



Travel Links

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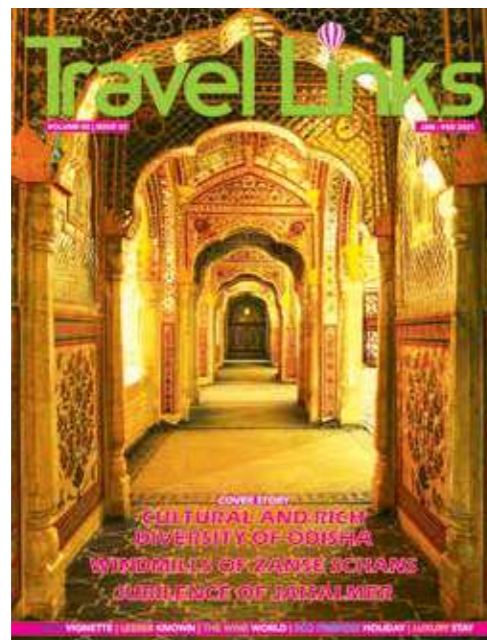
**Bengaluru
Reviews**

A Kutch Memoir

**The Land Where Kos,
Friluftsliv, Vikings Thrive**

Norway

LENS VIGNETTE | LESSER KNOWN | THE WINE WORLD | ECO FRIENDLY HOLIDAY | LUXURY STAY



Travel Links

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Plan now, plane later series brings to Norway, where every Norwegian is true to the sustainable living. They follow the philosophy of Kos. "Kos" is a traditional Norwegian concept which encourages you to opt for cozy living, unpretentious and colourful styles, and a lot of good time. Enjoying a cup of coffee and the freshly baked cinnamon bun is as much kos as is going on a hike or a skiing trip.

With wellness exploring the different ways culture and nation strive for a healthy lifestyle, Thailand is home to the confluence of healing and urbanity. Meditations, massages, yoga, art- Thailand has it all. Added to UNESCO's Intangible Culture Heritage of Humanity list, Nuad Thai or the Thai massage is one of the most famous and revered therapies of the Thai culture.

The travelogue to the White Rann of Kutch in Gujrat, the white salt desert, might fittingly be called the icing on the cake of a Kutch peregrination. This white salt expanse could be mistaken for ice crystals or snow accumulation if viewed from a distance. Those who have read 'Love across the Salt Desert' by K.N Daruwalla, would recall Najab crossing this very salt desert to meet his love Fatima across the border.

The 'Garden City, Bengaluru is the perfect place to enjoy a slice of slow life even amidst bustling tech parks. The mere name of one of India's most popular, populated, and well-loved cities rustles up images of tech-parks and slow living all at once. Blessed with breezy, gorgeous weather all-round the year; the city is a quirky mix of old-world charm and digital diaspora. Bengaluru is delectably calm and cosmopolitan at the same time. Also, enjoy our 'staycation' reviews of two hotels in the city.

Stay Safe and stay tuned, so that we can all fulfill our travelling dreams soon.

Stay Tuned.

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THE LAND WHERE KOS,
FRILUFTSLIV,
VIKINGS THRIVE NORWAY



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MADE ME UNDERSTAND THE
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The Land Where Kos, Friluftsliv, Vikings Thrive

Norway

Glowing and growing with warmth, care, togetherness, and nature, Norway is the epitome of enjoying the moment by being present in it. They even have a bachelor’s degree course on it! Read on to find out more about this nation as sweet as berries in our 3-part series on the Scandinavian countries. We are gladly calling it- “Scandinavia on your list: plan now, plane later”.

SRISHTI VERMA

The world is a beautiful place full of life and joys. While most of us get busy with our fast-paced lives, we forget the splendour that the little details offer. When was the last time you stopped to admire the lush greenery, and flowers and fruits in all colours imaginable? Do you remember the last time you sat down by a lake or a river, and listened to the sound of water, felt it touching your toes and taking away all the tensions you hold within?

Do you believe that a life in harmony with nature will bring happiness in every nook and corner? Will protecting and nurturing the mother Earth like we protect our children save it? What about fun times?

Welcome to Scandinavia. Located in the north, Scandinavian countries have become the quintessential of happiness in collaboration with nature. Scandinavia is a group of three countries- Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Norway is dubbed as the “Land of the Midnight Sun” because the Sun here does not set during the summer months. The



Autumn colours at Maihaugen, Lillehammer- Norway's largest open-air museum. The museum offers more than 200 buildings from different eras and invites you to exciting museum experiences.

Photo: Frk. Mags /Foap - VisitNorway.com



Waffles on Gaustatoppen- Do not miss the delicious waffles sold at DNT cabin at Gaustatoppen. Photo: Thomas Rasmus Skaug - VisitNorway.com

Norwegians love getting out in the nature and practicing what they call Friluftsliv.

capital Oslo is home to most population. Norwegians love getting out in the nature and practicing what they call Friluftsliv. If you believe the weather is not in your favour, think again. There is nothing like bad weather here. Put on the right set of clothes and out you go into the beautiful nature.

Sharing borders with Norway is Sweden. The most populous area in Sweden (and Scandinavia) is the capital Stockholm. It is famous for the world’s first open-air museum, and the world’s largest hemispherical building. There are hiking routes, urbanity combined with seaside charm, and cinnamon buns in this “Edible Country”.

Denmark is the land of “Hygge”.



Alpine Skiing Security in Øyer, Eastern Norway. Photo: Fredrik Myhre / visitnorway.com





Akrafjorden and Fjord cruise- Akrafjorden is a fjord in Vestland county, Norway.
Photo: Espen Mills - Visit Haugesund



Jostedals glacier- Walking towards the Jostedalen glacier and soaking in the nature's beauty.



Freshwater Fishing- Norway has thousands of lakes where you go fishing.



Autumn colours in Trondheim, located in Middle Norway.
Photo: Foap - VisitNorway.com

The Danes have it all- from urban cities and islands to street architecture and forests. This is country with 444 islands, a driverless metro and castles right out of your imagination. The capital Copenhagen is home to the renowned children's writer, Hans C Anderson.

Ranked among the finest countries in the world for social factors, Scandinavia is a proud model of how getting out in the nature, enjoying the simple pleasures in life, and living in accordance with nature can benefit the population as a whole.

In our three-part series on Scandinavia, we are taking you to a word-trip through this group of nations, bound by love for life and nature. In this article, we would cover Norway.

With the Arctic Circle crossing the country almost halfway through, Norway is a Scandinavian country sharing borders with Sweden, Finland and Russia. As nature lends Norway a vivid range of enchanting colours throughout the year, the people here delve into the experiences one at a time.

Though some people believe that

Kos” is a traditional Norwegian concept which encourages you to opt for cosy living, unpretentious and colourful styles, and a lot of good time. Enjoying a cup of coffee and freshly baked cinnamon bun is as much kos as is going on a hike or a skiing trip.

Norway should be visited during summers, Norwegians have a different opinion. When in Norway, you can be witness to the mesmerising phenomenon of the Northern Lights. As the light dances in the winter sky in various hues of green and blue, you can relax and calm down.

Of Reindeers and Frozen

Do your children love the movie “Frozen”? Who doesn't, right? Feel the forever Christmassy feelings as you spend a day with a reindeer herder family and observe their flock. There are over 200,000 reindeers in Norway. During their annual migration in April and May, it is a sight to behold. Reindeer meat is cherished here too.

Happy Times Start with Kos
Norwegians are true to their living. They



Reindeer- Norway is home to over 200,000 reindeers. Photo: Christian Roth Christensen - VisitNorway.com



Djupadalen- The recreational area is often used for hiking throughout the year.
Photo: Jone Torkelsen - Visit Haugesund

A waffle is as much kos as is a hot cocoa cup. You can cook waffles over a campfire and create “Bålvaffel”. Kakevaffel is a delight. Imagine a pile of waffles with cake being vanilla custard. This is the Kakevaffel for you.



Preparing gourmet meals outdoors- This couple is outdoors enjoying nature all year round and spends much of the autumn harvesting what the nature provides. Photo: Christian Roth Christensen - VisitNorway.com

follow the philosophy of Kos. “Kos” is a traditional Norwegian concept which encourages you to opt for cosy living, unpretentious and colourful styles, and a lot of good time. Enjoying a cup of coffee and freshly baked cinnamon bun is as much kos as is going on a hike or a skiing trip.

If skating and strolling give you peace, it is kos. Is reading a book to your child kos? You bet it is. Music, food, knitting, snowboarding- anything that gives you pleasure is kos. Simple eco-friendly pleasure.

A waffle is as much kos as is a hot cocoa cup. You can cook waffles over a campfire and create “Bålvaffel”. Kakevaffel is a delight. Imagine a pile of waffles with cake being vanilla custard. This is the Kakevaffel for you.



Couple relaxing in a hammock over a stream in Southern Norway- This is Kos and Friluftsliv wrapped into one.
Photo: Magnus Furset - Visit Norway

Norwegians support voluntary work and call it Dugnad. Volunteers come together for outdoor spring cleaning, maintenance of schools, and arranging sports for children. At the end, you get waffles. Hence, the reward and highlight Dugnadsvaffel.

Friluftsliv: Breathe in the Nature, Breathe out the Stress

As one of the happiest countries in the world, Norway has a secret to share. People here participate in an active outdoor life. This is called Friluftsliv. Believe me, you are going to love this.

With the Norwegian Sea in the west, Barents Sea in top north, and North Sea at south, Norway is home to all sorts of outdoor activities. The Scandinavian Mountains, Lofoten Islands, fjords, and various forms in which nature manifests itself- Norway is the definition of Friluftsliv. People here love to disconnect from the daily hustle bustle and connect with the nature.

Several kindergartens promote outdoor activities and children can spend 80% of their time in the nature. In Norway, you can take a bachelor's degree in friluftsliv.



Viking stories at Lofotr- Norway has a rich heritage of Vikings. Photo: Roger Johansen - @nordnorge.com

Government sponsored libraries are present too, from where you can borrow outdoor gear and venture into the absorbing beauty that the landscape offers.

Do you want to know a few mental and physical health benefits that it offers? Anxiety, cognition, that constant stiffness between your shoulder blades and back, better blood pressure readings. You cannot enlist the advantages that friluftsliv is going to have for you and your brood.

Sustainable Living, Sustainable Tourism

Norwegians believe in living sustainably. They utilise the Sun and water as resources, and reduce their carbon footprint. From agricultural practices to traveling, everything is done in a nature-healthy manner. It is not uncommon to see electric vehicles here. They even have a floating solar station! Norway is renowned the world over for As Norwegians believe



Guests at Trasti Trine- Tourists and locals come here to go join a tenting excursion, eat a 12-course dinner, attend cooking classes, stay the night or buy bread baked in a stone oven. Photo: Sara Johannessen - VisitNorway.com

They utilise the Sun and water as resources, and reduce their carbon footprint. From agricultural practices to traveling, everything is done in a nature-healthy manner

in the right to access, they practice “Allemannsretten”. As per the Outdoor Recreation Act in Norway, everybody has the right to experience nature. Even on privately owned areas. The rules are simple- you have to be thoughtful, considerate, respectful towards nature and people, and pick your trash. Easy, right? Do them right and experience the bountiful gifts of nature in Norway.

Kos goes hand in hand with sustainable and eco-friendly living. You can connect with the nature through food as you sit by a fireplace. The Inderøy peninsula in Norway has received the certificate of Sustainable Destination. Life here is a based-on nature. The many sustainable destinations in Norway offer more than an unforgettable cultural experience.

Vikings and Berries: the Norwegian Bowl of Fun and Culture

We cannot talk about Norway and miss the Vikings. The strong Viking history in

Norway can transform your holiday into an adventure. A Viking was a tradesman, farmer, or sea warrior from the Nordic region who partook in expeditions and raids during the era between 800 and 1050. Characterised by their courageous and fatalistic attitude, Viking were as good warriors as they were peaceful traders and farmers. In the Norwegian capital Oslo, you can walk around and smell the tar from the world’s best preserved Viking vessels at the Viking Ship Museum.

Hundreds of orchards and farm give Norwegian fruits have a taste of their own. From apples, pears, and plums, to blackcurrant, strawberries, and cherries- Norway’s mostly unpolluted climate makes ideal conditions for fruit and berries to develop. Norwegians want their food to be ecological and locally sourced. Various food tours are organised where tourists can experience the Norwegian hospitality and see how the food they eat is sown and harvested. You can also find stalls by the roadside selling freshly harvested fruits for eating on the go.


Takeaway

Friluftsliv and Kos are strongly interlinked. In Norway, there is no such thing as bad weather. Pick the right clothes and off you go! Seeing the opportunities of the distinct seasons, Norwegians are trained to be dynamic, and prefer to spend plenty of time in wilderness.

If you can open the door and step outside, or sit by a lake, or lay on the grass, taking in the vast views and the tiny details that Norway offers, you have accomplished and accepted the Norwegian life.

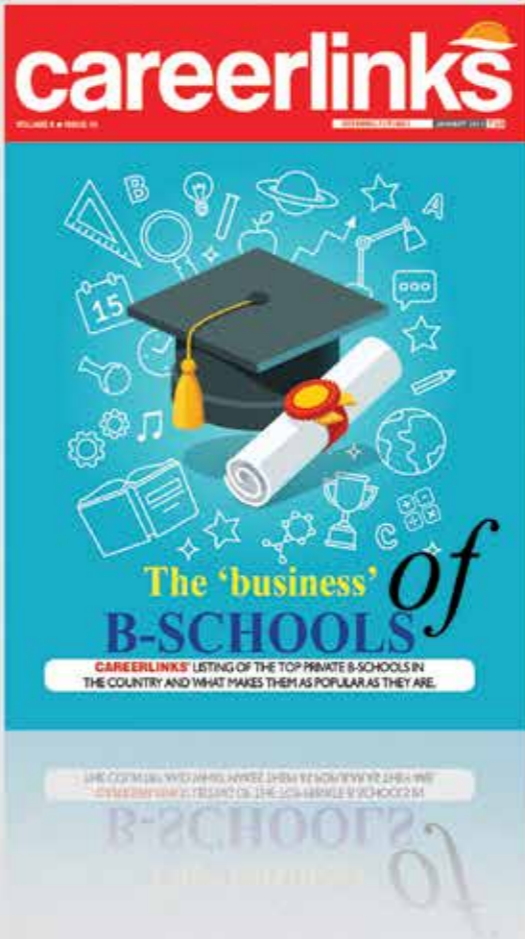
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In the following issues of Travel Links, we would be taking you through a reader-friendly trip of the other two Scandinavian countries.

Till then, stay in, stay safe. 

SRISHTI VERMA

She is a Delhi-based freelance writer. She loves reading and travelling, with a special place for lofty mountains in her heart. When not writing, she can be found working on her book and looking at pictures from when she was 2 feet tall.



ALL YOUR
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Buddha statues at Wat Pho, Thailand

Healing for All Times THAILAND

When was the last time you focussed on your breath? Or had a massage to ease the tensions you carry in your shoulders and back? How about learning these from the best?

With wellness exploring the different ways culture and nation strive for a healthy lifestyle, Thailand is home to the confluence of healing and urbanity. Meditations, massages, yoga, art- Thailand has it all.

The people, the land, and the culture of Thailand are intricately linked with each other in the practices followed here.

Added to UNESCO's Intangible Culture Heritage of Humanity list, Nuad Thai or the Thai massage is one of the most famous and

revered therapies of the Thai culture. In Nuad Thai, a person stretches and moves their limbs with the help of a trained therapist.

The birthplace of traditional Thai massage is Wat Pho. This temple is known for the reclining Buddha figure.

When you enter the temple, you witness a series of images inscribed on the walls and pillars. These depict the traditional medicine and "sen" or energy lines.

If you want to master the technique as well, you are welcomed to participate in the comprehensive 5-day course. Want to be a professional? A 30-days course at Wat Pho is all you need.

Also known as Thailand's first university

where traditions of Thai massage and medicine were taught, Wat Pho was built by an Ayutthaya period ruler, a long time before Bangkok was established as the capital. The Grand Palace next to it was later built during the reign of King Rama 1. The king also ordered the complete restoration of the temple in 1788. Following another major renovation during the reign of King Rama 3, the temple was turned into a learning centre for all.

Wat Pho became the knowledge centre about traditional Thai medicine. The massage school founded here still exists. You will find many stone statues around it depicting various massage techniques. Wat Pho is



Wat Pho- The serene centre in the bustling Bangkok



The Thai massage is primarily based on an acupressure system of Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine with an added touch of yoga



Lotus-The symbol of enlightenment in Buddhism

known as the birthplace of Thai massage, with massage courses open to anyone willing to learn.

Visit here between 8 in the morning to 6 in the evening for a relieving massage.

But a massage shouldn't be all that you experience in this beautiful nation.

How about leaning into your subconscious for well-being?

Offering a multitude of benefits, meditation can help you tap into your internal reserves of health and calmness.

In Buddhism, meditation is woven into daily life. It can be as simple as sitting down for a minute each morning and focussing on your breath.

Close to the Chao Phraya River, Wat Pho is easily accessible by road and mass rapid transit system. You can get down at Sanam Chai MRT station and take a 5-minute walk to the temple. You would notice that there are



71 chedis built in the temple complex. These contain the ashes of the royal family, while the 20 bigger ones contain the relics of Buddha.

The temple is lit up at night and the reflective mirrors are brought to life in the silence of the city and the lights of the Wat Pho. Isn't that what life is all about- finding the light within you!

As you sit down and relax, you scan your body for tensions. Feel that tightness between your shoulders? The frown on your forehead; Let all of it go. The body feels light and almost transparent as if accepting the kindness that you bestow it with.

Focus your awareness to a small point in the centre of your body. While this can be quite a task initially, you will notice that practicing works in a few days.

As the pandemic has gripped the world by fear and gloom, a lot of activities can help us relax and centre ourselves.

Observing and being present can help you be mindful and enjoy the process.

Staying in and staying safe is the mantra these days. While it can take a toll on your emotions, it is important to feel them and master them.

Safety and health are a priority for the locals as well as international travellers looking to visit Thailand once borders open up. A unique certification scheme has been launched by the tourism and health authorities of Thailand. This would help prepare the Thai tourism industry for recovery and enhance the confidence among tourists.

Under the Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration: SHA programme, establishments that apply, such as hotels, restaurants, tourism attractions, transport services, etc, will undergo strict inspection. They will then be assigned the SHA logo to serve as a mark of quality certification of the service standards. This logo will be issued by TAT with a validity period of two years.

Till then, stay healthy, stay safe :) 



My 'tete' with Chef Pawan Bisht, made me understand the grounded person, his responsibilities, and his passion to stick to his roots. He also firmly believes that opportunities knock the doors of those who try hard enough.

PAYAL SAHNI, THE EDITOR

Chef Pawan Bisht is currently the Corporate Chef and R&D Executive of One8 Commune by Mr. Virat Kohli in New Delhi. He hails from a small village named Chhoi, close to Corbett park 'Ramnagar' of Nainital district (Uttarakhand). With an experience of over 11 years chef Pawan is known as Dark Horse of the Indian culinary industry.

His mantra however is, that cooking is an emotional process and if you do not cook each dish with your heart, it will certainly not come out well.

Tell us a bit about the real person behind this corporate persona.

I am from a farmer's family, if not a Chef I would have been a Farmer of this modern era, which is still a plan once I will go back to. I foresee myself doing farming only with a functional café or restaurant in the hills with Farm to fork concept and promoting local cuisines of Uttarakhand.

I love to sit on river banks which are close to my house for hours and appreciate



nature, the catching games are still the same which you play on the trees, in some parts the cooking is still done on chulas, milk in villages are still boiled on a low flame, food comes from the kitchen garden, fresh and organic, after finishing games in the evening (in the rice or wheat fields) we still share the food in same plates with our friends, kids still gather in the night next to grandparents and ask them for the stories, hide and seek. And I am still the same person who loves Mother Nature more than manmade equipment.

As farmers, we grow almost all kinds of crops. The benefit of foothills is that you have ample opportunities to do experiments with the crops and can grow different types of crops. We deal with rice, wheat, different kind of pulses, vegetables and my favorites are Leeches and Mango orchards. I am a Chef in the city with my heart in the hills.

Q What inspired you to become a chef?

My mom has seen lots of changes in her life. The day she got married there used to be Desi Chula in the houses, then after few years, she got kerosene stoves which after few years converted into gober gas (cow dung gas setup) and finally into L.P.G. I was in school and was observing all these changes in her life but the food still tasted the same. I asked her mom how you manage to control all these changes and still can cook the same tasty food. She said "you just need heat as a medium of cooking doesn't matter in which form or where it comes from. If you will be able to control that heat in any form it comes you can also cook and rest experience will teach you" This was the first thing which interested me in cooking.



Q How did the first opportunity breakthrough?

I was passed out in 2009 from IHM Mumbai and it was a bad phase for the hospitality sector because of the recession. I did not get anything for almost 10 months and a few of us were struggling and earning our pennies through waiting in different functions (birthday parties, cocktail parties, marriages, get-togethers etc.) We used to earn around Rs. 200 – 250 for 5 to 6 hours and after 10 months of struggle I got selected for Chef's training program at Olive bar and kitchen and that's how I entered the hospitality sector and never looked back since then.

Coming back to One8 Commune, can



you tell us about its inception and the key person behind it Mr. Virat Kohli.

Mr. Virat has always been keen towards creating a place of comfort for everyone. One8 commune is a live example of this. The place depicts his life journey, his personal food choices, and his love for both food and cricket. Being a renowned beloved cricketer, athlete, and young icon, people have loved his charm and always are inquisitive to know more about him. His fans' support gives us a chance to make

this place bigger and better every day. His ideas about the food from his well-traveled journey across the globe helped me a lot to come up with a menu that is loved by everyone now.

Q What are the aims and aspirations for One8 Commune going forward?
We want to spread the art of commune dining across India, so that friends and families can come close while making it a Pan – Indian brand.

Q Top 5 meal recommendations.
Mushroom and truffle oil dim sums, Red and white quinoa salad, Gambas al ajillo, Sushi, Sliders, Napoli pizza, Black chicken, Burrito salad, and the list will go on

Q Top 5 cocktail recommendations.
Bronx, Gloria Negron, 18th era sour, Espresso martini, pure vessel of evil is a few of my favorites too.



Q What sets this apart from the other chains?

One8 Commune is not just a restaurant. It is a product of which shows passion, experience, and expertise of years that has been amalgamated into a place of love and unique flavors.

Q Any personal dreams that you would want to accomplish?

My restaurant in the hills and in metro cities serving Uttarakhand Cuisines which is one of the healthiest cuisines India has.

Last but not least where do you're true spirit lie and what you would like to tell the young budding chefs who want to make it big.

Hard work (don't wish for it work for it), be passionate, leave your comfort zone, trust yourself, ready to accept failure and learn from them and then rise again.

Cocktails

BY PAWAN BISHT

Zingy Zest

Preparation time:

05 minutes

Serving:

01 people

Ingredients:

Vodka (of your choice) 60 ml
Blood orange 1 no.
Ice 1 no.
(preferably large sphere ice ball as it melts slowly)

Sparkling water 1 cup
Fresh basil 1-2 leaves

Method

- Cut the orange into half. Take out the juice from one half orange and thinly slice the other half.
- Now in a glass of your choice add the ice. Pour the juice of other half orange. Leave crushed basil leaf in the glass and pour sparkling water into it.
- At this point pour the vodka into the glass give it a stir and garnish with fresh or dehydrated orange slice. Enjoy your drink.

Fizzy Gin

Preparation time:

05 minutes

Serving:

01 people

Ingredients:

Gin of your choice 60 ml
Fresh lime juice 30 ml
Egg white 1 no.
Rich simple syrup 15 ml
Soda to top up

Method

- Take a shaker and add gin, fresh lime juice, syrup, egg white. Shake it nicely for 10 to 15 sec.
- Now add the ice cube to the shaker and shake it till the drink is chilled properly.
- Now strain the drink and pour it in the glass. Top up with soda. Garnish with edible flower and enjoy your drink.



A Kutch Memoir

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

Ever since the 26th of Jan 2001, I've always wanted to take a peek into the state of Gujarat. And the opportunity came 20 years later. Rightly said by someone that good things take time, because this turned out to be a good thing indeed. Major portions of the state of Gujarat had been shattered and were in ruins after the deadly earthquake of Jan 2001, and why I associate with it is because my father was there at that time, and sometimes he recounts how he and his team worked 16-18 hours a day

for damage control, relief work and rescue operations.

Now 2021 may not be the ideal year for travelling, as your sub conscience would ask a lot of uneasy questions (on a personal as well as social level) if you plan travelling in the middle of a pandemic. But one who is passionate enough and zealous about it, can't be kept tie down for long. And so, with all precautions in place as listed out in various government health advisories, this step was taken (with permission from my sub conscience), and Kutch was chosen as the place of interest.

Kandla airport or Kandla Aerodome looks no more than a makeshift airport with bare minimum facilities and bare minimum staff. You would have definitely seen more fancy bus stations. The number of passengers arriving at this airport is quite small which is probably why I noticed only those smaller sized bombardier aircrafts frequent this airport. The number of flights is limited too and the airport shuts down at 6pm. The airport is nevertheless a vital one as Kandla is one of the biggest sea ports in India, and India's biggest in terms of volume of cargo traded / shipped, thus officials and

other logistical necessities need to access Kandla as a regulation.

Flying from Delhi to Kandla is a little under 2 hours, and the approach prior to landing in Kandla gives you the glimpses of Kutch which testify the vast extent of Kutch, the biggest district in India, measuring well over 45000 square kilometres. Kutch in the literal sense means something that intermittently becomes wet and dry. That's exactly what happens to the Rann of Kutch, the vast salt marsh which becomes wet during the monsoons and dries up thereafter leaving bare a huge expanse of snow-white salt desert that stretches across an area of around 7500 square kilometers, making it one of the biggest salt deserts in the world. The view made anticipation of white desert visit even more unbearable.

There are a few good luxury accommodation options available quite close to the airport such as Radisson and Holiday Village Resort at Gandhidham. Holiday village resort was to be our dugout for a week. A beautiful resort constructed in Rajasthani style architecture (as the original owner had



Rajasthani connections), which acts as an oasis in the middle of a desert, away from the hustle and bustle of city streets and noisy market places. The resort showcases palatial architectural designs spread across 20 acres of well-manicured lawns which are further embellished by fountains and pools and an adventure park. Certainly, a great place to feel very relaxed and a great base for an exploration trip across the entire district of Kutch.

The following day, the resort staff advocated on visiting a beautiful Jain temple in Derasar (Mundra), located around 35 kilometers from Gandhidham. I'd never been to a Jain temple before, so visiting the Shree Bhadreswar Jain Tirth in Daresar in Mundra was a completely novel experience for me. It turned out to be extraordinarily beautiful. It was divinely beautiful. This holy site is around 2500 years old (it is believed to be one of the oldest Jain temples in India) and the temple structure has been renovated after the devastation caused by the earthquake in 2001. Complex carvings all around the fortifying walls as well as within the temple





compound are fascinating to see. Layer after layer of elaborate carvings of various designs go all around the exterior perimeter of the temple, all the way from the ground level to the top. The effort to carve into the marble in such a fashion would have been nothing less than herculean. Mahavir Jain's statue is placed in the central temple while a lot of other small temples built connectedly in a concentric manner around it, showcase other deities and gods. It was interesting to note Ganesha's sculpture carved on some of the pillars. The expressions on these Ganesh sculptures were rather different from the calm and cherubic ones that we see in conventional temples. There's quite a bit one can learn about the Jain history and Jain culture over here. A beautiful temple such as this deserves much more attention from the tourist eye and I hope that would happen in the future.

The Swami Narayan temple in Bhuj is another majestic piece of architecture. Our driver Kalu Ram, insisted that we must pay visit this temple in Bhuj during our stay in Gandhidham. Bhuj being around 60 kms from Gandhidham was a comfortable drive through small towns and villages. One of the villages has big houses, but nobody lives there as everyone has settled abroad. An empty village with great houses, a perfect



The Swami Narayan temple in Bhuj is another majestic piece of architecture. Our driver Kalu Ram, insisted that we must pay visit this temple in Bhuj during our stay in Gandhidham. Bhuj being around 60 kms from Gandhidham was a comfortable drive through small towns and villages.



setting for ghost movies. Another village, Ratnal, on the way to Bhuj has a unique identity as this village holds the record for the greatest number of trucks and truck owners in all of Asia. On an average, nearly every family owns a truck here. Coming back to the Swami Narayan Temple, this is a temple built in honour of Hari Kishan Maharaj, Lord Krishna and Nar Narayan Dev. Upon entering the gate, you will be spellbound by the magnificent structure. The main temple structure is built of only two materials – marble and gold. The carvings on these marble walls and pillars are very intricate and are very much a sight to behold. The skeleton structure of the main temple is like a beautiful marble maze, its design appears



to be quite mesmerising, particularly when you're inside and you see pillars after pillars, and arches after arches in all directions. The thrones of the deities are all gold and so are the summits of the dome structures. This temple too has undergone major renovation after the Gujarat earthquake of 2001. The images of these temples that remain in the mind made me realise the resilient nature of these people who built such splendid places of worship place after it being almost reduced to rubble. So many times, people give up on certain things after getting shaken up. This kind of resilience is a great example to idolise in such times.

Aaina Mahal at Bhuj turned out to be a fine place to visit as well. Some parts of the palace are in ruins after the Gujarat earthquake and have been preserved in that manner. I personally feel that this can be a great place for various kinds of photo shoots. A museum in the Aaina Mahal offers insights into the history of this palace. What is particularly interesting about this palace is that its architectural designs, especially the interiors, are a fusion of Indian and European architecture. The chief architect is said to have gone all the way to Europe to study and practice architecture for almost 20 years prior to building this fine palace, and



that was way back in the mid 18th century. Only such kind of passion and conviction could result in such a marvel. The museum displays various articles such as paintings, swords, shields and a lot of fancy mirrors among other antiques.

The best part was ofcourse going to be visiting the White Rann! The drive towards Rann is quite beautiful. It looks like you are driving into infinity. A straight long road with flat bare land on either side. No other structures. For those who still have been unable to witness the mysterious working of the famous magnetic hill in Ladakh, can also make a trip towards Kalo Dungar (the highest hill point near the White Rann) and on the way towards Kalo Dungar a magnetic field area will present itself where you can

The Swami Narayan temple in Bhuj is another majestic piece of architecture. Our driver Kalu Ram, insisted that we must pay visit this temple in Bhuj during our stay in Gandhidham.

observe your vehicle move freely under the effect of the magnetic field. It was undeniably bewildering and I had to place our vehicle in the area over a dozen times again for the feeling to sink in. A childlike joy surfaces on your countenance when you observe such a phenomenon, that's exactly what happens to the visitors here. Kalo Dungar (Literally meaning Black Hill) is a point from where a panoramic view of the White Rann can be seen on a clear day as it offers much elevation over the desert (over 450 meters in height). Camel rides are available to take you to the highest view point. The area has an army check post as it is in proximity of the international border. Further off from the highest viewpoint the last BSF post before the border can be seen as well. It would take



some time and a few deep breaths to soak in such a grand view. Shrubs all over the hill side running downhill to meet the salt desert and the desert stretching out to meet the sea. Reminded me of a Ruskin Bond poem on how everything in nature is connected to be complete in itself. The view becomes a memory even more permanent because of the local artists sitting there at the view point, playing local instruments and singing folk songs to entertain the visitors.

The visit to the White Rann of Kutch, the white salt desert, might fittingly be called the icing on the cake of a Kutch peregrination. For this white salt expanse could actually be mistaken for ice crystals or snow accumulation if viewed from a distance. When I stepped onto the salt terrain, by default my steps were very careful ones at first, for I didn't want to disturb the salt deposition on the ground. In fact, I was even apprehensive of stepping onto this beauty

The visit to the White Rann of Kutch, the white salt desert, might fittingly be called the icing on the cake of a Kutch peregrination. For this white salt expanse could actually be mistaken for ice crystals or snow accumulation if viewed from a distance. When I stepped onto the salt terrain, by default my steps were very careful ones at first, for I didn't want to disturb the salt deposition on the ground.

for I felt that would be a derogatory act towards such a fine work of nature. Those who have read 'Love Across the Salt Desert' by K.N Daruwalla (most ICSE students of the early 2000's would have), would recall Najab crossing this very salt desert to meet his love Fatima across the border. However, I was tempted to think that Najab must have fallen in love with this salt desert as well. I certainly did. White all around, white everywhere, in every direction, white for as far as the eye can see. Wow! I felt quite sure that movie makers can film a moon landing scene for a sci-fi movie over here. Riding a camel deeper into the desert made it an enigmatic experience. Camping at this site under a starry full moon night must be the ultimate experience, and that is possible during the White Rann festival which is held every year from November to February. That's also a great time to watch the Gujarati or Kutchi women perform the traditional folk dance,

Gajiyo. A ride into the white salt desert is highly recommended. Apart from camels decorated in fashionable cloth work, horse driven carts are available for families to go deeper into the desert. This is a unique experience everyone must live, for it can't be entirely explained in words in any language.

Gujarati dishes are very popular and find their way into many breakfast menus across the country. Especially thepla, dhokla, ganthiya, etc. but I was hooked onto a delectable sweet, Mawa, which is a speciality of Kutch. And some of the best quality of Mawa can be purchased on the way to White Rann from the small local confectioners. I made a big purchase on the urging of my sweet tooth and a little guilt.

Kutch is very popular for the local art and craft, and its textile art is very well known across India. The expertise in their handicrafts can be traced all the way back to at least the 13th century. Articles such as clothing, apparel, home and wall decorative items, toys, etc. are all handmade and this aspect has even become renowned internationally after evidence from the Harappan sites in the region were discovered. Beading, embroidery, pottery and copper works are some of the main expertise of the artisans over here. The people performing the handiwork are from different communities such as Jat, Aahir, Mutwa, Harijan, Rabari, etc and its heart-warming to see and understand how art

unites everyone in a common thread and blurs the boundaries separating people, regions and even countries. Anjar, a town near Gandhidham, has some good markets where these artefacts can be purchased at a reasonable price.

A week flew by as we lost track of time. But there's so much more to explore in the district of Kutch. There's the Mata na Madh, Dholavira (a Harappan archaeological site), Mandvi beach, Vijay Vilas Palace among other attractions. But the highlight for anyone exploring this region will always be the white desert. In all honesty, the state advertising tagline - Kutch Nahi Dekha Toh Kuch Nahi Dekha (If you haven't seen Kutch, you've seen nothing) stands very much valid for which I would definitely testify, because Kutch - Kutch Hota Hai (Kutch is Kutch, and there's nothing else like it).

About the author: The above article is authored by Gautam Singh Kanwal (Master Mariner) who works aboard Merchant Ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. An avid traveller, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time. [\[U\]](#)

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He works aboard merchant ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. An avid traveller, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time.





Our Heritage Our Pride

SRISHTI VERMA

As school students, our summer vacations were marked with a common question in the holiday homework. We had to visit a historical monument and write about it. While we focussed on saving tickets, clicking pictures, and taking home the informative brochures, our ice creams melted and created a splotch on our clothes.

Going back to school, “UNESCO World Heritage Site” would crop up in many accounts by students. If you could remember that UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organisation headquartered in Paris, France, you were sure to get a star on the test.

In 1983, UNESCO decided that the International Day for Monuments and Sites would be marked on April 18. This day is popularly called World Heritage Day. The theme for this year is “Complex Pasts-Diverse Futures”.

Presently, there are more than 1100 sites globally that have been identified by UNESCO as world heritage sites. 38 of these are present in India- 30 cultural, 7 natural, and 1 mixed site.

We have planned to cover each one of them in the series- “our heritage, our pride”. This part will focus on the sites recognised

in north India. Fasten your seat belts for this journey through the world heritage sites in India!

1. Mountain Railways of India

Three railways in the lofty mountains captured history as we know it within them- the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, and Kalka Shimla Railway.

The Darjeeling railway was opened in 1881 and established a rail link across the beautiful mountainous terrain in northern West Bengal. Often called the “Darjeeling Toy Train”, this railway line ensures that you witness beauty and amusement in equal amounts. It runs slow enough that

passengers can get down, buy fruits and vegetables from the hawkers, and get back on the train.

The Nilgiri railway line in Tamil Nadu was quite difficult to construct, taking 17 long years to be completed from 1891 to 1908. Many movies have featured this railway system. The popular song Chhaiya Chhaiya was picturised here. Sridevi and Kamal Haasan's Sadma shot the last scene on this railway line. David Lean's Passage to India features this railway too.

The Kalka Shimla line was yet another representation of the technical marvels employed in the hills. Opened in 1903, you can view this railway line running parallel to the highway when you visit Shimla. It intersects the highway too, so at lucky times, you can look at the train passing through tunnels and on the track on the highway.

2. The Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Himachal Pradesh

Nestled in the mighty Himalayas, the Great Himalayan National Park is home to 25 types of forests and rich fauna diversity. It is a part of the Himalayan biodiversity hotspot and includes the sources of many



rivers that supply water to plains.

Meadows, rivers, valleys, snow, and mighty slopes housing animals and birds- GNHP is surely going to be a trip that you will remember. It covers several other natural reserves such as the Pin Valley National Park and Kanwar Wildlife Sanctuary.

3. Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Uttarakhand

Nanda Devi National Park has a rugged

mountain wilderness and the Valley of Flowers National Park has gentle landscapes. Perfectly complementing each other, together they represent the transition between Zaskar and Greater Himalayas. Rare and endangered flora and fauna species are found in this richly diverse area. Located within the Western Himalayas Endemic Bird Area, significant populations of birds are found here.

4. Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim





The only mixed site in India, this national park is home to a unique diversity of plains, glaciers, valleys, lakes, mountains, and forests. The world's third highest peak, Mount Khangchendzonga, is located here. It is sacred to both Buddhists and Lepchas, depicting co-existence and exchange between different ethnicities and

traditions. It also forms the foundation on which the Sikkimese culture is built. The national park covers 25% of the state.

5. Kaziranga National Park, Assam

Undisturbed by humans, the Kaziranga National Park houses the world's largest

population of one-horned rhinoceroses. It is the single largest undisturbed area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain. The fluctuations in the Brahmaputra river give birth to mesmerising riverine and fluvial processes here.

The park is present at the junction of the Australasian and Indo-Asian flyway,



ensuring that many migratory birds are conserved here.

6. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam

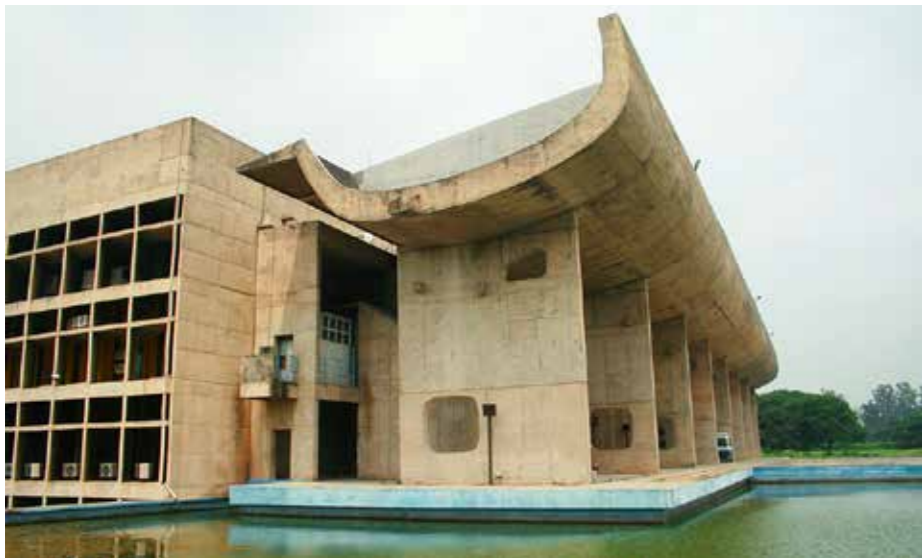
A biodiversity hotspot, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is part of the core zone of the Manas Tiger Reserve. There are forested hills, grasslands, and evergreen forests in the area. Many rare and endangered species are found here. The northern border of the park is contiguous to the international border with Bhutan.

Manas-Beki river system flows through the park, joining the Brahmaputra downstream. Tourists can enjoy river rafting, elephant safari, and jeep safari here. You can visit it from November to April for pleasant weather conditions and animal sightings.

7. The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement, Chandigarh

Chandigarh, the beautiful city and the shared capital of Haryana and Punjab, was planned by the renowned French architect Le Corbusier. His work, completed over a





period of 50 years in four continents, depicts his fresh perspective and the modernisation of architecture. The Complexe du Capitole in Chandigarh is the focal point of the city. The Capitol Complex represents the idea of Radiant City to the maximum. When in Chandigarh, you can visit Sukhna Lake and enjoy a boat ride after a drive across one of the most beautifully designed cities in India. Do not forget the shopping!

8. Humayun's Tomb, Delhi

The mausoleum built for the second Mughal ruler Humayun is a grand architectural marvel in the national capital. It derives its inspiration from the Holy Quran by utilising the char-bagh design. This garden tomb went on to encourage many other tombs,

including the enchanting Taj Mahal.

When you visit Humayun's Tomb complex, you would also be witness to the history preceding when this tomb was built. Nila Gumbad, Isa Khan's tomb, and Barber's tomb are present here among other monuments. The building craft traditions used by the Mughal builders in Humayun's tomb are an absolute delight to the eyes and the mind.

9. Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi

Said to be visible when you land in Delhi, Qutb Minar is a beautiful red sandstone minaret that has witnessed Delhi's history being written before it. How could it not! It was built in 1199 by Qutb-ud-din Aibak.



It was the "victory tower" built in Islamic architectural styles and was completed as we see today by many more rulers following Aibak.

Qutb Minar complex houses the magnificent Alai Darwaza, Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, tombs of Iltutmish, Imam Zamin, and Ala-ud-din Khilji, as well as the Alai Minar of Khilji. The iron pillar, originally erected by Chandragupta II at Udayagiri, was shifted in this complex by Anangpal. The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque is one of the oldest mosques present in India.

The minar has been struck by lightning, dealt with reconstruction, and has seen Delhi being born.

A 3-day Qutb Festival is now held here in November-December where artists, dancers, and musicians perform.

10. Red Fort Complex, Delhi

Shah Jahan built the new capital at Shahjahanabad. The capital needed a fort, so a red sandstone architectural marvel was built. On the banks of Yamuna, Red Fort

brought together Islamic, Persian, Timurid, and Hindu traditions in architecture. The palace later influenced the development of buildings and gardens in Rajasthan, Delhi, and Agra.

Red Fort has been a symbol of power since the times of Shah Jahan. It has witnessed the power transition from Mughals to British to democracy today. It was here that the first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gave his speech on Independence Day.

A sound and light show is held here to inform the public about the history that this monument holds deep within its heart. It oversees Chandni Chowk at its front, with the Gauri Shankar temple and Jain temple across the road from it.[it](#)

SRISHTI VERMA

She is a Delhi-based freelance writer. She loves reading and travelling, with a special place for lofty mountains in her heart. When not writing, she can be found working on her book and looking at pictures from when she was 2 feet tall.



Holiday Village Resort

GANDHIDHAM

A Holistic Review

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

Location and Accessibility: Holiday Village Resort in Gandhidham is like a much-needed refuge in the midst of an industrial and city life chaos. A reclusive hideout away from the mundane life. It is easily accessible from the Kandla airport (being only 3 kilometers away), while the Gandhidham railway station is 9 kilometers. The resort provides prompt airport / railway station transfers to and from the Holiday Village Resort. The location of this resort is apt because it is well isolated from the hustle and bustle and yet in the proximity



of where all the business takes place and well connected to the airport as well as the railway station. Its vicinity to the airport makes it a convenient place to hold business meets, seminars and conferences. Getting to the resort is never going to be a problem as this is a very well-known property in the region. The Kandla airport displays posters of the Holiday Village Resort quite prominently near the main entrance. There is a travel desk besides the Holiday Village Resorts reception which is managed by 'Modern Travels' agency and they provide vehicles to the guests at a fair price to travel around the area.

Infrastructure: The property showcases traditional style architecture with Rajasthani influences. The restaurant, accommodation building and other structures all have the signature Rajasthani / Rajput style architecture design giving you the feel of residing in a palace. The entire property is spread out across 20 acres over well-manicured lawns, gardens which are further embellished by ponds, fountains, pools and even a water park. The resort also houses a big sports complex and gymnasium adjacent to the main accommodation building. Another restaurant is being planned right next to the current restaurant (Urban Masala). This new restaurant will focus on



non-vegetarian dishes mainly while Urban Masala has a great variety of vegetarian dishes. Certain parts of the property are currently under renovation. The water park is under major renovation currently. The design and architecture in general appear to be very well planned. The property has a total of 94 rooms. Elegant looking ‘chattris’ (open, dome shaped pavilions which were common constructions at Rajasthani sites specially during the 12th century) are constructed in the main lawn (The Cottage Lawn) that separates the restaurant and the swimming pool. Comfortable seating is provided within these ‘chattris’. All in all, the infrastructure of the resort is a visual treat for the guests as the royal appearance of the buildings and the colour schemes (light fulvous shaded walls under burgundy shaded corrugated roofing being the main backdrop with designs, the windows, arches, corridors decorated with traditional Rajasthani art) used make it very appealing to the eye. The Holiday Village Resort provides the biggest banqueting services in this region with a total of 4 lush green party lawns and 2 banquet halls, capable of hosting up to 5000 people.

Cleanliness and Hygiene: On most accounts of this aspect I would definitely say that their staff does a commendable job in maintaining good standards of cleanliness and hygiene. The vestibule at the reception is sparkling clean, everything is in a spick and span condition. Neatness and orderly arrangement of articles is noticed everywhere be it in the restaurant, reception, gymnasium or other facilities of the resort. What was impressive was that a dedicated cleaning staff was continuously disinfecting the alleyways, floors in the hallways. Regular checks were conducted by a supervisor over them. The swimming pool was being very well maintained as it was being cleansed twice a day or whenever required additionally. The rooms and bathrooms were maintained in a very clean manner. Housekeeping staff was attending the rooms daily in a punctual manner and was taking feedback on each occasion. The housekeeping staff was available round the clock at a single phone call. Each floor of the accommodation building had dedicated store rooms for housekeeping equipment. If there was one thing which they could vastly improve on is their precautions against the current COVID-19 pandemic. I did point this out to the staff and they took note of it. On



Each floor of the accommodation building had dedicated store rooms for housekeeping equipment. If there was one thing which they could vastly improve on is their precautions against the current COVID-19 pandemic.

certain occasions the working staff wasn’t wearing their mask or wearing them in an ineffective manner. This could jeopardise the health of not just the guests, but also of the resort staff. I truly understand the inconveniences of the mask while working such a tough job that too in hot climates, but if the hospitality industry doesn’t take initiative in this area, we can hardly expect people in other fraternities to follow these basic guidelines. The staff took note of my feedback as a positive.

Rooms: There a total of 94 cottages and rooms available at this property. The rooms are very comfortable with a great view of the swimming pool on one side and the sports ground on the other side. You could enjoy watching the local cricket tournaments organised by the club members of the resort from the room itself. The rooms are spacious enough for a couple staying there while the cottages offer even more space to enhance your comfort levels. The designs of the doors



and windows of the cottages again invoke the theme of the Rajput style Rajasthani art each time you look at them. Some of the rooms and cottages were under renovation at the time of my stay and there were efforts being made to revamp some of their aspects. The resort had reopened a few months earlier after a total shutdown during the pandemic and great efforts were being made in every department to rejuvenate the spirit of the resort. One improvement in the rooms I would like to see is the decorations. The room was pretty looking in general, but the beauty of the exterior should be complimented with the interior. There was just a single painting in the room, and Im sure they could improve upon the decoration aspect of the room interiors.

Comfort and Luxury Quotient: Well this one is a little tricky to comment on. This is a 4-star property and it definitely has the comfort and luxury to offer in that magnitude. Beautiful pool to rejuvenate

after a hot sun-drenched day, spa facilities to pamper yourself, a water park for fun activities like water slides especially for children, a theatre to have a cine going experience in a luxurious manner on a giant screen. But many of these facilities were under renovation or revamping efforts (like the water park and theatre) so I could not access them for a fair judgement. The management chose the right time to revamp and renovate as it was the off season, but I am sure these facilities would be of a very good standard after I took a tour of the place. In my assessment of things, the luxury and comfort quotient will be very high once all these facilities are available in full swing again. I would definitely vouch for that given the kind of space and infrastructure available for each of these facilities. On the comfort side I pointed out to the management staff that they should procure some golf carts in order to transfer the senior citizens from the reception to the rooms or from the rooms to

the restaurant and other areas of the resorts as the distance for them could be quite a lot to walk comfortably. This is a big resort and could require quite a bit of walking at times. This is a great resort to bring an entire family reunion to, in which cases there are going to be senior citizens in all likelihood. Open Golf carts will be very comfortable for the senior citizens and fun to roam around in.

Food and Drinks: The food and beverage management are new and has taken over 3 months earlier from the previous management. The chef is a Bengali gentleman and has a wide range of culinary skills. The restaurant at the resort is called ‘Urban Masala’ which is a vegetarian restaurant. They have a wide range of delicacies on the menu and a lot of paneer specialities. The paneer lababdar was an amazing meal. The breakfast buffet provides wholesome fulfilment to the taste buds with a wide range of food items from Gujarati dishes, to South Indian dishes

as well as Punjabi / North Indian cuisines and Continental dishes. On weekends this restaurant offers buffet dinners as well and a lot of visitors frequent this restaurant including families for the weekend buffet dinner. The price is quite reasonable too. The room service is for food and drinks is quite well managed and reasonably prompt. However, the menu card in the rooms were undergoing a change by the F&B management staff and many of the dishes and desserts mentioned in the menu at the rooms were temporarily unavailable. A non-vegetarian restaurant is coming up right next to 'Urban Clap' and that could be another couple of months from now. The name for that restaurant is yet to be finalised as well. There is a bar where alcoholic beverage is served to foreigners and others would require a state issued permit to buy alcohol (Gujarat is a dry state). Overall, I would rate the food quality, quantity and hygiene quite highly.

Facilities at the resort: Holiday Village Resort offers a good number of facilities. There's a gymnasium which is well equipped with a lot of equipment and in good quantity for each equipment for multiple people to work out at the same time. There's a TT table, snooker and billiards table, chess boards, carrom boards and a library available in the club hall apart from the gymnasium. In front of the club hall is a big sports ground which is well equipped to host cricket matches and there are club level tournaments hosted here for members. The ground has flood lights to host day night matches, and even an electronic scoreboard with big displays. There are two tennis courts adjacent to the cricket ground. Coaches are available to help you out in tennis. Two swimming pools are there and quite big in size with deep and shallow arrangements. The badminton and squash courts were again under renovation. Bicycles are available to move around the entire complex. As mentioned earlier the spa, theatre and water park were under renovation. So, there's more than enough facilities in Holiday Village Resort to keep all members of an entire family occupied in some activity or the other at the same time. I mentioned to the Club Hall staff to get new TT rackets and tennis rackets as their condition was deteriorating and they acknowledged it immediately.

Staff Conduct: This one is right on top. Each and every staff member of

The food and beverage management are new and has taken over 3 months earlier from the previous management. The chef is a Bengali gentleman and has a wide range of culinary skills.

Holiday Village Resort, right from the top management down to the workers, was very courteous and presented themselves in the best manner possible to the guests. Every request was addressed promptly and politely. The staff was positively very responsive to any feedback given to them. Some of the staff members had been working there for 12 years while some had just begun work a month ago, but the highest level of commitment in serving the guests in the best manner was observed equally in all members of the staff.

Overall Impression, Experience and

Conclusion: At the time of my stay 20 of the 94 rooms and cottages were occupied. Covid-19 times could be held accountable for the low occupancy at initial analysis, but it was also the onset of the sweltering hot summer and the White Rann Festival had just ended, so it was very much off season. With these two predicaments in tandem it was still a good occupancy rate in my opinion, even more so after considering the fact that the resort had shut down for around 4 months during the pandemic as a precautionary measure. This is actually a great place to stay for a week or more

and unwind. There are a lot of places of interest around such as the White Rann of Kutch, Aaina Mahal, Vijay Vilas Palace, Shree Bhadreswar Temple, Kalo Dungar hill top, Swami Narayan Temple, Mata Na Madh, Dholavira, etc. among others. As mentioned earlier great efforts by the staff were easily noticeable in every department to rejuvenate the spirit of Holiday Village Resort and I am sure the way the staff is working, that this property would go fully booked in few months and definitely during the season time. It's been almost 3 weeks since I left Holiday Village resort, but I am

still thinking about it and talking about it to everyone I meet. I thoroughly enjoyed my stay here at the Holiday Village Resort and I definitely want to visit again with the entire family or even have a big family reunion here. And I certainly would highly recommend the same to others as well.[\[1\]](#)

GAUTAM SINGH KANWAL

He works aboard merchant ships and hails from Nainital, Uttarakhand. An avid for travelling, reading, learning, music, art and adventure sports, he is keen to indulge in new experiences every time.



Staycation experience at Renaissance Bengaluru

We were pleasantly surprised to be invited and experience what this luxurious property had to offer. The lockdown had again started picking the pace but because of prior commitments we had to go. We took utmost care and this happened to be the ideal location for us too, being a very central property. We must admit that sanitization protocols are adhered to with maximum care from the word go. One can be stress-free yet careful the moment one enters this vicinity.

PAYAL SAHNI, THE EDITOR

Location

Nestled in the central business district of Bangalore, it is located just 500 meters from the iconic Bangalore turf club close to MG road, the Bangalore palace grounds.

Arrival

The brand new electric luxury Sudan on pickup gave us a sense 'already' that we are

out to get pampered. Reaching the Hotel, our entire luggage was once again sanitized.

Rooms

We were accommodated in kings' size suite which did feel like a luxurious comfortable home for a few days as we were all set out to do work and enjoy the staying experience. The suite had an unforgettable view from our window of the lush green fields, the horses playing and practicing with their jockeys,

and we could spend hours together there in perfect peace and harmony, in unison with the world outside. The bathrooms of this hotel are fitted with jacuzzi, bathtubs, the white marbles which added to our pleasures as this is one thing we look forward to the most in our stays, i.e. good washrooms and comfortable beds.

Food

The gastronomy experience here is to die for,



with a wide range of authentic south Indian dishes (of course there has to be when one is in Bangalore), continental, Asian, Japanese, Italian food with a twist. One is spoilt for choices to make. You name it and they have it. The layout is widely spread in authentic settings both inside and in the open areas amidst the greenery and waterfalls which is both poetic and romantic at the same time. It transports you in another world. We would, once again like to mention it here that it is just not about the Hotel but the staff working there, the team who is going an extra mile and making you feel special by taking personal care of even the smallest of the needs/demands one can have. Our utmost love and regards to the entire team of this hotel and entire hospitality industry for putting in extra efforts round the clock in these turbulent times.

They have the famous 'R bar' which has a feel good factor and niche settings. The outside seating arrangement has gusty fresh winds that one can never forget because wide space between the two buildings





facing each other in a way that blows of wind is like kiss of fresh air on your cheeks.

'Pet-cation'

They had organized the dog show for the first time when we were there. The owners could come and have brunch with their pets; enjoy their meals in open settings. Wide variety of delicacies was served along with pet friendly dishes made to make the four legged feel special.

Our tete' with Mr. Tejus Jose, the General Manager of Renaissance Bangalore.

As he narrates, "I grew up in Mumbai and my childhood dining-out experiences largely revolved around the Udipi restaurants that are dotted along the length and breadth of Mumbai. From the ubiquitous Sada dosa and masala dosa to the slightly less popular Mysore masala dosa and Rava dosa, these were my gourmet food definitions back then. But beyond my love for dosas, I was awestruck by the efficiency and speed of service at these modest establishments. This observation sowed the seeds of hospitality management into my mind and as they say,



TEJUS JOSE

rest is history".

About his professional background, "I went to Hotel school at IHM Hyderabad and subsequently did my training at Oberoi Hotels, I had the good fortune of working with various international brands such as JW Marriott, Hyatt Hotels, at Hyderabad International Convention Centre, Le Meridien and now I am at the stylish and chic Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel".

About his core responsibilities

here in Renaissance

The Renaissance brand of Marriott International is a 'lifestyle brand'. Renaissance Bengaluru lives by its brand ethos and thus channels the energy of the neighborhood through a sense of discovery. The Hotel espouses a local spirit and its personality is infused with spontaneity and style. The Hotel opened in the second half of 2018 and just when it had begun to gather footfalls, COVID-19 truck the world, and the hotels' ramp-up was cut short abruptly. "My core responsibility is hence to take it to the logical conclusion by finishing its journey of ramping up to its full potential".



About the challenges of 2020 and the present COVID situation

There is no denying that 2020 hit all of us, across the world, like a truck of bricks, so while many industries recovered fairly rapidly (some even thrived), the hospitality industry and the greater tourism industry as a whole floundered. When the world went into this tailspin in March 2020, the speculations were that the 'dust would settle' by 2021 and life would return to normalcy but with new variants of the disease, the industry

across the globe seems to be in limbo. While the recovery will not be immediate, I believe with more and more countries successfully inoculating their population, we should be able to see a travel recovery between Q4 2021 and Q2 2022”.

About the comeback plans. “The objective for me, in my position, is to ensure that I and my team can deliver optimal profits to the hotel stakeholders by exploring unexplored revenue opportunities and ensuring non-essential expenses are avoided”.

His vision shortly: “I believe the

immediate future is fairly simple to deduce, it will be survival of the nimble. Those who adapt and evolve to these challenging times will survive and others will perish. Larger organizations will have to adapt more aggressively since their innate structure does not allow for too many changes. Smaller organizations are better structured for quick changes and adaptation and will most likely weather this COVID storm. Immaterial of how long this situation continues, it's is crucial that organizations, hotels, or travel businesses, empathize with their

Finally our review An ideal place for:

- Luxurious stay
- Unique blend of lifestyle, local infusion with aesthetic modern settings.
- Centrally located Gastronomy experiences to indulge in
- A perfect place for wedding destinations.



team members and brave this situation as one”.

Initiatives towards sustainability and the green environment: Sustainability is core to the Hotel and rightly so. In line with this philosophy brand 'Renaissance' runs a program called Earth Matters, and under this program, the hotel reduces the frequency of bed linen change for guests staying for longer durations such that the chemical and energy footprint left behind by guests stay is reduced. This is voluntary and up to the guest to agree however from our experience we observe that most guests are more than willing to participate. The Hotel is moving from halogen lamps to LED lamps in a phased manner and this will not only save energy costs but also reduce the hotels' carbon footprint. The hotel has a very effective sewage treatment plant, which reuses the wastewater and uses it for gardening and other tertiary uses, thus reducing the need for freshwater.

Mr. Jose also tells us about his favorite international destinations, Scotland due to its simple unending landscape, and how in many places you end up seeing a house after many miles. Back home in India, he loves the beaches; also the whole Kankan stretches from Maharashtra to Kerala, and its intense flora and fauna. [\[1\]](#)



Namma Bengaluru!

The 'Garden City' is the perfect place to enjoy a slice of slow life even amidst bustling tech parks.

MATULI MADHUSMITA SWAIN

Call it Bangalore or Bengaluru, the mere name of one of India's most popular, populated and well-loved cities rustles up images of tech-parks and slow living all at once. Blessed with a breezy, gorgeous weather all-round the year; the city is a quirky mix of old world charm

and digital diaspora. If Mumbai is ambition and money, Delhi is power and politics, Goa is lazy and laidback; then Bengaluru is delectably calm and cosmopolitan at the same time. The city is the technological powerhouse of the country yet the tree-lined streets, old shopping areas and South Indian tiffin centers really do tell a different story. So what can you expect when you embrace

the city as a first time tourist or if you are in it for the long haul?

Coffee, Honey cake and Bisi Bele Bhaath:

Bengaluru (Bangalore) is a culinary powerhouse, having some of the finest restaurants in the country and yet hardcore Bangaloreans still love to fuel up with

traditional favourites. While idi-dosa-uttapam remains the holy trio of South Indian food, Bengaluru swears by Bisi Bele Bhaath. Steaming spicy rice, loaded with vegetables, definitely runny in texture, served with khara boondi and laced with hot ghee; it is comfort food every day. The city runs on coffee of both kinds – those which are sipped in charming cafes and those which are slurped from the traditional 'dabara'. The best one is definitely the filter coffee, absolutely strong, sweet and foamy, that which is sold on sidewalk cafes. And

when in Bengaluru, don't forget to have a taste of the much loved 'Honey Cake'. Sponge cake, honey drenched, smeared with jam and topped with cream. Definitely to be had from an Iyengar bakery. This saccharine overload spells Bengaluru in every bite!

Silk, Sandalwood and Shopping

When in Namma Ooru, the rustle of silks and the scent of Sandalwood is omnipotent. Shopping is definitely a real treat and when

in the city, make sure you have plenty of time on your hands and a willing wallet. Commercial Street, MG Road, Chickpet market are the shopping hubs, with the best street shopping and retail brands. For luxury retail therapy, head over to UB City; the place is mecca to high fashion and fine dining spaces. To buy a gorgeous six yards of elegance, there are numerous homegrown brands like Nalli, Pothys, and Mysore Saree Udyog to name a few. For authentic sandalwood souvenirs and artefacts, check out the state run Cauvery Handicrafts





Emporium for some great gifting options. Malls are a mainstay, so if street shopping isn't your style, explore Phoenix Market city, Forum mall, Orion Mall and more.

Gardens, Lakes and Hills

The Garden city of India truly lives up to its name, peppered as it is with numerous parks, gardens, lakes and wondrous picnic spots nearby. Take a break from the city and spend a beautiful morning at Cubbon Park. The glorious green lung of the city is great to enjoy a walk, or a spot of jog. Or simply, just sit upon the green grass cushion and enjoy a moment or two to yourself. Lalbagh Botanical Gardens is a real treat, the biggest park in the city, and one that has many photo-worthy lush corners to explore! Keen for more – do check out the Bugle Rock Park too! Ulsoor lake, right at the city centre is great for a spot of boating and some gorgeous sunset watching. To catch a beautiful sunrise, keep a morning drive to the nearby Nandi Hills. The drive is worth it.

Forts, Palaces and Pubs

Juxtaposing history with the best brew pubs, Bengaluru is a treat for those who love to explore the old and chill out with the new. Explore a slice of past by taking a tour of Tipu Sultan's summer palace or walk through Bangalore Fort and Bangalore



Palace. Soothe your soul by saying a quiet prayer at St.Mary's Basilica, which is open to people of all faiths. When you have had your fill of history, unwind at some of the spectacular pubs and breweries the city has to offer. Toit, a city favourite has the best brews and pub-grub. Or just step into Indiranagar for some great pub hopping! You won't be disappointed.

Education, books and bibliophiles

Bengaluru is a book lover's paradise and is ranked among the best known cities in India for education. The city is home to some of the finest institutions in the country. The mecca

of management studies, Indian Institute of Management (IIM) has its hallowed corridors in the city. Indian Institute of Science, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Indian Statistical Institute, National Law School of India University (NLSIU) are among a few. There are plenty more, where the best of Indian minds are trained and educated. The charming streets of Bangalore is home to quaint bookstores, some big, some small but all beautiful. Blossoms bookstore, is one of the oldest. The place is filled with new titles as well as old ones. Higginbothams on MG Road is simply old world. Located in an art

deco building, the bookstore is perfect for those who love to read, browse and live in the world of words. Many of them have gone online too, so check out these places!

Luxury living and lifestyle

High-rises are part of the city's skyline. Luxury spaces and residential areas are what lend the city its glamorous edge. When you are in the mood for some high indulgence, UB City is the place to go. The centrally located luxury space, has 6 blocks and hosts multiple luxury retail and residential spaces. On any given day, explore Central Bangalore for its business and commercial spaces and check out the premiere hospitality brands. In the past couple of years, North Bangalore has been steadily coming up as the newest space in the garden city!

Namma Bengaluru is growing and as always, still retains a slice of its old world charm. [u](#)

— MATULI MADHUSMITA SWAIN —

She is an actress, author, speaker, life coach and marketing and communications expert with over 10 years of professional experience working with The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, Hyatt, Movenpick Hotels & Resorts, IHG, Grey Group and Dr. Reddy's Foundation. Matuli loves good content, and champions conversations on marketing, leadership, new age work place practices, economics, entrepreneurship, sustainable travel and tourism. A proud Odia!



Q May we know briefly about your initial days of your student life and what were your aspirations then?

I have been born & brought up in a very small town (Nilokheri in Haryana, in between Karnal & Kurukshetra). We had a big joint family of almost 45 people living in one big house. I did my schooling at St. Theresa's Convent School, Karnal. I have had a dream of becoming an Army officer; however, due to the non-availability of a Degree, I was rejected (cleared by CDS exam). Discipline from the dream of being an Army Officer had always been with me that helped me at every step in Hospitality Industry to grow from a room boy, steward, laundry valet, matrimonial agent to a CEO of a 5-star Luxury Brand. "What an inspirational journey, says the Editor."



My conversation with Mr. Kush Kapoor, made me understand his core strengths, and his everyday work challenges. Mr. Kapoor is currently the CEO- of the Roseate Hotels and Resorts. He shares about the journey of his initial years, and the expansion plans of the brand. Indeed he has a huge responsibility ahead of him.
By Payal Sahni. The Editor



The Biggest challenges are keeping the team engaged & motivated, Guest Safe & Secure & ensure optimization of resources at every step without compromising on Quality of Guest & Team Satisfaction.

Q May we know how do you plan to overcome them?

Flexible shift hours, work from home on certain days, helping the team to develop new skills & acquire more knowledge, stringent protocols without any exception in terms of Safety, Security & Hygiene Standards both for the team & Guests. We have given 24x7 camera access to the entire world to see the levels of Hygiene followed in our Kitchens, offering Alkaline water (highest Quality of water), ensuring the team learns more skills by taking experience & exposure in ancillary departments which increases better understanding as well as bonding.

Q Please let us know the TOP 3 to 4 USP's of each of the properties of 'The Roseate' chains and what makes them unique and different from any other hotels around.

The Roseate New Delhi – Longest pool in the country, 1500 + trees making it a forest within Delhi, Organic food & personalized service, biggest rooms size in entire NCR Delhi.

Roseate House New Delhi– Biggest North Indian specialty restaurant (Kheer) in India, the infinity pool at a terrace, 71 seat



Q Coming back to the present times, please let us know about your core current responsibilities as a CEO of Roseate Hotels and Resorts.

As CEO of Roseate Hotels & Resorts, my Core responsibilities include putting the Brand on the World Map as the most sought-after Brand when it comes to personalization & Innovation. We have also opened our standalone cafes, "Roasted by Roseate" & opening Hotels in Goa & Hyderabad in 2022, besides a few more hotels & resorts in the pipeline. We are also expanding our footprints in Food Truck operations, Iskate (India's biggest Ice Skating ring), and getting into Quality Partnerships with leading Universities to expand our Education programs as well.

Q In everyday affairs and especially in this current uncertain time, what are the acute challenges you are facing?


Movie hall, 24x7 alcohol license for Bar & Kheer, the first hotel to have co-work space.

The Roseate Ganges – 17 private villas, private beach, nestled in the forest, location.

Q May we know your vision going forward?

Make my brand the most sought-after brand, be the best in everything we do. I would like to see a waiting period for my Hotels & Resorts; where there will be a waiting period for rooms & F&B outlets bookings regularly.

Q Please let us know about the expansion plans for 2022.

Innovation is the key and we are on the right path. The plan is to do many more innovations than what we have done and continuously rediscover & improve our strengths, be our own biggest competitor. 



Holiday Inn Express & Suites Bengaluru OMR

PAYAL SAHNI

We chose to stay here as this is an apt and affordable luxury for a longer stay' if one has a couple of days or longer period of work in Bangalore.

Introduction

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Bengaluru OMR opened in August 2020. The property 129 rooms that include 21 suites, ideally located on the Old Madras Road and a premium mall as part of the hotel complex.

Highlights

Set right on the Old Madras Road with easy access to Whitefield, Narsapura, and Hoskote Industrial hub, Holiday Inn Express & Suites

Bengaluru OMR is the smart choice for smart travelers looking for a comfortable and hassle-free stay.

Location

A 45-minute drive from the Bengaluru International Airport, the hotel also offers convenient access to Malur Industrial Area. With tastefully appointed 129 smart rooms and Suites, at Holiday Inn Express & Suites Bengaluru OMR, guests can work and relax at their own pace.

Our Stay

The suite they offered us to stay, was classy, comfortable, designed aesthetically with modern finishing, and provided a scenic



your family, friends, or colleagues. If one is planning a meeting or a social event, it can be done at The Atrium, a conference/ banquet space that can cater from 60 to 80 guests. Also not to miss, their compact lovely Bar, to chill out with cold beer, mocktails to sit & relax with friends, business associates also.

The hotel is part of the same complex as the Orion Uptown shopping mall. The guests have direct access to the mall which has a 5 Screen multiplex, many lifestyle stores & multiple international Fast-Food outlets.

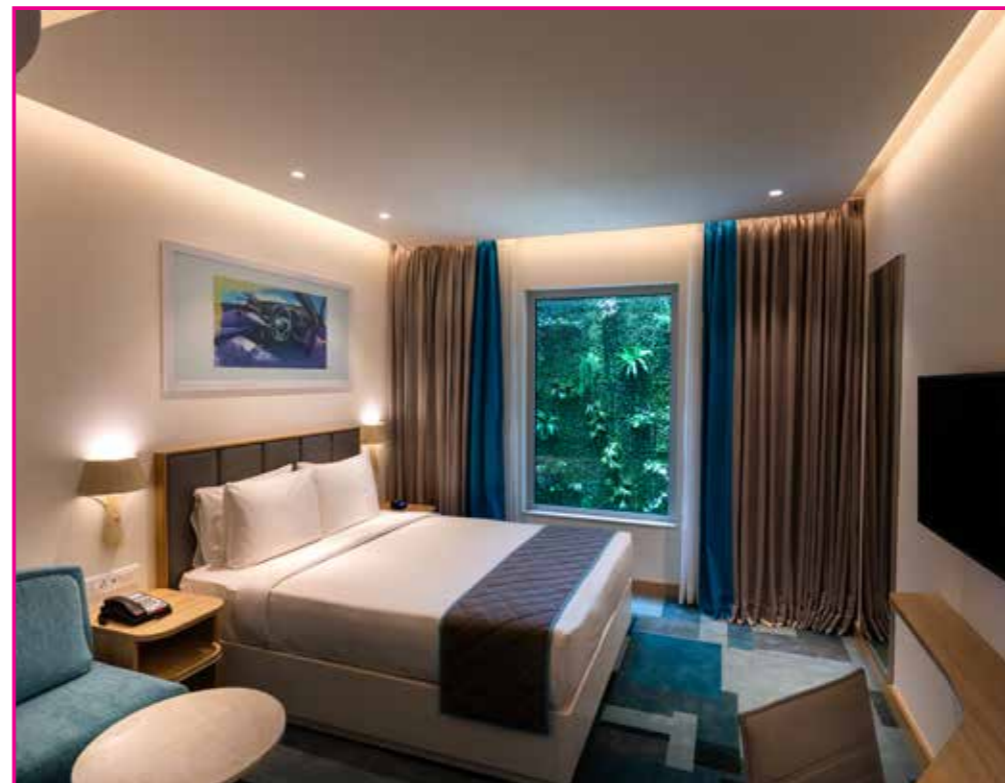
The USP of the property is its location, and being a mixed-use property is an added advantage. Today's traveler primarily needs a clean & sanitized room with a good breakfast option and high-speed wi-fi and they provide this. For family staycations, this is an ideal drive away and has comfortable suites with balcony and bathtub added with great options in dining for both food & beverage".

About the General Manager: Mr. Deepak Sampath

Deepak has spent the majority of his career in Bangalore and Mumbai working for The Park Hotels, IHHR Hospitality, Hyatt, and IHG. He has worked in pre-opening scenarios and has also been an important part of a team that did a brand change over from a domestic to an international brand.

Deepak is a seasoned high potential candidate presently working as General Manager at Holiday Inn Express & Suites Bengaluru OMR, which he had joined at a pre-opening stage, with a strong track record of consistent delivery throughout his career. He is a mature leader who is quality and performance-driven with a proven track record in managing people, guest service initiatives, and successful operations of managed properties. With a high drive for results, passion, and desire to be the best in whatever assignments he takes, he has demonstrated capabilities in delivering strong results and growth through his strong business acumen, innovative sales strategies, and the ability to optimize revenue and minimize costs by balancing the expenses as per business needs.

His greatest strengths are a passion and skill to develop a great team, a team



view of the highway and lush greens of the city. The comfortable beds promise a good night's sleep ensuring guests wake up refreshed and energized.

One can start the day right with their Free Express Start Breakfast or Grab &

Go option and stay connected. There is the complimentary High-Speed Free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel and relax at Great Room, an all-day dining restaurant. The Verandah, an alfresco seating restaurant, is the ideal space to have a get-together with



Name: Kathiron Shanmugam
Designation: Head Chef
Years of Experience: 14 years

committed to giving all the guests the best food experience. He believes in sourcing the best food from ingredients that are "locally produced, sustainable, artisanal and seasonal."

His Motto

"Learn from mistakes never repeat." He states "As the world adjusts to new travel norms and expectations, we're enhancing the experience for our guests by redefining cleanliness and supporting wellbeing throughout the guest's stay".

Kathiron has designed a global cuisine menu by understanding the guest profile



at the hotel and the immediate market that they cater to. The signature dishes include the Hearty spinach soup, Buratta Bomb with Char Cooked tomato, Orzotto al fungi, Tandoori chicken wings, Subz miloni, and Mewa khurchan!!

The chef states, "We introduced a sumptuous dinner buffet in February and have received a great response from our patrons. Our guests can relish different cuisines with pure food aromas from hot soups and starters to flavorful gravies and desserts. At the Bar, we have some refreshing infused cocktails that include Basil Mojito, Lemongrass & Wild chilli martini, and Cucumber & Rosemary Martini. Looking at the present situation, we have worked on our options for contactless home delivery and are very happy that our guests have appreciated the effort".

Launched in 2015, IHG Way of Clean already includes deep cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants in guest rooms and public spaces, putting them ahead of the curve. They have issued new training, protocols, and best practices, evolving the IHG Way of Clean into a robust, 360-degree cleanliness response program designed to provide hotels with a comprehensive set of tools, training, and equipment to ensure colleague and guest safety". In the end, we would like to mention that the staff is extremely helpful, courteous, and would go out of the way to make a stay memorable. This is an ideal place for longer staycations.[\[1\]](#)



TRAVEL SAFE STAY SAFE

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