

Himalayan Hospitality

Nestled in the mystical mountains of Gulmarg, this luxury ski resort embodies the spirit of Kashmir while tipping its hat to the world.

By Vaishnavi Nayel Talawadkar
Images courtesy of The Khyber Himalayan
Resort & Spa Gulmarg



Situated at an altitude of 8,825 feet, in the heart of the Himalayan Pir Panjal Range, The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa in Gulmarg is India's first and only luxury ski resort. The seven-acre property, which opened in 2012, is set in a pristine pine valley and was designed in 2009 by architects Anil Sharma and Anil Badan, the respective founders of New Delhi-based practices A Sharma Associates and Studio B Architects. Sharma helmed the architecture, while Badan was responsible for the interior design.

Characterized by Swiss-chalet-style architecture, The Khyber Himalayan is composed of 80 guestrooms, four luxury cottages and a Presidential Cottage. The luxury balcony rooms and all the cottages are outfitted with generous private balconies, separate dressing areas, and ensuite bathrooms with large picture windows and sunken tubs. The Presidential Cottage, meanwhile, offers additional luxuries such as a private heated plunge pool with a Jacuzzi, a dining area, and a spacious private garden. It also features a living room and kitchen facilities, as do the two-bedroom cottages. The bathroom fittings in each suite, as well as in the common areas, are by Kohler.

The lobby serves as an overture to the rest of the property, with stained glass and a grand curvilinear diwan sofa evoking a Kashmiri home of yore. An arched window recalls an open *jharokha* (a traditional stone window projecting from the face of a home), while photographs by local artist Faheem Qadri lay bare Kashmir's architectural and cultural crown jewels.

Reflecting the architects' vision to localize the design language, the interior is enhanced by artisanal handiwork, including *namda* rugs of felted wool, woven grass displays, silk carpets from local looms, furnishings with crewel embroidery, carved walnut paneling, papier-mâché accents, ornate Khatambandi ceilings, and ornately carved pelmets that hold a mirror to Srinagar's famous Jama Masjid mosque. "We wanted the resort to epitomize Kashmiri hospitality, and everything showcases Kashmir in its natural setting," says Vinit Chhabra, the hotel's General Manager. The design teams paid equal attention to the landscaping, taking inspiration from the state's storied paradise gardens.

The finished product is a resort with opulent accommodations complemented by wellness offerings that encompass a luxurious Mediterranean-themed spa with L'Occitane products, steam and sauna chambers, an amphitheater, a well-appointed gym, and a temperature-controlled swimming pool with unrivaled alpine views. In addition, the resort features a tearoom, a shisha lounge, and four beautiful restaurants. Recently renovated in parts, The Khyber Himalayan is the preferred destination among adventure enthusiasts and tranquility seekers alike, as Indian actor Vidya Malavade can attest. A faithful patron of the property, she recently documented a stay in a social media series for Kohler and NDTV.

Finally, the resort benefits from an unparalleled location, just strides away from the Gulmarg Gondola, one of the highest cable cars in the world and part of the local skiing infrastructure, and a mere 20-minute walk from the world's second highest green golf course. Colorful meadows in the summer and pristine white snowfall in the winter mean that no matter the season, there's always something in bloom.



B



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D



E

Previous spread

A India's only luxury ski resort, The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa in Gulmarg is situated at an altitude of 8,825 feet and offers spectacular views of the Himalayan Pir Panjal Range

This spread

B In the spa, guests can enjoy the alpine views from the warmth of a KOHLER bathtub
C New Delhi-based A Sharma Associates is behind the architecture, which is inspired by that of a Swiss chalet with Kashmiri touches
D-E Interiors by Anil Badan continue the theme, and privilege natural materials and ornate local accents