

# “I want guests to be as enchanted as I am”

**Q: BOUTIQUE HOTEL, B&B, home-stay**—what is Juniper at Jungalia [near Bhimtal, Kumaon]?

**A:** Actually, none of the tags apply. Juniper is too small to be a boutique hotel. It isn't a B&B because it offers lunches and dinners and staff who cater to your specific needs round the clock. So I guess it's more of a homestay. But even that label isn't entirely apt because I am here sometimes but not all the time as I am a freelance journalist and most of my work is in New Delhi.



**AMRIT DHILLON**  
Owner, Juniper at Jungalia

**Q: WHY HERE, WHY NOW?**

**A:** I was entranced the moment I first saw the view, felt the stillness and quiet, and heard the baritone mooing of a local farmer's cow amid the birdsong that filled the valley. Why now? Well, the initial plan was to build a tiny one-room getaway for myself. But as a freelance journalist, I could see the future of my profession and it looked bleak as hell. I had to create a new revenue stream. So I went to the bank and plunged deep in debt to build a larger home that could function both as a holiday home and as a homestay. Running Juniper has been great because it's given me a break from words, words, words. Its success has been all the sweeter for being totally unanticipated.

**Q: WHAT THINGS DO** you pride yourself on doing differently?

**A:** Making an effort to ensure that the interiors are classy with pleasing furniture and furnishings. Krishna Chandra, our manager, is the other big distinction. His warmth, attentiveness, good nature and excellent cooking are exemplary and have been singled out by every guest. The food at Juniper is not run of the mill, it's superior.

**Q: WHO IS YOUR** ideal guest?

**A:** I've been lucky in this regard. I have wanted guests to be as enchanted by the place as I am and

they have been, every single one of them. I would like them to treat the place as they would their own home and be friendly and appreciative towards Krishna.

**Q: IS THERE SUCH** a thing as a guest who is better off in a non-boutique, standardised property?

**A:** Probably. Those who want to order six different types of breakfast on the same morning, need lifts for elderly people, some playing facilities for young children and who like the presence of other families around, will probably be better served in a standard hotel.

**Q: WHAT IS THE BEST** guest response you have had? And the most absurd?

**A:** The best? Goodness, far too many to mention. Perhaps the young couple who came to Juniper to celebrate their baby's first birthday, on their own, with no battalion of relatives in attendance.

“This place has come the closest to my imagination of a serene, calm, beautiful holiday place which gets me close to nature without compromising on the comfort of a home,” they wrote.

The most absurd request was from guests who checked in at 11.30pm and demanded that Krishna make them a Jain meal (which he did!).

