



TRANQUIL

Hidden Treasures

Susie Brand, Audley's India Subcontinent Programme Manager, chooses some of her favourite small hotels in India.

India is one of the most diverse countries on earth, from the highest mountains to the most densely populated cities, the arid plains to the verdant backwaters. Scattered throughout all the regions are all manner of places to stay, including some of the

world's most opulent hotels. Besides these, we have unearthed a number of wonderful properties which offer guests the more intimate experience of staying with a family and enjoying their company. Those who have stayed in such properties, including my parents

who have recently returned from Southern India, consistently comment on the unfailing hospitality and friendliness of their hosts and come away feeling like they have made friends rather than mere acquaintances. Below are just a few of my favourites.

Tranquil

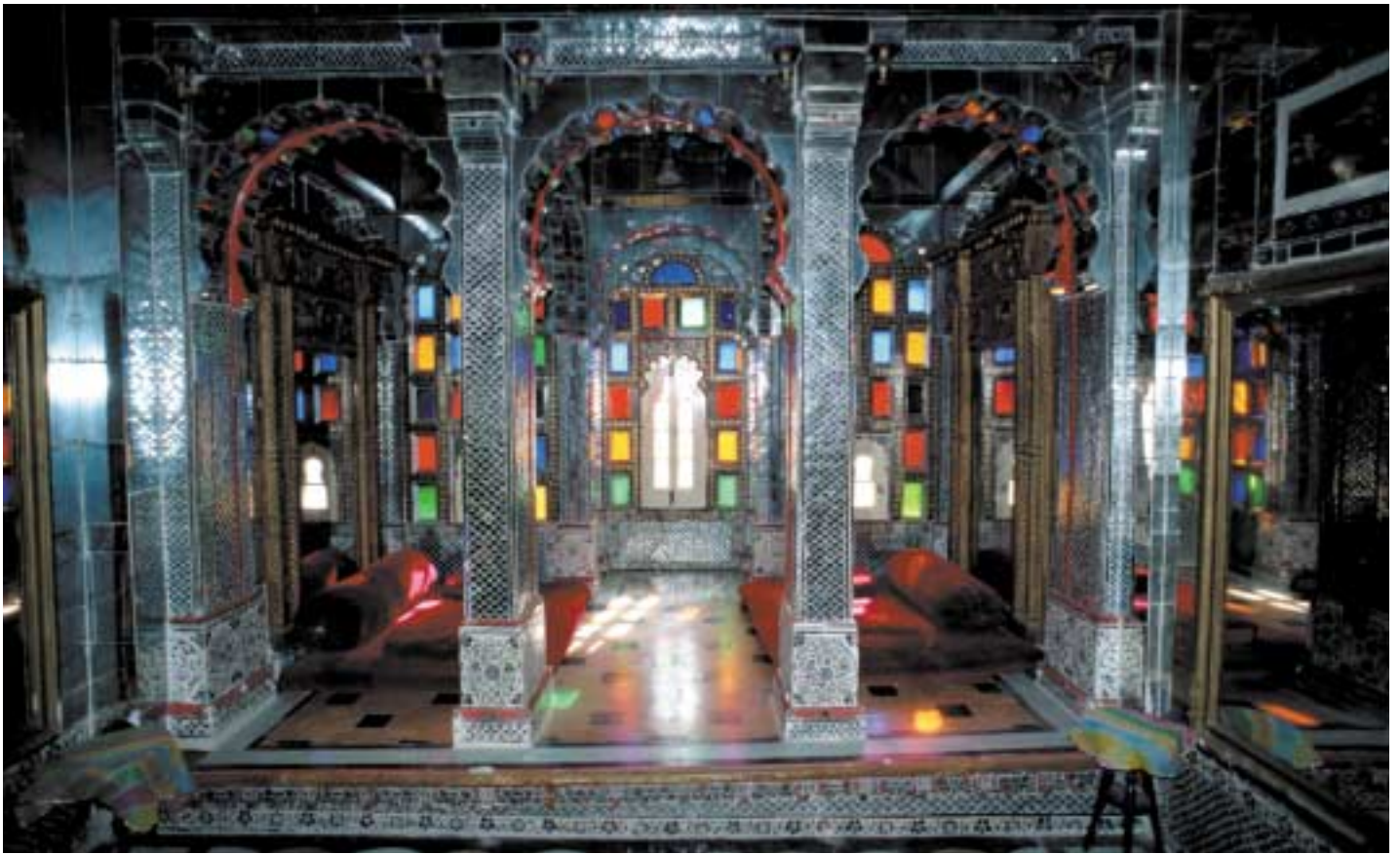
An opportunity to learn, amongst other things, about the myth and lore of Kerala

Set in the heart of northern Kerala, my favourite place in India, Tranquil is owned by the charming couple, Victor and Jinni Dey. They are tea and coffee planters by profession but socialisers by heart. A stay on their coffee plantation offers the opportunity to learn, amongst other things, about the myth and lore of Kerala, the politics of coffee markets and the value of taking life at a slow pace. With only eight rooms there

is no need for rigidly observed meal times. You are free to roam on the estate and a picnic can be delivered to one of the many scenic viewpoints, just be prepared to share a little with the monkeys! Because of its location, you can easily combine a stay with the Karnataka region including Mysore and Bangalore and the rest of Kerala using it as a place to recharge your mental and physical batteries.



JINNI AND VICTOR



DEOGARH MAHAL: THE SITTING ROOM

Deogarh Mahal

Lying in the heart of the Aravalli Hills of Rajasthan, Deogarh Mahal is an imposing fort, complete with domed turrets, dating from 1670. It is still family-owned and occupied, however, and very much a home. The interior has been carefully restored to its former glory with the family's personal belongings. Many of the rooms have been given the names of their previous

occupants and there is even a room dedicated to their favourite elephant, complete with his ceremonial robes as ceiling canopy. A member of the family is always around in the evenings to talk to guests, make suggestions and enthusiastically discuss the local attractions. One of the most popular activities is the narrow gauge railway, a must for train buffs who may be able to

sit with the driver as it descends 500 metres through a series of tunnels. You can also stroll through the village, where you will be made to feel most welcome, or visit the local schools to view ongoing local educational projects. However you choose to spend your time, you are sure to leave feeling like you have been part of the community, even for a short while.

Glenburn Tea Estate

With stunning views of the Kachengunga mountains, close to the hill station of Darjeeling

The Prakash Family only opened their four bedroomed restored tea plantation bungalow just over a year ago and already it is receiving high praise. With stunning views of the Kachengunga mountain range in north east India, it is close to the hill station of Darjeeling. Glenburn will suit those who enjoy walking, fishing, bird watching, enjoying the scenery and who like top quality food combined with genuinely friendly hospitality. I recently



heard of a guest who was met on her stroll through the plantation by the cook carrying a flask of tea and a plate of freshly baked chocolate brownies for elevenses, not a service most international hotel chains are ever likely to offer!

Travel File

These are just a sample of the many smaller, family run properties that can be included in your tour of India. For further details please call our India specialists on 01869 276 218.