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Clockwise from here: aerial view of Aurika; the main guest lobby; the presidential suite; and Mirasa, the all-day restaurant

HOTELS

CHECK OUT 30 AURIKA, UDAIPUR **32** TAJ THEOG RESORT & SPA, SHIMLA **34 FRESH SHEET** CAPELLA, BANGKOK

[CHECK OUT]

LOST AND FOUND

Simrran Gill is wooed by Aurika's hilltop charm, hospitality and tasteful luxury

The misty hills stretched endlessly before me as I strained to spot Lake Pichola. I was standing between a rock and a hard place, quite literally so—a wall of doors to my left, and one covered in climbers to my right. No, I wasn't lost, neither was I dreaming. I was trying to find a secret garden.

The Paheli Bagh at Aurika, Udaipur is reserved for a lucky few. If you can solve the riddle put forth by the staff—one that will take you through the labyrinth of Rajasthani art and winding architecture

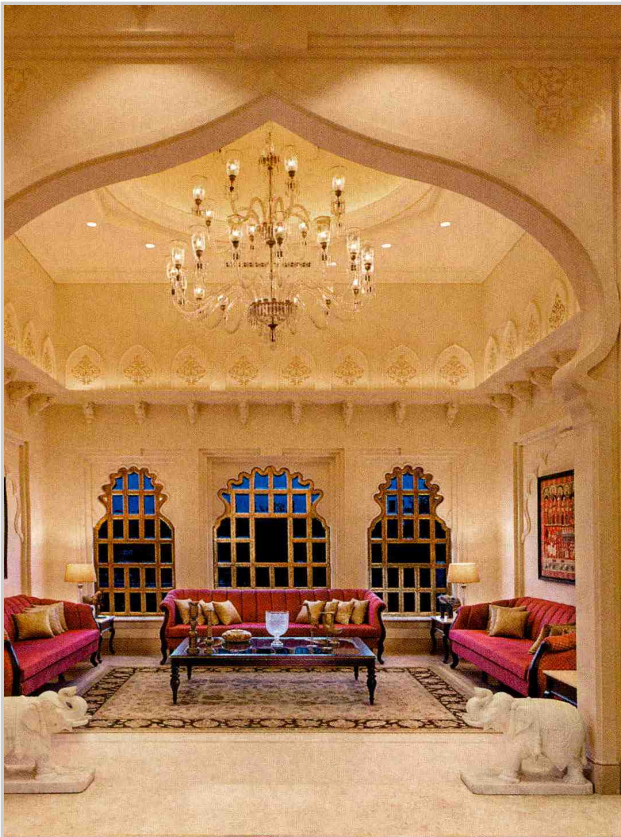
of Aurika in a flurry of jumbled words—you'll have the privilege of knowing that you're a lucky one too. And, of course, a moonlit dinner overlooking the breathtaking landscape of Udaipur in perfect twilight.

The first outpost of Lemon Tree's new upscale brand (more coming soon), Aurika is situated on an undulating hilltop. Away from the hustle-bustle of Udaipur, but still a comfortable distance from all that the city has to offer. The term Aurika means gold, and a tour of the property aptly reflects its namesake.

Udaipur had been unusually misty since I arrived, and the staff had been joking about how I brought the haze with me from Delhi. On a sunny day, unlike this one, you can easily spot Aurika from the Monsoon Palace. And if you looked a little further, you could spot Lake Pichola too. Adorned with traditional Shekhawati paintings and Karnawati stones, the hotel offers cosy nooks and corners to curl up with a book or gaze at the starlit sky.

I'm usually good with directions, but it took me a while to figure my way around the property. I was partly at fault as I

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kept zoning in and out, marvelling at the traditional Rajasthani architecture. Thankfully, the staff always managed to rescue me from my lofty wanderings with a golf cart in tow to deliver me to my desired destination.

And the one I was looking for was Mirasa, the all-day restaurant. Chef Kamal spun his magic in everything he brought to the table. His signature Rajasthani thali with *churma* and a warm jowar drink was my personal favourite, washed down with some blueberry cheesecake. Satisfied and more than a little full, I retired for the day in my room. Calling it comfortable would be an understatement.

Usually an early riser, I overslept more than I care to admit. But one can't complain about happy accidents, can one? The day was surprisingly sunny and before I could even head to the terrace to try and spot Lake Pichola, breakfast was waiting at the door. I decided to do all things touristy that day. Thankfully, I was accompanied by Chef's lip-smacking picnic basket and


the hotel's General Manager, Rahul Korgaokar's banter. As I walked around Jag Mandir and the Udaipur City Palace, I could draw similarities between the architecture of the palace and the property.

Tasteful and ornate, Aurika also had a library among its long list of offerings. One can choose to bring their own selection, or pick from their collection of over a thousand books. I more than utilised the privilege of a reading room with a glass of lemonade and some good ol' Charlotte Brontë.

Much of my last day was spent gloriously lazing around Aurika, which I had now, thankfully, figured out (but the golf cart was still there). The warm afternoon made for a perfect excuse to have lunch by the pool, and my burger and shake really hit home. A nap, as they say, was inevitable.

Since I obviously hadn't relaxed enough, I followed the whiff of essential oils into the Araya spa. After choosing from a variety of said oils, I headed into a room that was already temperature-

controlled for the session. Might I say that the session was 45 minutes of pure therapy with unadulterated wholesomeness.

I retired for the night, but not before a quick glance at the Ariva bar, which boasts of an impressive selection. I wondered for a second before making up my mind; how could I end a perfect day without a trusty little nightcap? 

THE INFORMATION

LOCATION 01, Kala Rohi, Sisarma, Udaipur. 30 kilometres from Maharana Pratap Airport (approx 60 mins).

ACCOMMODATION 72 deluxe, 36 deluxe vista, 12 premium with private terrace, 15 premium vista with private terrace, 3 Aurika suites with private plunge pool and 1 presidential suite

TARIFF Deluxe (from ₹12,500), deluxe vista (from ₹14,500), premium room with private terrace (from ₹16,500), premium vista room with terrace (from ₹19,500), Aurika suite with private plunge pool (from ₹34,500), and presidential suite (from ₹56,500) for single occupancy.

CONTACT 0294-7140000; aurikahotels.com