

**RS SAROVAR PORTICO, PALAMPUR**

**UP IN THE CLOUDS**

**N**othing of any significance ever happens in Palampur.

A tiny town, its centre and market don't stretch beyond a kilometre. The surrounding quaint hills lie carpeted in lush green tea gardens, the mighty Dhauladhars peek through the clouds in the distance, and noise here is conspicuous by its absence. Palampur is still off the tourist radar, but with popular destinations such as Dharamsala and Bir-Billing just an hour's drive away, it's well on its way to becoming a preferred weekend getaway.

Striving to put Palampur on the tourist map is the year-old RS Sarovar Portico. As you drive towards it, a tall tower comes into view in the distance. It houses a revolving restaurant which, we're told, is the hottest attraction in town currently.

The claim isn't unfounded as we find it packed when we drop in for lunch after checking in. With ceiling-to-floor glass panels as windows, the restaurant named Cloud 7 slowly revolves to provide lovely 360 degree-views. An Indian buffet spread is laid out for lunch and dinner every day. You can end up spending several lazy hours here, but the slight jerk in the revolving movement can leave some a little dizzy.

The hotel itself is a comfortable, modern stay—except when the electricity goes off (which is often), plunging you into total darkness in true small hill town style. The different categories of rooms and suites vary primarily in their sizes. Amenities—large screen LED TVs, mini bars, tea stations, selection of toiletries

etc—are largely uniform. So are the stunning views from each room. Ours had a large bay window that opened to views of red-roofed houses, a winding street, rolling hills and a tea garden in the distance. Framing it were two beautiful Victorian chairs—the standout piece of furniture in each room.

RS Sarovar Portico takes special care in organising day activities in and around Palampur. Our itinerary began with a Gypsy ride to a tea estate, where we were given an hour-long tour of the tea-producing process. This was followed by a visit to the artists' colony of Andretta—a pretty-as-a-postcard village that is famous for housing writers and artists such as Norah Richards and Sobha Singh. At Andretta Pottery, you can

try your hand at crafting clay on a potter's wheel. Next up was the breathtakingly green landing area at Bir, where paragliders from Billing land (the activity is halted during the monsoon). We wrapped up the day with a visit to the grand Sherabling Monastery. The low rumble of the chants of monks reverberated off the walls of the monastery and made their way to our city-bred hearts, warming them with serene divinity.

—Satarupa Paul

**NAVIGATOR**

**Go there for** Peace amidst mountains and clouds

**Address** RS Sarovar Portico, Near Ram Chowk, Ghugghar (Dharamsala Road), Palampur, Himachal Pradesh - 176061

**Reservation** (0) 87390 55555/85428 55555

**Website** www.sarovarhotels.com/palampur-hotels/rs-sarovar-portico

**Tariff** ₹7,000 - 18,000

