

KOCHI STAYS



GO ARTY

KNOWN FOR THE KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE THAT
RECENTLY CONCLUDED ITS SIXTH EDITION,

the properties in Fort Kochi ensure
your stay is as filled with art too.



BINDU GOPAL RAO

OPPOSITE: At The Postcard Mandalay Hall, contemporary art brings local narratives into the guest experience.

THIS PAGE: The Malabar House pairs antiques and contemporary art in a collection shaped by Fort Kochi's layered history.



PAST MEETS PRESENT

THE POSTCARD MANDALAY HALL takes art to another level with five 'galleries' that are not just rooms; they are curated spaces where the walls, furnishings, and installations tell their own stories. Artist Sushanta Maharana explores the idea that heaven always existed alongside the realities of earth in one room, while Anju Acharya's artworks on the walls are in another. Another room is a nod to artist Dibin Thilakan's *Ode to Home* artworks, while artist Gopal Samantray's work makes a statement in another. Artist Giuseppe Stampone's artworks drawn with blue and black BIC pens are seen in the room on the top floor.

Similarly, Old Harbour Hotel is a late-18th-century heritage building located in the heart of Fort Kochi, directly opposite the iconic Chinese fishing nets. Dating back to 1788, the structure has been painstakingly restored by renowned Swiss architect Karl Damschen, preserving its soul while elevating its architectural character. "The hotel features 13 uniquely designed rooms, each furnished with period pieces, antiques, and carefully curated contemporary Indian art. Its serene courtyards and verandas create a timeless atmosphere that blends colonial charm with understated luxury," says Edgar Pinto, Founder, Old Harbour Hotel.



FORT KOCHI'S LAYERED HISTORY HAS LONG ATTRACTED COLLECTORS as much as travellers, and few properties embody that dialogue better than The Malabar House. Conceived around architecture, contemporary craft and a carefully assembled collection of art and objects, the hotel was never intended to be merely a heritage stay. Instead, every antique, painting and handcrafted intervention is part of a larger conversation with Fort Kochi itself.

"The collection is a dialogue with the surrounding world," says Founder and Curator Joerg Drechsel. "It is a personal story, a dialectic and emotional process." That philosophy runs through the property, where period furniture sits alongside commissioned contemporary works, and local craftsmanship shares space with carefully chosen collectibles.



The *Batavia* model at Eighth Bastion by CGH Earth pays tribute to Kochi's centuries-old maritime legacy.

Rather than freezing the collection in time, Drechsel continues to commission artists and evolve it. "Today the input of reflective contemporary art is much stronger than in the beginning. We dialogue with artists and commission artworks."

Drechsel is sceptical of hotels that use art as little more than decoration. "If a hotel group engages a curator and gives him the freedom to tell a story, bravo," he says. "Unfortunately, it is often only decoration with little substance and context." At The Malabar House, the collection instead reflects what he describes as Kerala's composite culture, shaped by influences from East and West, and by centuries of trade and migration that made Fort Kochi one of India's most cosmopolitan ports.

Forte Kochi is another property where Fort Kochi's layered past and the Biennale's contemporary energy meet in one intimate, story-rich space. The restored colonial mansion on Princess Street, once home to a prominent Jewish trading family, gathers European traces in its stained-glass windows, arches, timber shutters and tiled floors, creating rooms that feel like carefully held fragments of another era. Most of the art that is presented here is from owner John Paul's personal collection, and some artefacts were picked from antique stores in Jew Street. Likewise, Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Cochin, is an iconic property that immerses guests in the history, culture, and artistry of Kochi. Perched on Willingdon Island, the heritage wing and interiors celebrate Kochi's history.

"These feature carefully preserved artefacts, black-and-white photographs, and metal sculptures that tell the story of the island's conception and evolution. The lobby houses a significant artwork tracing Bristow's history, while live cultural performances bring Kerala's vibrant traditions to life," says a property spokesperson.



Marine-inspired artworks at Brunton Boatyard echo Kochi's enduring relationship with the sea.



spirit of Fort Kochi. "Our property has specific nautical themes that you can see in the many maritime-themed art pieces across. We have the model of the *Batavia* as a tribute to Kochi's rich maritime past. The Dutch East India Company merchant ship, whose tragic maiden voyage became one of maritime history's most compelling tales, is in the foyer. Dutch spice routes featuring the food from the different regions that were Dutch colonies are part of the cuisine," adds Shenoi. 🍽️

HERITAGE VIBES

AND AS YOU HEAD TOWARDS THE HISTORIC HARBOUR OF FORT KOCHI, Brunton Boatyard by CGH Earth offers front-row access to the creative pulse of the Kochi Biennale. Built on the site of a former colonial shipyard, the hotel reflects Kochi's colonial past, with architecture that beautifully blends Portuguese, Dutch, and British influences. "At Brunton Boatyard, we take you back in time with an interesting collection of art. From hanging *punkahs*, ornate spice boxes, antique tea cabinets, palanquins, original paintings, lithographs, and historical maritime art, each space within the property is an ode to Kochi's tryst with the arts. With David Hall, a restored heritage Dutch bungalow, being in close distance, we ensure that guests can understand arts more intimately, as our guests can visit the gallery that is part of CGH," says Radhakrishna Shenoi, Assistant Vice President, CGH Earth Experience Hotels.

Kochi's Dutch influence is seen at Eighth Bastion by CGH Earth, a property that perfectly blends design, history, and the contemporary

OPPOSITE, ABOVE LEFT: Inspired by Kerala's traditional rice barges, Rice Boat at Taj Malabar Resort & Spa, Cochin, celebrates the state's coastal culinary heritage.

OPPOSITE, BELOW: Archival portraits and historic artworks at Brunton Boatyard by CGH Earth narrate Kochi's layered past.

