



Exterior view and inside the White Peaks Homestay. Below: A picnic lunch prepared by their staff.

## UNDER THE HIMALAYAS

Between Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the hills, mountain streams, orchards, and woods create India's traditionally romantic holiday region. Earlier, the homestays here were basic but now you find tastefully decorated boutique properties, mostly owned by the Delhi-elite, perched with vantage views. Here, homeowners are working with locals to create sustainable tourism and promote local produce and craft.

### Cottage Amidst Apple Orchards, Kotgarh

This pretty cottage is located in the midst of an apple orchard in Kotgarh, about 75 kilometres from Shimla. Apart from the cosy interiors, it offers guided tours of the village and informative orchard tours. In the evenings, bonfires are lit and wonderful barbecues are arranged. While there, taste locally-grown peaches, kiwis and apples, and the cook's hearty rendition of local cuisine. If you must go out on excursions, there are lovely old churches nearby, and the Sadhu Sangh caves. [saffronstays.com](http://saffronstays.com)

### The White Peaks Homestay, Gagar

The White Peaks is a quaint, pet-friendly summer home of Abhijit and Aparupa Ganguly and their two adopted mutts. It stands amidst a fragrant oak and rhododendron forest, has stunning views of the white Himalayas, and gets a generous dusting of powdery soft snow through deep winter. The owners have decorated the house with lots of character, with books, warmth, and

lovely furnishings. Come for lazy days, bask in the mellow sunshine, and to let your dogs run free in the meadows that surround. [thewhitepeaks.com](http://thewhitepeaks.com)

### Soulitude in the Himalayas, Nainital

Nestled on a quiet hillside in Gagar near Nainital, Soulitude, as the name suggests, provides complete solitude for the soul. Face-to-face with the mighty Kumaon Himalayas, it is so quiet here that one can actually hear a pin drop. Fresh mountain air, spectacular 180-degree views of snow-clad mountains, long walks, and warm hospitality is the hallmark of this boutique stay. There are ten beautifully designed and cosy rooms. [soulitude.in](http://soulitude.in)



### IN THE WILDERNESS

The Serai at Toria is a wonderfully luxurious but earth-friendly property on the banks of the River Ken, 20 minutes from Khajuraho, and just outside Panna Tiger Reserve. A riverside setting, delicious food, and wonderful hosts make this a very special place to stay. Within the nine acres that Serai is set in, there are beautiful nooks under enormous trees to relax, while outdoor dining choices include lunch by the big tree and dinner by candle light under a star-lit sky. Book direct or with [rareindia.com](http://rareindia.com).