of Rajjipura, this heritage building with large rooms contains some original furniture is set among large attractive gardens. The dining room is an outstanding feature.

Kasmanda Palace Hotel (0133) 263424; kasmandapalace.com; off the Mall, Rs 2300-2500, off-season discount 10%. This white Romanesque castle was built in 1880 for a British officer and was bought by the Maharaja of Kasmanda in 1915. The red-carpeted hall has a superb staircase flanked by bugling trophies. Book room 4 or 11 to experience the full-on authentic maharaja style.

Eating

RESTAURANTS

Uphar Restaurant (the Mall, Gandhi Chowk; sweets Rs 7, meals Rs 20-65). This popular place has tasty dishes such as vegetable jala, beige (spicy stir-fried vegetables) and sweets like kaskyadula (deep-fried dough sweet) and coconut burfi (a delicate, sweet made from coconut).

City Point Restaurant (the Mall, Gandhi Chowk; meals Rs 20-40). All the Indian and Chinese favourites are available in this reliable restaurant.

The Tavern (0133) 263280; the Mall, Picture Palace; meals Rs 70-100, meals Rs 110. Live music from 7pm, a global range of food, welcoming staff and a smart green and natural wood decor makes this a top dining spot. Besides Chinese and Indian food, the menu includes roast lamb, fish, sizzlers and pizzas, which can all be delivered to your hotel.

Madras Cafe (the Mall, Picture Palace; meals Rs 25-45). This is dosa nirvana with over 50 varieties to choose from.

QUICK EATS

Meeting Point Cafe (the Mall; meals Rs 25-45). The friendly and musical young owner makes this a great hang-out with espresso coffee, Tibetan and other foods.

Casa Mia Bakery (the Mall, Pahari Bazaar; snacks Rs 15-45, large pizzas Rs 120). The best of these many bakeries, this one has a dazzling range of temptations, including croissants, cakes, muffins and apple pies.

Mussoorie Fruit Centre (the Mall, Pahari Bazaar; juices & shakes Rs 15) Mangoes are in season from February to August and lychees in May and June.

Drinking & Entertainment

Savvy Hotel Writers' Bar (Savvy Hotel, Gandhi Chowk; 0133) 263280. The Raj-era hotel is too dilapidated to stay in, but you could be up to the bar to down a Kingfisher among the ghosts of the past.

Indoor Roller Skating Rink (0133) 263277; the Mall, Picture Palace; back Rs 55, kids Rs 40. The price includes skates and the sessions start at 8.30am 8.30pm and 3pm.

Snooker Pool Parlor (above the Tavern, the Mall, Picture Palace; pool per hr Rs 80, snooker per hr Rs 100). This pool parlor is recommended as a great place to keep yourself entertained for an hour or two.

Shopping

Ancient Palace (0133) 263277; Landour Rd; 9-9pm) This shop is crammed with antiques and curios.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Frequent buses leave from the Mussoorie bus stand (next to the train station) in Dehra Dun for Mussoorie (Rs 23, 1 1/2 hours). Some go to the Picture Palace bus stand (0133) 263277, while others go to the Library bus stand (0133) 263277 at the other end of town. The return trip (downhill) takes an hour. Inquire at the Library bus stand (0133) 263277. The Har Ki Puri Chhati for Yamunotri Temple (Rs 80, 6 hours), which are irregular, or to Sanskriti for the Har Ki Dun trek (Rs 100, nine hours), which may require a combination of bus and share jeeps. Local buses, such as those to Tehri Dam, leave from the Tehri bus stands on the way to Landour.

TAXI

From taxi stands at both bus stands you can hire taxis to Dehra Dun (Rs 350).

TRAIN

The Northern Railway booking agency (0133) 263246; the Mall, Khati Bazaar; 8-3pm & noon-6pm Mon-Sat; 8am-2pm Sun), houses in a very dilapidated building, sells tickets for trains from Haridwar.

Getting Around

Cycle-rickshaws allow Rs 20-25.

AROUND MUSSOORIE

The most popular sight around Mussoorie is impressive Kempty Falls, 15km north of Mussoorie. It's a 3km walk from the crowed parking lot.

INFORMATION

www.hardwaronline.com for information on Haridwar.
HARIDWAR & AROUND

PANDAS

Have you ever seen a panda? This is a common question from Hindu pilgrims visiting Haridwar, Priests and pilgrims gather, and you can see them not only on the streets but also at the train station. They always carry a panda, the name of their clan, the village, district, and state, and are often greeted by their specific family panda.

Once found, their panda will record their visits and any births, marriages, and deaths that have taken place since the last pilgrimage. A family member, in the past, might have stayed with their trusted panda, who acted as banker, provider of money, and a helping hand with the many cremation rituals.

Pandas can become wealthy as pilgrims donate not only generous sums of money but also valuable items belonging to their deceased relatives.

In Haridwar, you can easily find a panda. They are found all over the city, and you can see them on the streets, at the train station, and even near the temples.

OTHER HOLY SITES

The ancient Badri Mahadev Temple, south of the city, contrasts with the modern temples such as the Disneyesque Lal Mata Temple, the Pawan Dham Temple with its dazzling mirror and mosaic interior design, and the seven-storey Bharat Mata Temple which even has an elevator. The main road is a traditional Jain temple made from Jaisalmer sandstone. Just north of Har Ki Pauri is Bhimgoda Tank, said to have been formed by a blow from Bhima's knee - Bhima was one of the Pandava brothers, heroes of the Mahabharata epic. Just north of the tank is the impressive Jal Ram Ashram - colourful wedding-cake architecture at its best.

Tours

From his office next to Chitra Tailors cinema, Sanjeev Mehta of Mohan's Adventure Tours (220901; www.mohansadventure.com; Railway Rd; 8am-10.30pm) can organise any kind of tour, including cycling, trekking, fishing, and rafting. He specialises in five-hour safaris (Rs 1650 per person) around Raja Ji National Park (see p14).

Sleeping

See the boxed text, p14 for information on ashram stays.

BUDGET

Jassa Ram Rd has loads of budget hotels and although some of the fancy foyers may raise your expectations, none are very good.

Hotel Arjun (22) 27950; Jassa Ram Rd; d Rs 400-950; €€€€) is the best of the bunch if you don't mind pink decor. It has solar hot water and even an elevator.

Hotel Om (22) 2426589; Upper Rd; d without/wi fi Rs 500/600, Dec-Mar Rs 600/750, €€€) Large, cleanish rooms (some with a balcony), a central location near the cable car to Mansa Devi Temple, and helpful staff make this a good budget option.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Ashok (22) 2426469; Jassa Ram Rd; r Rs 110, d Rs 165-350; €€

Hotel Swagat (22) 22150; Jassa Ram Rd; r Rs 300-600, d Rs 495-950; €€
ASHRAM STAYS

If you prefer an ashram with few or no foreigners, stay in Hardwark rather than Rishikesh. You can join in with ashram activities as long as you obey the strict rules: ‘Everything’ - lodging, meals, religious practice - is usually free, but a donation is expected. Most ashrams try to have sufficient mini-utopia and some grow their own herbs which are made into Ayurvedic medicines.

A large ashram set in beautiful gardens, Shanti Kun (260002; www.amop.org; Rishikesh Rd) is an inspirational community which offers simple accommodation with fans, air-coolers and private rooms. With hot water, it suits serious students of sadhana as meditation and mantra practice at 5.15am followed by yoga (five ceremonies) and meditation in front of a model of a Himalayan cave. Contact the officials (the 'Abode Cell') for further information.

The small peaceful Mohyol Ashram (2601136; mohan.india@yahoo.com; Rishikesh Rd; dorm Rs 100/400/600; ) has lawns, marble floors and a meditation and yoga hall with wooden acoustics, and offers spotless midrange accommodation at budget prices. The hatha yoga tutorial costs Rs 150 per hour (minimum two people). Breakfast is Rs 20; lunches are free and dinners are Rs 30. This is not the usual strict ashram although smoking, alcohol and meat are prohibited, and Mr Dutta the helpful manager is used to dealing with foreign guests.

The very large Prem Nagar Ashram (2603524; premnagar@vsnl.com; Railway Rd) was founded by Prem Nagar, who died in 1966. His extraordinary mausoleum features a pyramidal blue copper roof and steps representing the seven holy rivers and the sea. Meditation and singing take place daily at 5am and 7.30pm and the ashram has its own cows and Ayurvedic medical facilities as well as a huge, pillarless meeting hall and a ghat facing the Ganges. Few of the staff speak English but the plain accommodation has fans, private bathrooms and hot water.

MDRANGE

Hotel Sachin (222655; fax 225184; Railway Rd; d Rs 750-950, s Rs 900-1000; ) is perfectly located with walking distance of the transport hub. Its staff are unhelpful but this large, recently painted, almost smart hotel has comfortable and quiet rooms, and a restaurant reached over a causeway. Make an offer off-season.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Haveli Hari Ganga (226143; www.leisurehotels.co.in/hardwar; Ram Ghat, near Vishnu Ghat; d Rs 2200-2800; ) is totally hidden away in Rana Bazar. This superb haveli, built in 1918 right on the Ganges River, with airy courtyards, marble floors and hanging flower baskets. Packed with character and oozing charm, it has friendly staff and has been tastefully restored to become an elegant 20-room luxury hotel. The Ganges laps onto one terrace and downstairs an Ayurvedic health spa offers treatments from Rs 950 as well as yoga classes.

Hotel Ganga Azur (2420938; www.hotelazur.com; Railway Rd; d Rs 300-1500, off-season discount 20%; ) is of all types of rooms are available in this large, well-equipped hotel with a courtyard. See opposite for its Big Ben Restaurant.

Bhaj-Govindam (2601682; fax 223656; near Ganga Bridge; d Rs 300, with AC Rs 1200; ) is in a wonderful location in a garden on the banks of the Ganges. Nestled among the comfortable bungalow rooms, there is a clean, tiled private bathroom. The accommodation is absolute ruralism - no electricity. With its own private bathing ghat, so peaceful, you are willing to pay the high prices.

Hotel Le Grand (2242950; www.hotellegrand.com; Railway Rd; d Rs 995-1805; ) This is a very stylish, semi-luxurious hotel, 1km south of the transport hub, with a marvellous pool and comfortable rooms with balconies.

Eating

Being a holy city, only vegetarian food and non-alcoholic drinks are available.

RESTAURANTS

Hoshiyar Puri (Upper Rd; meats Rs 15-45). Established in 1937 and still going strong - the kitchen

serves 'Vachet parathas' (stuffed fried bread), 'chhole' (chana and potato curry) and 'rice puddings' are recommended.

Shivlal (Railway Rd; meals Rs 35-50; ) Meals here arrive to time are due and are worth the wait.

Chotiwala (Bana Bazaar; meals Rs 25-65). A busy outdoor eatery with all the usual meals can be found here.

The Dada Boudoir Hotel Restaurant (Bana Bazaar; meals Rs 25-50) is also recommended.

QUICK EATS

Jaiwasi Mathura Walla (Bana Bazaar; sweets around Rs 10). The best ras malai (milk and sugar sweet) in town and delicious fruit luid with cream are among the many treats here.

Shopping

Thousands of tiny stalls are crammed along both sides of the narrow walkways through the lively Bana Bazaar. Religious paraphernalia, clothing, fabrics and household goods are on sale. The market is surprisingly hassle-free with an excellent sweet shop (above) and looks attractive at night with strings of fairy lights.

Getting There & Away

the following buses leave from UP Roadways bus stand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Fare (Rs)</th>
<th>Duration (hr)</th>
<th>Departure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badrinath (via Joshimath)</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>every few hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangaotri*</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>btw 3am &amp; 5am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanuman</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>btw 3am &amp; 5am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch satellites</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>btw 3am &amp; 5am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some of these buses go via Chilla (Rs 10, 1hr), the base for safaris round Rajaji National Park.

Private deluxe buses run to Agra (Rs 350), Delhi (Rs 250), Dharmasala (Rs 350), Jaisalpur (Rs 400) and Pushkar (Rs 450). They leave from near the train station and any travel agent in town can make a booking.

TAXI & VIKAM

The main taxi stand is outside the train station on Railway Rd. Official rates include Chilla (for Rajaji National Park, Rs 310), Rishikesh (Rs 410), Dehra Dun (Rs 610), Delhi (Rs 1700) and Uttarkashi (Rs 1610). Shared vikrams run to Rishikesh (Rs 15, one hour) from Upper Rd, north of Lallatara Bridge, but buses are more comfortable.

TRAIN

See p407 for trains between Haridwar and Delhi. The Down Express runs daily to Kol- kata (sleepers/AC/2AC Rs 777/1059/1904, 33 hours) via Lucknow (Rs 185/519/830, 10 hours) and Varanas (Rs 259/728/1165, 18 hours).