



1. The facade resembles a Rajasthani haveli 2. The 24-hour eatery, The Brown Sugar 3. The central courtyard

Sohum Signature Massage—a mix of Thai, acupressure, sports and a deep tissue massage. It's exactly as hard as it sounds, and after 90 minutes I'm not just rejuvenated, but also famished.

DINING

I head to the Indian restaurant, The Frontier Mail, named after the train that ran between Mumbai and Peshawar before 1947. The restaurant has tables set inside a train compartment for those who enjoy the thought of dining in a train. The cuisine offered is from regions through which the train used to ply. I ponder over the menu and choose *Mahi Soley*—fish marinated in spices, which is so soft and tender that I have difficulty lifting it with my fork, and *Murgh Lahori*, a speciality from Lahore, which was not as spicy as I expected.

The other eatery at the hotel is the 24-hour coffee shop, The Brown Sugar, where I have a leisurely breakfast the next morning. That evening I while away time sipping perfectly chilled champagne at The Polo Bar, where waiters are dressed in polo uniforms.

The dining options may be limited, but the banquet facilities are not. The hotel has seven banquet halls, which can be combined to accommodate as many as 5,000 people. For some it may be the perfect venue to hold their dream wedding, but for me Noor Mahal is an ideal weekend getaway.

—PALLAVI PASRICHA

Noor Mahal, Karnal

All right, come up with it. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of Karnal? Rice fields? Dairy products? Liberty shoes or simply a town you pass enroute Chandigarh?

How about a five-star hotel? Doesn't seem to fit, does it? Digest the idea, for Karnal is now home to a sprawling heritage hotel, Noor Mahal. And it is exactly how it sounds—royal and glamorous.

What strikes me is the hotel's unlikely location and impressive facade. Standing amidst lush, green rice fields, this huge property resembles a Rajasthani haveli.

Once I step into the

lobby, it is difficult to remember that I am in Karnal. The delicate inlay work in the marble floor, the eye-catching hand-painted mural on the wall and sprawling verandahs are reminiscent of a maharaja's palace.

ROOMS AND SPA

I am taken to my Club Royal room. But unlike the lobby, there is nothing royal about it, the décor is modern. I quickly draw the curtains, hoping to catch a glimpse of the rice fields we had passed. Instead, all I see is verandahs and a central courtyard. Sigh, such is life. Disappointed, I get down to some reading, and then head to spa—7th Heaven, a tie-up with Sohum Spa from Mumbai. It's a small spa with just three treatment rooms, but an exhaustive menu. I opt for the

AT A GLANCE

WHAT: A new heritage hotel

WHERE: National Highway 1, Sector 32
Tel: (0184) 306 6666;
www.noormahal.in

COST: ₹4,500 onwards per night for the Club Room

VERDICT: A good weekend and MICE option for Delhi and Chandigarh