



# A COMFORTABLE ADVENTURE

Stepping up the pace at Atali Ganga | By MILAN MOUDGILL



**T**o most people, an active outdoor vacation might seem incompatible with a family holiday. The first option is seen as gritty, and back-to-basics. Family vacations with children, on the other hand, demand that you're never far from creature comforts.

Atali Ganga creates a lovely blend of the two. The "activotel" near Rishikesh provides access to a host of vigorous pursuits like rafting, wall climbing, mountain biking, and hiking—right outside your room. It's great to get sweaty knowing that you have a hot shower, comfortable bed, and great food to retreat to at the end of the day. Activity Officers oversee everything, ensuring safety and fun for people of all skill levels and ages. Those who prefer something less strenuous can splash around the open-air pool.

I really wanted to push myself, so I tried the High Ropes Course, a series of 16 elements, including a zip line, that are elevated 30 feet off the ground, and spread over 2.5 acres. It really put my strength to the test. Equally high on my list was the desire to sit motionless by a bonfire, watching dusk settle over the valley.

Atali is located 30 kilometres north of Rishikesh, and has a breathtaking view of the Upper Ganges valley. Its 16 cottages are spread over a five-acre hillside, surrounded

by forest. The place encourages you to get up and about. To begin with, there are no televisions in the rooms. Room service is not provided, so all meals are served buffet-style at the White Water Café. The food—and there is a wide variety—is superb. Atali sprawls down the hillside, so getting around entails walking uphill and down paved paths. It's the perfect opportunity to shake off that sloth (and an extra kilo or two).

## ACCOMMODATION

Each of Atali's cottages is named after a Himalayan village, a river rapid, or a local



landmark. The cottages are well-furnished and comfortable, and stand independently, giving their residents ample privacy. With a large sliding door in front, and huge windows on two other walls, much of the cottage is open to the beautiful hilly surroundings. The patio is a good spot from which to enjoy the view. The only electronic distraction is a thoughtfully provided iPod dock so you can play a raga for your morning yoga or break into an impromptu dance.

For a change of pace from the activities, opt for a yoga session by the Ganga or head to Haridwar (80 km/2 hours, ₹5,400 round trip) to witness the evening aarti on the ghats. Incantations fill the air, and the encroaching darkness is bathed in the glow of hundreds of floating diyas.

At Rishikesh (30 km/45 min, ₹3,600 round trip), cross the Laxman Jhula bridge to the left bank of the Ganga for a great walk through a bustling market, past temples and ashrams. Have lunch at the famous Chotiwalla restaurant, before crossing back over Ram Jhula. ■

## THE VITALS

Atali is 260 km/6 hours northeast of Delhi and 30 km/45 mins north of Rishikesh in western Uttarakhand. It is 46 km/1.5 hours from Dehradun, the nearest airport and 50 km/1.5 hours from the nearest railway station at Haridwar. Both are well connected with Delhi. There are 19 independent one-room cottages (*doubles ₹12,500*) with an additional bed for a third person (*no charge for children under 5; ₹3,000 for 6-15 years; ₹4,000 for 16+ years*). For larger families, there are three cottages with two rooms (*₹20,000 for four*). The room price includes three meals, two activities per person per day, campfire snacks, and morning/evening tea and coffee with cookies (*Atali Dogi, Milestone 30, Rishikesh-Badrinath Road, Tehri Garhwal; 975661 1114; ataliganga.com; For bookings, call Aquaterra Adventures at 011-41636101*).