



KOCHI CALLING

ENJOYING THE VISTAS OF KERALA JUST GOT BETTER WITH THE NEW PLUSH ADDRESS GRAND HYATT KOCHI BOLGATTY, THE FIRST GRAND HYATT IN SOUTH INDIA.
BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

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Bolgatty Island in Ernakulam district of Kerala is a small oasis that you can reach crossing over a bridge.

Home to India's only international marina, the island is a great way to explore the sounds and sights of Kochi. Now, 26 acres are occupied by the Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, a waterfront urban resort that overlooks the backwaters of the beautiful Vembanad Lake.

The first thing that struck me here was the expansive space and how it has been personalized with bold and compelling works of art. Perhaps an ode to Kochi that is so renowned for its art and cultural heritage, the lobby is done up in gold and beige tones. The large light fixtures, over the top chairs and textured seating make for a stunning first impression. Add the view of the lake on one side and the city hugged by swaying coconut palms on the other and you know this property is different. Incidentally this happens to be the hotel

with the largest number of keys in Kerala and is next to the 1744 Bolgatty Palace, one of the oldest existing Dutch palaces in the country. The eclectic art forms throughout the hotel add a touch of class here.

The hotel has a total of 264 rooms with 38 suites and four villas. All the rooms come with complimentary Wi-Fi, access to the 24 hour fitness centre and pool. The standard rooms come with an option of a king bed or two twin beds and have a view of the Marine Drive. Spread over 41 square metres of space, the room has an attached walk-in shower and bathtub. Equipped with swanky 49" Smart IPTV, air conditioning control and more, this is where smart automation technology is seen whether it is in the sensor based lighting, motion sensors to control curtains or tapping the door to enter inside.

Some rooms also have outstanding views of the sprawling backwaters of the Vembanad Lake. The suites here are expansive, ranging from 81 to 240 square metres and have separate living



room and come with a kitchenette or terrace. The Grand Club Rooms are two or three bedroom villas spread over 214-287 square metres and also include perks like two way airport transfers and are equipped with a private kitchen and dining area, separate living area, private balcony overlooking the Vembanad lake, library cum study room, private plunge pool and more. And if you are looking for uber luxury, the Presidential Suite with its Middle Eastern theme redefines the good life.

The restaurants and bars at Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty offer an array of options to satisfy your gourmet senses. The best part is that several eating spaces come with a patio and al fresco seating so you can enjoy lake views with stunning sunsets while you nibble on local delicacies. The coffee shop at the lobby level is laid out like a lounge and has private dining spaces by the waterside. The Pool Bar adjacent to the

swimming pool is the place to chill with a signature cocktail. The Colony Clubhouse & Grill is a rooftop bar where you can enjoy a bird's eye view of the backwaters and Kochi's skyline.

To sample some authentic Kerala fare head to Malabar Café, a relaxed restaurant that redefines the region's age-old, treasured recipes. Do try the wheat pancake filled with minced chicken called Kozhi Pathiri and the Local Market Thali which has a selection of local food served in steel plate and bowls. The Grand Lobby Lounge is available for some class of rooms and is a plush place to chill. If you want to try international flavours check out the Thai Soul, a poolside restaurant inspired by Bangkok's street side where Chef Suppatra's take on Thai street food classics are a must. Do try the Pla rad prik, a crispy fish fillet with chilli garlic, green peppercorns and Num keang sai made with shaved ice, Thai syrup and

tropical fruit compote.

Interestingly the hotel is suitable not just for business travelers (well it also has three helipads) but also families. Health watchers can head to the advanced Fitness Centre that is open 24 hours and is equipped with state-of-the-art latest cardio and strength-training equipment and personal trainers who are always ready to help. Else head out for a morning yoga session at the waterside lawns, enjoy a game of lawn tennis, take a dip in the expansive pool or around the landscaped gardens. There is also a separate pool for children and an indoor pool at the mezzanine level. To relax and rejuvenate head to Śāntata (meaning inner peace, harmony and tranquility in Sanskrit) the in-house spa that has both Western and Ayurvedic therapies. Do try the signature treatments that have been developed in-house. Being in spice country, the Spice Symphony uses a



curated blend of oil prepared in-house combining many Indian spices.

The Arabian Sea Salt Ritual, Absolute Aroma Therapy and Harmony are other therapeutic treatments that are unique to this spa. The Island Gardens that envelope the resort will thrill the nature lover in you. Kids can pick fruits at the mango orchard in the season or chase butterflies in the garden that has cabanas to relax.

Or simply head to the reading garden with a book or learn more about the spices in the spice garden. A Waterside Amphitheater on the lawns is the place where dance, theatre, Carnatic music recitals and traditional Kalarippayattu and Kathakali arts are performed. Children also have designated play areas complete with interactive indoor and outdoor activities with a sandpit, multipurpose sports court and activity room on site. With over 3,000 square

metres of space including a grand ballroom and meeting rooms, the hotel is ideal for both weddings and meetings. The Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre is adjacent and has over 6,500 square metres of indoor and 4,000 square metres of outdoor spaces.

And since you are in the culturally rich city of Kochi do make time to soak in some local experiences that are curated by the hotel and are available at an additional cost. A visit to Fort Kochi that still has a Dutch hangover is the place to head for cafés, museums, old churches and colonial houses. Take a tuk-tuk tour with a local expert while you stop at major sightseeing places or visit the Elephant Training Center Visit and go for a spice



walk with a naturalist. My personal favourite however was a visit to the fishing village of Kumbalangi where you can see the Chinese fishing nets on the shores and also tour the village to come up close with what village life is all about. The hotel also organizes an ancient spice market guided visit with the Chef that will give you some great insights into Malabar cuisine and its aromatic ingredients. ■