



# AN ARTY STAY

THE NEWLY LAUNCHED PARK BAGA RIVER GOA IS A REFRESHING GETAWAY WITH PERSONAL TOUCHES THAT WILL GIVE YOU AN EXPERIENCE THAT IS 'ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY' AS THE BRAND PROMISES.  
BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

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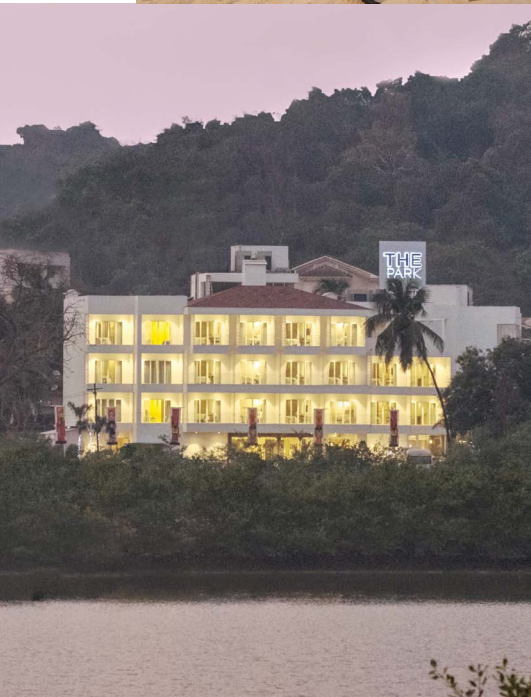
A rather long drive of close to 80 minutes from Goa's Dabolim airport gets me to The Park Baga River Goa and my journey stress evaporates when I see a bunch of smiling faces waiting to welcome me. I am first handed a coconut to break at the entrance, a traditional welcome and offered a welcome drink – tender coconut. Then, I am straight away led to my room – The Terrace Suite and all check-in formalities are done in the room itself.

The Park Hotels is known for being a design-centric brand and this property takes this philosophy several notches higher. My suite is a great example with bird cage inspired lights, high chairs and a practical design that gives me space and comfort with a high degree of luxury. The interiors reflect Portuguese influences with bold accents of yellow and art work from local artists are part of the décor. My room has two balconies and a terrace area too, all furnished with outdoor seating and

a large bathroom with a separate bathing area and a bath tub. Incidentally this property is located adjacent to the beautiful Baga River so you see water but also abundant greenery and coconut palms that you can see from the 28 rooms.

All your meals here are at the 24-hour restaurant, Saltwater, that offers a curated selection of Indian, Continental and Goan cuisine. An alfresco pool-side dining space and an elegant lounge area to relax are also part of the premises. The restaurant serves a buffet breakfast and a-la-carte menus for lunch and dinner and is done up in vibrant hues of yellow and blue with funky light fixtures and overlooks the garden. A small board room is also available for smaller get-together's.

Leisure activities here include the swimming pool and early morning yoga sessions. While the spa is not yet operational, you can avail of some services like foot massage, head, neck and shoulder massage and a sitting back massage between 4 and 8 pm on prior appointment



by the poolside. As part of the turn down service, there are chocolates and sweets in the room as well as a choice of two oils – Peace Oil (a blend of jasmine and geranium to destress you) and Dream Oil (a blend of Ylang Ylang and Lavender to relax you). Dab them on your pulse points, pillow or use them in a bath and you are guaranteed a good night's sleep.

Designed by Anil Badan, all the art displayed here has been handpicked by Priya Paul, Chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd. She says, "Designed with The Park's signature contemporary, cool style and open only to guests above 18 years, the hotel is a cultural hub, a place of escape for those who need some luxurious time off or a cocoon to rest

after a day or night enjoying Goa's beaches or night life."

When you are here do check out the set of 10 colour photographs by Atish Saha, a young photographer and performance artist based in Dhaka, called 'Open Wound' that depicts an artist dressed as a melancholic clown, wandering the streets of Panjim looking for love. Harsh Kadam from inkbrushme Studios in Pune has created a 56 foot long mural running along the poolside whose vivid turquoise hues recall the refreshing scent and colours of the Arabian Sea just minutes away. You will also find art from the likes of Veenu Shah, Siddharth Kerkar, Mahesh Nair, Arunkumar H.G. and Valay Mulji Gada at the property.

'Anything But Ordinary' experiences are available at an extra cost if you want to do something offbeat. If you are like me and want to understand your surroundings better, head to the nearby hillock that gives

you stunning views of Arpura and Baga. If you are here during the evening, you can even catch a stunning sunset over the sea. While Goa is known for its beaches, I recommend that you stop at the Baga river that overlooks the property. Surrounded by mangroves nestled on the edges of the beautiful river that is inhabited by several native and migratory birds, this is a side of Goa that is often unexplored.

The hotel also organizes photography and cookery workshops, and art classes with renowned Goan artist, Subodh Kerkar as well as yoga, kickboxing, surfing, sailing and romantic river cruises. It also helps that a fleet of local taxis are parked right outside the hotel, so you can easily hop into one of those to explore the place on your own. While in Goa a visit to the Friday Mapsua market is also a good way to explore the local sights and sounds. Amidst a cacophony of sounds, there is still an underlying sense of organization here.