

CEO *Lifestyle*



Vol 1 • Issue 8 • November 2014 • ₹100

ROYAL FABLES

Explore Indian royalty's
cherished lifestyle

SHAPE UP!
Get expert
opinion on
bridal diets

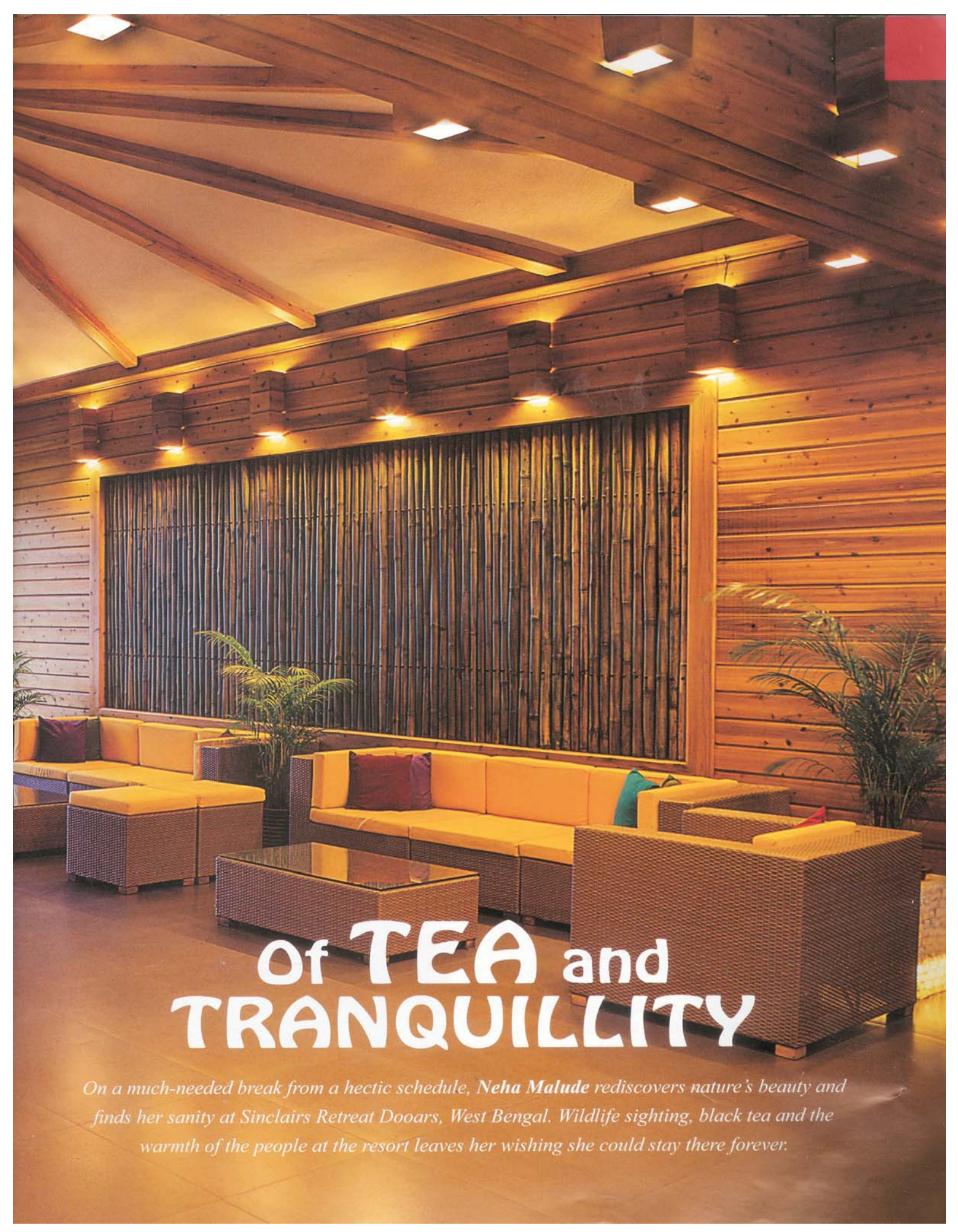
**WEDDING
WOWS**
7 destinations to
get hitched in style

DESIGN DIVA

Neeta Lulla

LIVING
IN-STYLE



A photograph of a modern lounge interior. The walls are made of horizontal wooden planks. A large window is covered with a screen of vertical bamboo stalks. The ceiling features exposed wooden beams with recessed square lights. In the foreground, there are two L-shaped sofas with orange cushions and dark brown textured bases. A low, rectangular coffee table with a glass top and a textured base sits in front of the sofas. Potted plants are placed around the seating area. The overall atmosphere is warm and rustic.

of TEA and TRANQUILLITY

On a much-needed break from a hectic schedule, Neha Malude rediscovers nature's beauty and finds her sanity at Sinclairs Retreat Dooars, West Bengal. Wildlife sighting, black tea and the warmth of the people at the resort leaves her wishing she could stay there forever.

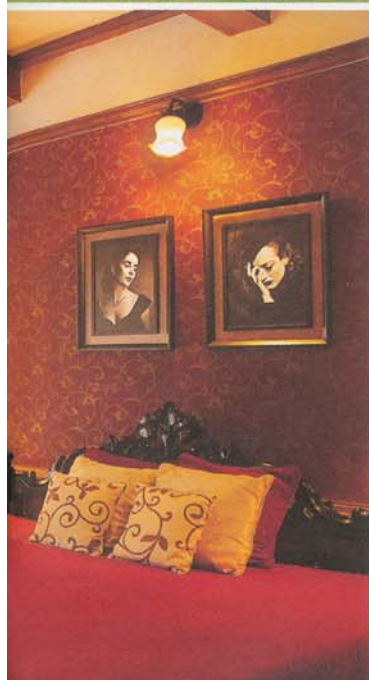
LIVING IN-STYLE

About 600 kilometres from Kolkata lies Dooars (meaning 'doors'), a perfect getaway for those wanting to escape from the sometimes humdrum life of the city. And this little town, which is the gateway to Bhutan from India, is also home to a gorgeous resort, Sinclairs Retreat. For those coming here from other states, the quickest way is by a flight to Bagdogra, which is how I travelled. The two-hour road journey from the airport to the resort was enchanting. As I crossed the small city of Siliguri, the terrain switched from plain to hilly and the majestic Teesta showed itself in all its glory, with the eastern Himalayas in the backdrop. A little later, all I could see for miles were beautiful tea estates on both sides of the road. By the time I reached the gates of Sinclairs Retreat Dooars, I was invigorated rather than tired by my drive. Situated atop Chalsa Hilltop, Sinclairs is a 20-acre lush green paradise. Age-old banyan trees and green bushes flank the brick pathways that lead to the lobby, which boasts of a large garden with a view of the entire valley. Thus far, the resort lives perfectly up to its USP 'come and live with nature'.

After completing the check-in formalities, I was led to my room, one of the 66 suites on the property. If you are looking for something more luxurious, choose from the three luxury suites that are decorated with different themes. The Burra Sahib Kothi has a distinctive colonial feel, while the Bandoob Babu Kothi, as the name suggests, embraces the beauty of a forest featuring a wildlife themed bedroom with matching furnishings and the Nouveau Ville is inspired by nature but with a modern, contemporary twist. My room, though minimalist, was elegant and sleek. All the suites have an attached balcony and a private garden that overlooks the rest of the resort. A quick shower later, it was time for lunch at the resort's only restaurant, The Banyan Tree. I started off with the Crispy Fried Babycorn, the restaurant's speciality in appetizers, and wanting to try something with a more local flavour, followed it up with a Fish Curry that was not on the menu but is prepared specially for guests who want to be recommended something from the region. The curry, tempered with Indian spices, and the tender fish with steamed rice, was simple yet delicious. The secret probably lies in the organic farm that the resort maintains in their backyard. With everything, right from cherry tomatoes and broccoli to bell peppers and celery, what better way to be one with the nature? I polished my lunch off with a Gulab Jamun which, if you have a really sweet tooth, will love.

Utterly full, there was only one thing to do: walk it off. If you don't mind cycling, the resort has cycles that you can hire by the hour. As I set off at a leisurely pace, I took in the sights and sounds. No high rises or dusty tar roads,





LIVING IN-STYLE



just greenery as far as the eye could see. No honking cars or heavy trucks, there was just the chirping of birds and a melodious Bengali song drifting in and out from a distance outside the resort.

Outside The Banyan Tree is the resort's cafe, Bamboo Grove Cafe where you can head in the evenings for a small snack or a cup of coffee. If you are in the mood for a quick cocktail before dinner, The Tusker Bar is at your service. Adjoining the restaurant is also a cosy library, where you can relax with a novel from the resort's small yet great collection of books.

For corporate companies who would like to plan an offsite, the resort boasts of three conference cum banquet halls and also The Pavilion, an outdoor space where you can organize a party or have a barbeque dinner amidst the flora. The resort also offers special services, if you would like to organize a birthday party or a special anniversary party. As I walked on, I chanced upon the pool and made a mental note to squeeze in a quick lap before dinner. Just adjacent to the pool is the Laya Spa, where you can step in for a session of pampering. Or if you are a fitness freak and can't afford to miss a day of working out, hit the gym, complete with a treadmill, cycles, elliptical, rower and free weights.

After a quick dinner of a hearty Butter Chicken and Naan, it was time to retire. The next day, at the crack of dawn it was time for a short jeep ride to the nearby Gorumara National Park, at the suggestion of Moloy Sarkar, the resort's General Manager. After all, this trip was going to be all about getting

in touch with nature, no? As we marched deeper into the forest, the foliage got thicker and it felt like a different world altogether. The forest guide led me atop a watching tower where a few minutes later, I sighted bison, a few elephants and even rhinoceros, grazing in green fields a safe distance away from us, as the sun rose slowly in the horizon. To say that it was magical would be an understatement. If you harbour love for wildlife, there is plenty to explore around Dooars – the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary where, if really lucky, you can even spot a Bengal tiger, the Buxa Tiger Reserve, etc.

For those wanting to see Bhutan whilst being in India, Alipurduar is the perfect place. Here, you can climb to the Chota Sinchula, the highest peak in Jalpaiguri, where you will spot the Bhutan Valley. If a picnic is what you love, head to Neora Valley National Park, where you can also spot red panda and the Himalayan black bear.

An hour later, warmed by a hot and sweet cup of black tea, I returned to the resort. Breakfast at The Banyan Tree included a fluffy Masala omelette with toast and another hot cup of tea. As I sipped my chai, gazing over the green expanse that lay before my eyes, I felt a sigh of contentment. I was taking back great memories – the peace, the sound of chirping birds, the sight of the Teesta, the hospitality of Sinclairs, and of course, the charm of Dooars.

As I drove out of Sinclairs Retreat, I couldn't help but look back, silently promising myself that I would be returning, very soon.