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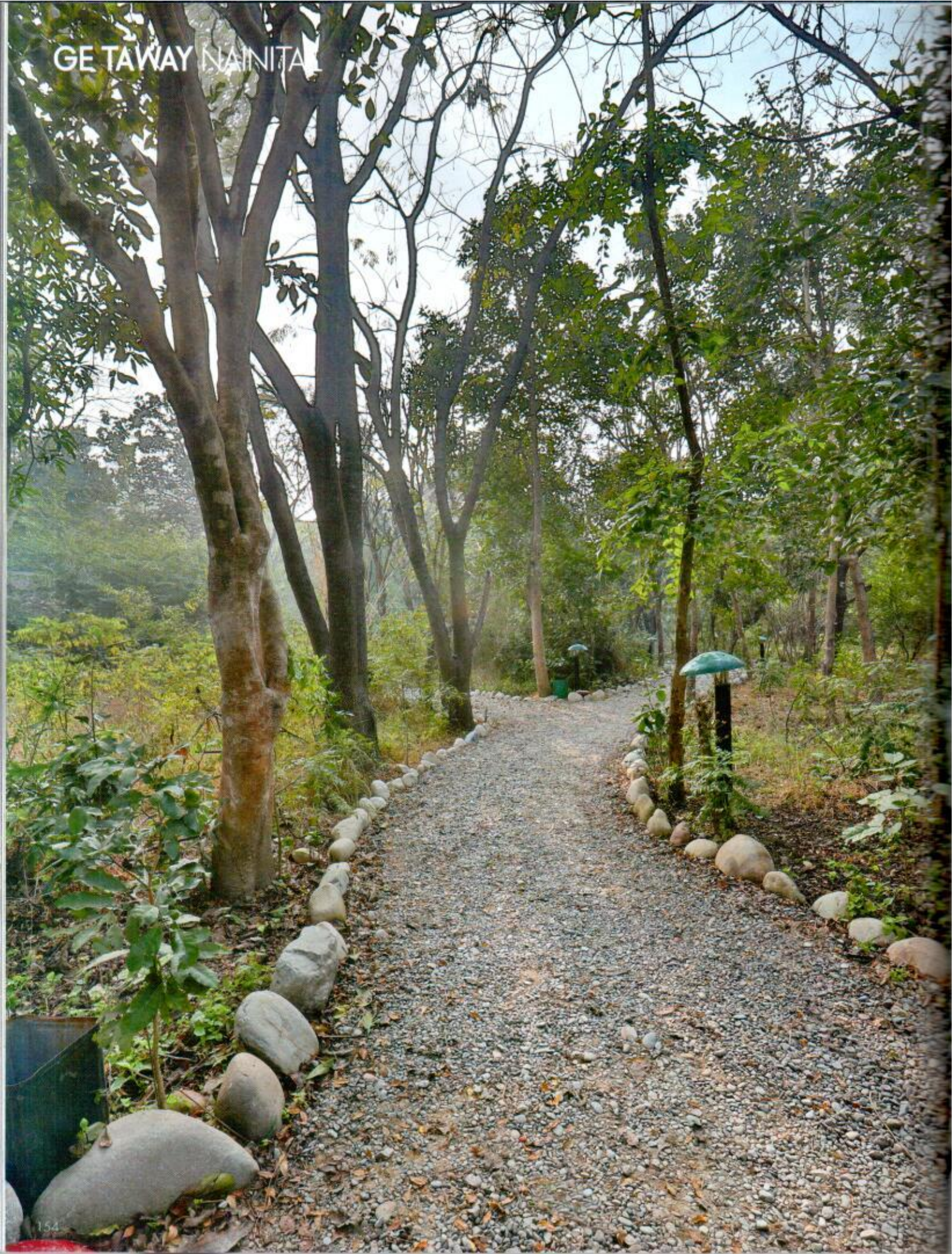
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WILD & FREE

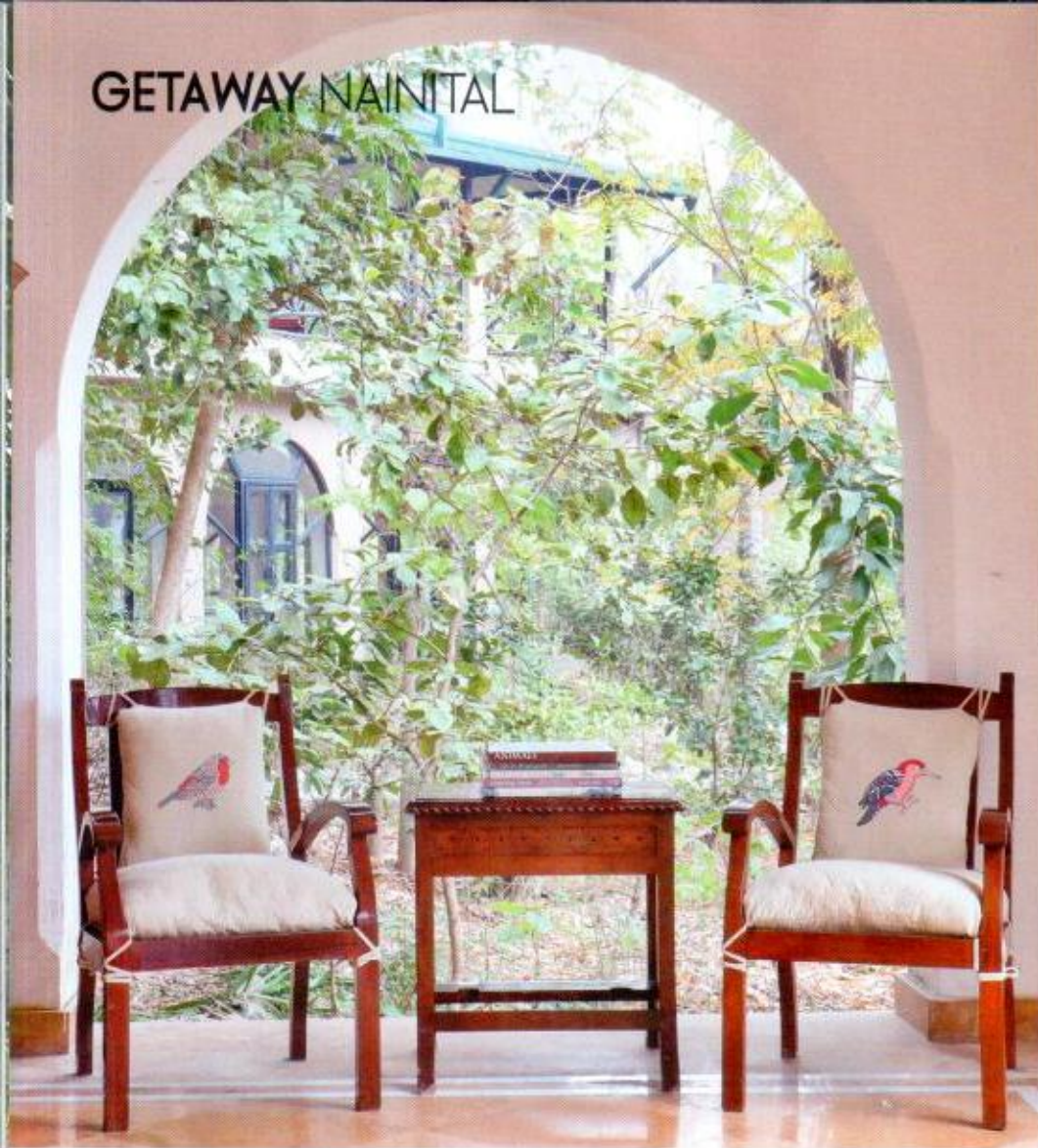
Located on the periphery of a tiger reserve, Jim's Jungle Retreat in Uttarakhand is a delight for both wildlife enthusiasts and city dwellers looking for respite

TEXT BY **DELILAH RODRIGUES** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TANUJ AHUJA**
PRODUCED BY **PRATEEKSHA KACKAR**



The expansive verandahs were designed in a way to promote interaction with the surrounding landscape. The seating is every bibliophile's dream, ideal to curl up with a book and a cup of freshly brewed coffee. Left Leading to the different areas in the property, the pebbled pathways are flanked by about 100 varieties of trees and 50 kinds of plants and shrubs that attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

GETAWAY NAINITAL



THE ARCHITECTURE IS INFLUENCED FROM HOMES OF THE VAN GUJJARS...



From Top Two views of the library: Arches accentuate the area that features wood and cane furniture along with bookshelves well stocked with literature on wildlife. A doorway leads you to the spa that offers rejuvenating, organic treatments Right Inside The Carpet Sahib's cafe (named after the local moniker for Jim Corbett): Locally produced light fixtures created from the barks of fallen Rohini trees found in the forest and baskets in mulberry wood and wicker, hang from the thatched roof



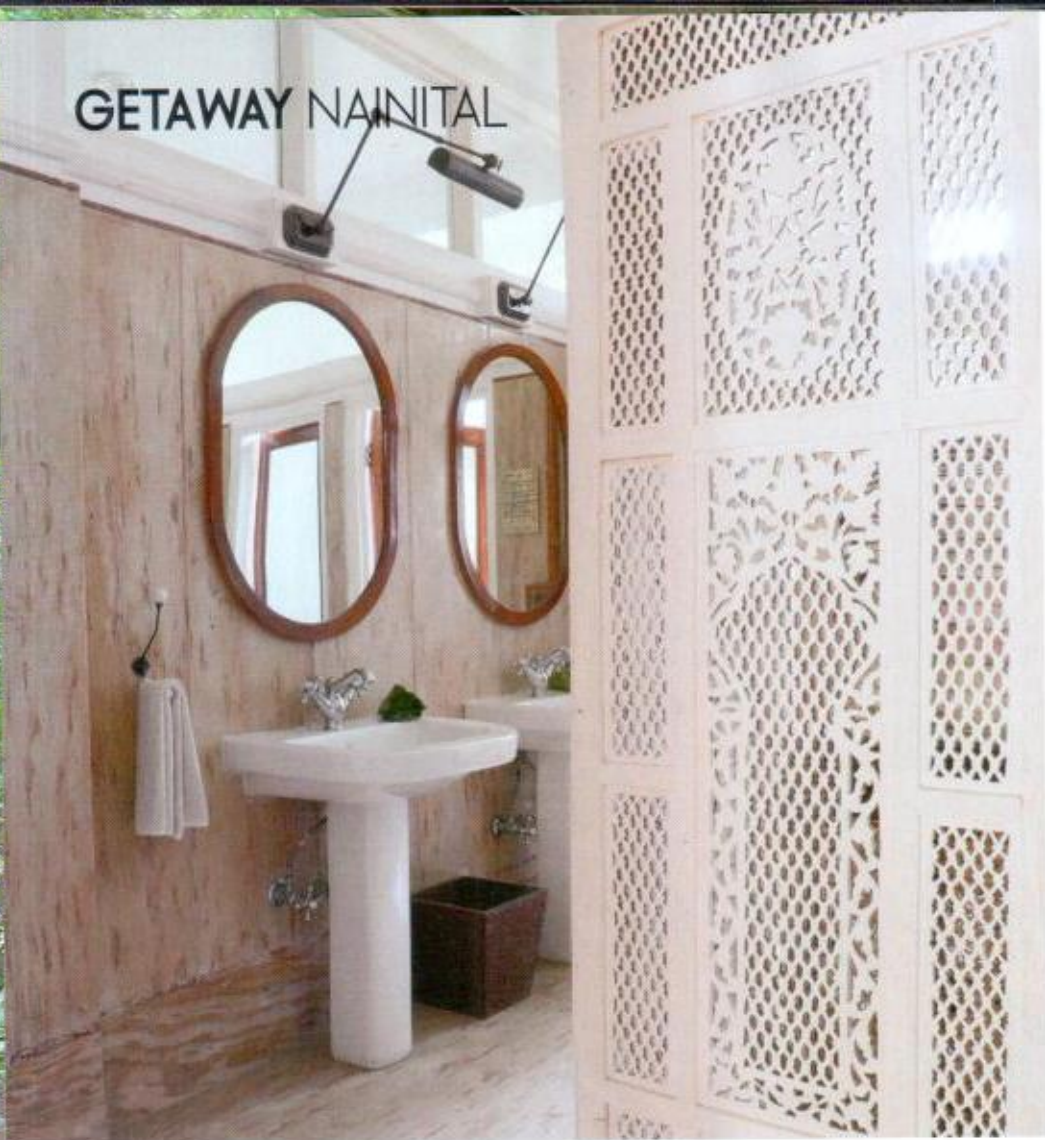
GETAWAY NAINITAL

Awashed in natural light, the double height, glass enclosed cafe brings the outdoors in. In one corner of the eatery, a cosy seating area featuring a whitewashed brick wall, plants, furnishings with animal motifs and a centre table made from salvaged wood.





GETAWAY NAINITAL



THE ELEVATED LODGES... MIRROR FOREST RESTHOUSES, BUILT BY THE BRITISH

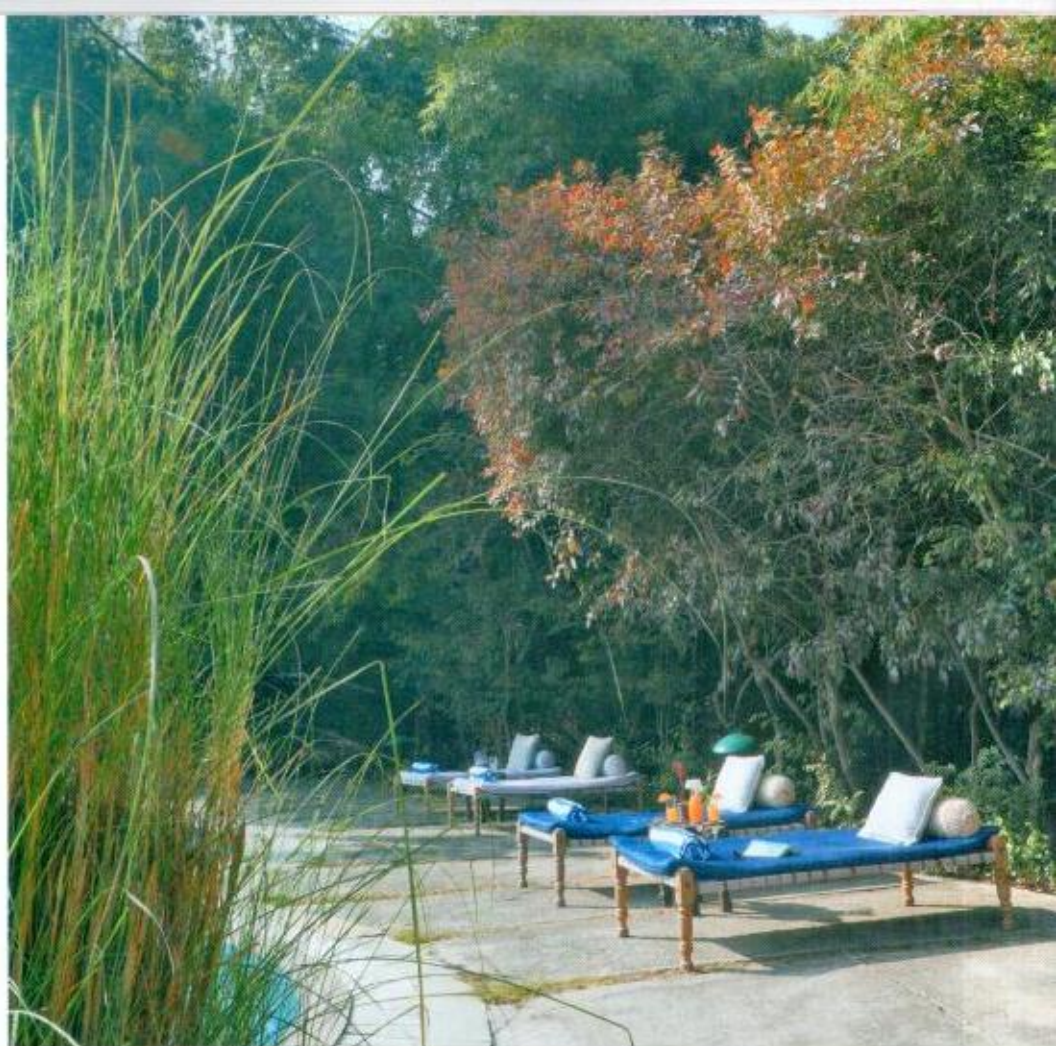


Clockwise, from Top The skylight brings in ample light into the bathroom in one of the lodges that has handmade elements like soap dishes made from leaves; Flora and fauna in the decor: Details like the metal woodpecker door knocker and elephant knobs seen in the library make an appearance throughout the eco-resort *Right* Each lodge is inspired by conservationists like Jim Corbett, Frederick Walter Champion, King Ashoka, Salim Ali and Billy Arjan Singh, represented through framed lithographs of various species of birds. Bamboo used during the construction of the lodges were refurbished to create a ceiling that mimics roofs of local homes





The concrete floor near the poolside has discrete imprints of animal paw marks, giving you the feeling of constantly being in the thick of wilderness. Inspired by local cots, the daybeds complement the setting. **Left** On the second level of the cafe, the machan, ideal for star gazing, provides a view of the majestic eucalyptus forest. If you're lucky enough, you will hear the distant alarm call of the spotted deer, a chorus of animals on sighting a tiger or trumpeting elephants



As you drive through the small town of Ramnagar in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand, dotted with quaint, mud walled huts and breathtaking, lush landscapes, you go past a narrow road, flanked by trees to reach a riverbed, which leads you to the final destination. Jim's Jungle Retreat is a hidden gem, situated on the South-eastern edge of Jim Corbett National park. The owner Inder Pratap Singh Akoi bought this piece of land – then a paddy field – and set up a little camp in late 1990. In a span of a few years, the forest escape, now under the care of his son Daleep Akoi, took shape as a boutique resort with sustainability at the core of its heart.

INTO THE WILD

As you step into the reception area you notice the high thatched ceiling, colonial furniture and antique lanterns. A pebbled pathway takes you to the cottages and lodges. Walk along and sink in the verdant landscape, home to over 100 species of trees and about 50 kinds of plants and bushes; it's not too difficult to fall in love with the place instantly. You feel like you've almost stepped into Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. While you're finding your way, don't be surprised if you're caught off guard by a group of spotted deer, a howling jackal or a kaleidoscope of butterflies.

TRANQUIL SOJOURN

The architecture is inspired by homes of the Van Gujjars, a local pastoral nomad group. The cottages, hearkening to the elegance of the Raj era have earthy interiors, while the elevated lodges, ideal for birdwatching, mirror forest resthouses, built by the British. Here, elements like cane furniture and camp chairs will transport you to a '90s jungle camp. Verandahs and high ceilings keep the heat out and large windows and skylights bring in natural light. "We also want to conserve electricity," informs Daleep. Each space is painstakingly put together by the owner and his family. "My sister creates beautiful embroidery and patchwork," he says, pointing to a cushion with a bird motif on it. The whiff of *ramdana* pie will bring you to the restaurant, where they dish out delicacies influenced by the Raj, the owner's Peshawar born, Australian grand aunt and the Kumaon region. Apart from the retreat itself, the food is crucial to the overall rejuvenating and humbling experience. ♦

The ELLE DECOR team travelled to Uttarakhand courtesy Jim's Jungle Retreat, Village Dhela, Ramnagar, Corbett National Park, Nainital, Uttarakhand 15. Website: www.jimsjungleretreat.com