



BEYOND COMFORT

NOVOTEL KOCHI INFOPARK IS LOCATED IN AN UPCOMING IT ZONE BUT IT ATTRACTS THE LEISURE TRAVELER TOO. **BY BINDU GOPAL RAO**

Novotel philosophy of 'home away from home'. The welcome drink was interesting too. Called Kulki Sherbat, it is a pineapple drink flavoured with ginger, lime, green chilli and basil seeds and was just what I needed to refresh myself. The 128-key hotel, with signature in-room amenities and Wifi, also includes eight suites and a room designed specifically for the specially-abled. The décor is a perfect mélange of local and international art elements of the city. The reception is large and airy and the colour comes from the wall décor as well as the bright-hued cushions on the sofas.

My room on the fourth level was a Superior Room and at 330 sq ft was spacious and felt just right – not too large or small. Apart from a comfortable king-size bed and a 49 inch smart television, there was a work table, a sofa and a small side table where I saw some local desserts and chocolates waiting for me. The room was well furnished with a cupboard, minibar and a spacious bathroom with a separate shower cubicle. The views from the room were great with undulating greens that are a sight for sore eyes. The other categories of rooms here include

A visit to Kerala is always something to look forward to and the recent launch of Novotel Kochi

Infopark was a perfect reason to go back to God's Own Country. Located in Kochi's IT belt, this is the first international hotel in the Kakkanad IT hub and is away from the humdrum of the city.

This property is a partnership between AccorHotels and the Muthoot Pappachan Group and is a 40 minute drive from Kochi International Airport.

When I arrived here I was given a traditional welcome by the hotel, keeping in mind the

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HOSPITALITY HOTELS



Premier Rooms and Suites. The suites come with a separate living space and larger bathrooms with bathtubs.

Since I was quite hungry after my flight, I headed to The Square, the all-day dining restaurant that offers a wide selection of quintessential Malabari delicacies with a mix of local and international cuisines. The large 106 cover restaurant is bright and airy and has a nice ambience courtesy the natural light that comes in through the large French windows here. The restaurant has a buffet for breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as an extensive a-la-carte menu. There are live action stations where you can see how your food is being made, including a pizzeria that makes fresh pizza and bread too. Executive Chef G.V. Ramesh says, “As this area has several restaurants that serve Kerala food, I decided to keep the food choices as a mix of international and local fare. Of course being in Kerala, there is local food too but we have ensured that the food has a good selection of Western dishes as well.” There is also Hyderabadi Biryani as part of the a-la-carte menu. After all, the Chef is from Hyderabad!

Opposite the restaurant is The Bar that serves a range of single malts, cocktails, mocktails and spirits. However to enjoy Kochi evenings, head to The Sun Deck Bar on the sixth level where you can

tuck in lip-smacking Indian culinary creations and live grills and enjoy a dinner under the clouds by the poolside. Incidentally, this 35 cover space is cozy and intimate and can also be hired for private pool parties and dos. Do have at least one dinner here and it is guaranteed to be an experience like no other. The grills served are quite amazing and are sure to have you feeling well-fed! The Sunday brunch is extensive and with a live band playing, it is a wonderful way to spend your holiday.

The hotel has a swimming pool on the sixth level as well as the 24/7 gym Balance — so health freaks will be happy. In fact the gym offers nice views of the city too so there is an extra motivation to exercise. There are three banqueting spaces that can accommodate about 200 people and a boardroom that can host 14 people. This hotel is also great for families and offers a 50 per cent discount on the second room for two children below 16 years.

There is a special kids menu and a kid’s corner too so children will not be bored here. Also this is an ISO 14001 certified hotel so you know they care about the environment too. Speaking at the launch, Sachin Maheshwary, General Manager, Novotel Kochi, said, “As a growing IT hub and a travel destination, Kochi is an ideal location for travellers



whether they are here to explore the city for a weekend getaway or a family retreat or for business.” And you know exactly why when you are here.

While you are here in Kochi find the time to explore the city’s eclectic culture that is a motley mix of Portuguese, Dutch, Arab, Chinese and Japanese influences. And the best way to do this is to head to Fort Kochi that is steeped in Portuguese and Dutch history. This quaint locale has a mix of sights including the famed Chinese nets. These nets are supposed to have been introduced by Chinese traders way back in the 14th century. This area is also home to St. Francis Church where Vasco-da-Gama was originally buried and Vasco House, his former residence.

Stand at the waterfront and see the fishermen throw the nets and bring their catch to the shore. The sunsets against the nets are magnificent too so it is a good idea to make it here towards the evening. When in Kochi do not forget to stock up on your fill of spices especially pepper and cardamom as well as the famed banana chips. In the summer months, jackfruit chips are a must too. So pack up and head to Kochi – a wonderful time beckons. ■