in the Bandook Babu Kothi—an expansive suite. Space was the key word here—with large windows overlooking a private garden, the rooms were not only comfortable but also had the perfect ambience to help you unwind.

ACTIVITIES

I am taken on a tour of Gorumara National Park. We spend an hour or so at the watchtower, however, I do not spot anything except a peacock, but then it is the rainy season and wildlife is a bit scarce. Next on the cards is tea and tribal dance but I decide to head back to the hotel as it's beginning to pour in buckets and darkness is setting in. I get lucky the next day with clear skies and sunshine, and opt for a cycle tour to a nearby village and I cross tea gardens and gushing streams during the 8 km ride. Another interesting excursion is to the orange orchards of Samsing. It is a drive that meanders through green hills, mountain streams and beautiful villages.

WELLNESS

After the excursions I return to the hotel to find that an ayurvedic treat has been lined up for me at the Health Centre. Their in-house ayurvedic doctor Dr Ghosh advises I try the Mukhalepam—a facial with ayurvedic scrubs and oils from Kerala. The masseuse, Sunitha does an excellent job. The Health Centre also offers Oriental and Swedish massages, steam, sauna, and has

The Health Centre with a view of the lovely Dooars outdoors

a gymnasium and yoga room. The pool next door—I discover—is great for a refreshing dip.

FOOD

During my stay at Sinclair I'd settle down for a good read with a glass of fresh mango juice in their valley-facing lobby. The mangoes incidentally are from their trees on the property. In fact, the food served at their multi-cuisine restaurant Banyan Tree is mostly made from fresh vegetables and fruits grown in their kitchen garden. They grow red cabbage, gourd and herbs. The best bet I would say would be simple *daal*, rice and vegetables and the chicken stew is to die for.

At a Glance

WHAT: To relax and unwind

WHERE: Sinclairs Retreat Dooars, Chalsa, Chalsa Hill Top, Jalpaiguri;

tel: (03562) 260 282, 200 179;

e-mail: dooars@sinclairshotels.com

COST: Starts at ₹5,500.

VERDICT: Excellent for quiet vacations.