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Hot spots: The Manor, New Delhi

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What is it? The Manor is probably the Indian capital's best-kept secret. Insiders are reluctant to spread the word for fear that this oasis in the huge, sprawling megapolis that is New Delhi could be ruined by over-popularity. The Manor offers a more intimate experience than you'd get at any big-brand hotel. Entering the property is like stepping into an opulent, elegant home - one with a lush garden, in a very chic neighbourhood. This tranquil and leafy suburb is home to tycoons, media barons and diplomats, who live in white mansions surrounded by high walls.

Developed in the 1950s as a small two-storey country hotel, The Manor is a delightful refuge from the city yet close enough to wherever most visitors will need to go.

Do go on: The Manor has 16 rooms, some of which open out onto the garden. All are elegant and understated, with cherry wood panelling, wooden floors, green granite bathrooms and contemporary fittings. No Indian ethnic here. The furniture is upholstered in brown and cream silk and olive-green leather. Black and white photographs of Delhi monuments hang on otherwise bare cream walls. On the first floor, there is a small library with windows that open out onto a large terrace overlooking the garden; a great place in which to have a drink or sunbathe while trying to remember the difference between frangipani, ficus and hibiscus, all of which bloom on the lawn below. The Onyx bar, on the ground floor, is another option.

What's the best thing about the place? The Manor's manna: Indian food as you have never had it before. Indian Accent offers some of the most original and delicious food in the country; contemporary Indian made with non-indigenous ingredients. Prize-winning chef Manish Mehrotra takes global favour-ites such as foie gras, smoked salmon and truffle oil and melds them with Indian dishes to coax out the most amazing flavours, course after course. Add to your list of things to try before you die Mehrotra's *galouti* (a kebab originally created for a toothless nawab, that is famed for its velvety soft texture) with foie gras, served with a tart strawberry and green chilli chutney. To top it all, the restaurant is quiet, a godsend for those familiar with the noise and chaos of your average Delhi eatery.

Anything else we should know? The Indian capital can be a bit confusing for first-time visitors, so the tours that The Manor arranges to tourist sites and shop-ping centres prove invaluable for some. During the summer months, it is too hot and humid to sit out on the lawns but as winter draws in, an al-fresco dinner goes down a treat.

What's the bottom line? A room in the summer costs 7,500 rupees (HK\$1,080) and rises to 9,000 rupees in the winter. The largest suite is 16,000 rupees in summer and 18,500 rupees during winter.

The Manor is at 77 Friends Colony West, New Delhi, India, tel: 91 11 4323 5151; www.themanordelhi.com

