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TRAVEL 19

The Decadent Escape

AFTER A LONG week of struggling with deadlines, missing meals and wondering what life has come to, you deserve total luxury on the weekend. Most resorts outside the city are content to provide lush greenery and quiet. It's only now that they're also throwing in plush rooms, spas and world-class amenities. Pull out your platinum card for a decadent weekend.

THE MACHAN, LONAVALA

The Canopy Machan: ₹12,000
The Heritage Machan: ₹30,000

Plenty of resorts offer you lodgings in the lap of luxury. At The Machan, they go a step further and put you on the very shoulder of luxury, offering a panoramic view of the Jambulne valley. Tree houses 40ft above the ground include the Heritage Machan, with a suspended 'Hanging Room' with glass walls from floor to ceiling. Watch the sunrise, and count the stars, from your cushy bed in a floating room. Talent manager Vidushi Arora visited The Machan and says the resort blends beautifully into its surroundings. "I spent my time sipping masala chai and watching nature revel in the monsoon!"

THE RADISSON BLU, ALIBAUG

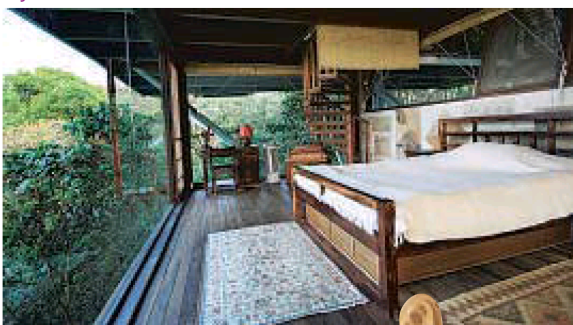
FROM ₹19,000

A little further away from popular beaches like Kihim, Mandwa and Nagaon is The Radisson Blu, 16 acres of peace and quiet. City dwellers especially love the Mandara Spa, a Balinese brand offering massages inspired by indigenous practices. Hurlene Kharbanda, a project consultant and frequent visitor at The Radisson, can't seem to shake her spa experience. "As I lay there,

While the masseuse fussed over me, I felt like I was in my happy place

The city slicker's guide to an even slicker weekend – super posh places that are only a few hours' drive away

by Kasturi Gandhi



INSIDE OUTSIDE
Glass-fronted room at The Machan (top) or Radisson spa? Take your pick

with the sound of water flowing around in the enormous spa, I felt so refreshed. The Tamarind Body Blast Therapy was heavenly and while the masseuse fussed over me, I felt like I was in my happy place."

BEYOND, SULA VINEYARDS, NASHIK

₹6,000 TO ₹18,000

What started off as a winery has unfurled into an elegant getaway for those who prefer idling the weekend away with good wine and a view of the Nashik vineyards stretching for miles ahead. Beyond at Sula is all about touring vineyards, stomping grapes, appreciating new wines and tasting new flavours.

Former VJ Shehnaz Treasurywala says that one of the things she remembers of her visit is "sipping my wine at



sunset after a refreshing swim in the infinity pool. I was totally vinced down when I checked out."

THE UPPER DECK, LONAVALA

FROM ₹11,000

The Upper Deck, perched on the highest point of Lonavala, is secluded, untouched and offers the best view of the Valvan Reservoir, Rajmachi Point and the lush Sahyadri greenery that surrounds it. Take in the sights from the open-air jacuzzi they've installed on their massive deck. When Ishrat Chadha, a playschool supervisor, went there with her family, everyone had a great time exploring the hills. "I enjoyed swimming in the large pool out front, with the valley as the backdrop," says Shimona Chadha, her daughter.

BLUE YONDER

Beyond, at Sula Vineyards, lets you unwind with wine, quiet and luxury

FORT JADHAVGADH, PUNE

FROM ₹7,000

If you're looking to spend your weekend maharaja-style, this is the place. Trumpets are blown to celebrate your welcome. And from then on, you're treated like royalty. The tents are air-conditioned, the rooms decorated with antique furniture, and the suites were once used by the descendants of Maratha General Pilaji Jadhav himself. There are ghazals and folk dances to keep you entertained, but if you're a history buff, just walk around the fort hotel to feel the past come alive. Harish Punwani, operations and scheduling manager at Emirates, spent one of the most memorable weekends of his life at Fort Jadhavgad. His wife surprised him by booking a romantic escape for their anniversary weekend. "As soon as they learnt that it was our wedding anniversary, they decorated the secluded balcony at the restaurant with flowers and candles, and treated us to a special dinner."

CCAZA CCOMODORE, MANDWA

FROM ₹10,000

At Ccaza Ccomodore, barely seven minutes from the Mandwa jetty, the lovely cottages come with their own kitchen, private garden and caretaker. The homely vibe continues with a big common garden, where, if you choose to dine, your food is grilled and barbecued in front of you. It's possible to while away the entire weekend in the great outdoors, watching your children knock themselves out on the trampoline, which according to Nitin Mongia, owner at Ccaza Ccomodore, is a favourite pastime for visiting families.

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"When preparing to travel, lay out all your clothes and all your money. Then, take half the clothes and twice the money" – Susan Heller

JULY 8, 2012 **hindustantimes** BRUNCH

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www.newspaperdirect.com US/Can: 1-877-820-4240 Int: 300-6384-6364
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