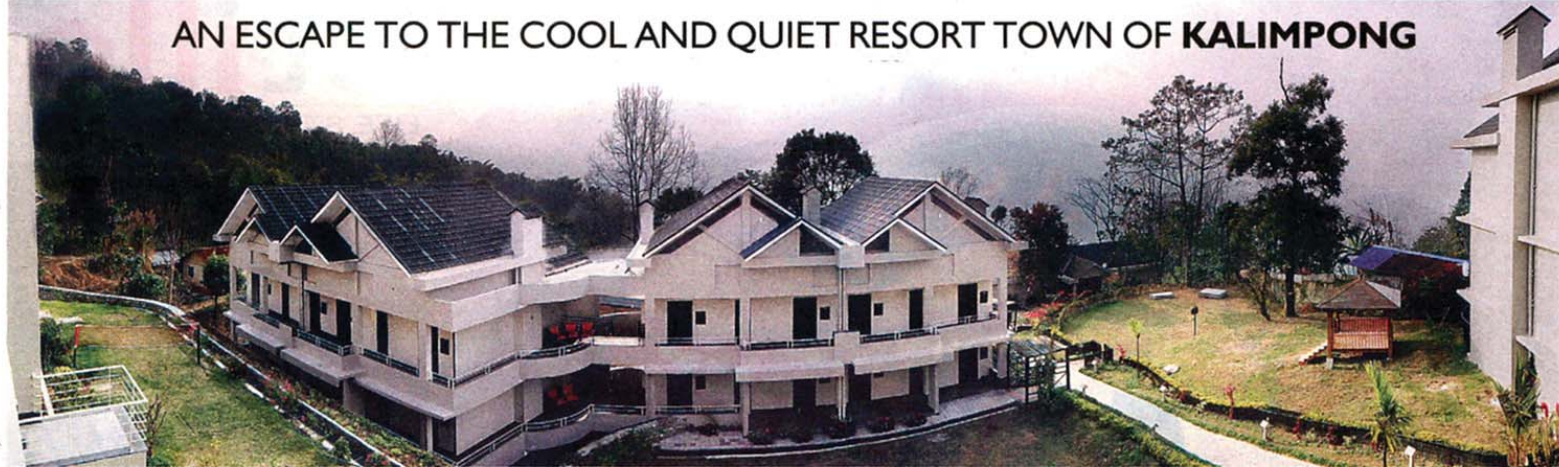


AN ESCAPE TO THE COOL AND QUIET RESORT TOWN OF KALIMPONG



There are two types of hill station holidayers. One reaches the cool confines of a hilly resort, warms up with a hot cuppa and then slumps into bed and doesn't wake up till lunchtime. The other is off sightseeing in a jeep before room service can ask if the fireplace needs lighting up.

At the new Sinclairs Retreat in Kalimpong (www.sinclairshotels.com), you can easily be both. The resort at 6th Mile, Purbong Busty, sprawls over five acres of landscaped green so it's tempting to just give up sightseeing and settle for a walk around the resort to explore its hidden retreats. And then you glance at the service directory casually lying on the table that offers a list of places to check out. Suddenly, you can hear the bustling Wednesday Haat Bazaar and smell the strong Kalimpong cheese at Lark's Provisions and visualise saintly monks at the Durpin Monastery.

So t2 did what any good holidayer would do. Keep a day for snuggling under the covers and another for stepping out in the mountain sun! Here are some of the sights we savoured....



THE WALLS OF SINCLAIRS RETREAT TELL US...

- Kalimpong produces 80 per cent of India's gladiolus
- Kalimpong Cheese was made by Brother Abraham, a parish priest in Sikkim. It is still made in 12kg and 1kg wheels and produced in limited quantities by Amul, just like Gouda cheese
- The *Mirror or Me-long* was the first Tibetan-language newspaper published in Kalimpong in 1925
- Whenever Rabindranath Tagore visited Kalimpong, he stayed at Gauripur House
- The river Teesta flows in the valley below Deolo and Durpin Hill, and separates Kalimpong from the state of Sikkim

There are many paths to meander in and around the sprawling five-acre Sinclairs Retreat in Kalimpong



The resort has 48 rooms, out of which 28 are premier rooms, 16 with an attic (four beds), two suites and two rooms in a unique wooden cottage. Room rates start at Rs 5,500 (plus taxes).

Business meet? The large banquet called The Orchid can hold meetings for up to 400 persons.



It's tough to find a very warm day in Kalimpong. But if you do, take a dip in the gorgeous pool that overlooks the snow-capped mountains and pine forests. Other facilities at the resort include a spa, gym, library and games like dart (picture right) and billiards.



Head over to The Golden Oak for your meals or dial 608 for room service. For that midday snack, order in French Fries and Chocolate Brownie — high on comfort (and calories!). Like all hill resorts, room service stops soon after dinner time so make sure you order in advance if you're going to be home late!

5 TOURIST SPOTS NEARBY



1) Lark's Provisions: Located in the market along Rishi Road, this is your best bet for Kalimpong cheese. Also sells milk lollipops, prawn and chicken pickle and rock-hard *churpi* made from yak's milk.

2) Deolo Tourism Complex:

Located on Deolo Hill, the park offers a few "viewpoints". Brush up on your science lessons by reading the labels on tree trunks, sit on a swing and watch your feet sweep up into the sky, carry along a picnic lunch or take a pony ride. The government-run Deolo Tourist Lodge (gtatourism.com) is on this hill. Order a plate of momos from one of the roadside shacks outside the park.



3) Himalayan Handicrafts: Stop by for *thangkas* (Buddhist cloth paintings), antique knives, dragon masks and items made from bone at this store on Rishi Road.

4) Army Golf Club: The weather creates a perfect setting for a game of golf on the undulating terrain en route to the Durpin Monastery. There's also an army shop that stocks artefacts and Bhutanese, Sikkimese and Lepcha-embroidered purses at great prices.



5) Durpin Monastery: Around 5.5km from the resort. There's not much to do here except take a walk around the monastery, churn the sacred wheels and say a little prayer.