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FEATURE FOCUS

Koder House Hotel, Cochin: where to stay

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Tabitha May checks into the Koder House Hotel, an imposing red brick mansion in the Indian coastal town of Cochin.



The Koder House Hotel is right on the harbour's doorstep

LOCATION

Literally next door to the Old Harbour, so in Fort Cochin's prime position and a few steps from the sea.

CHARACTER

An imposing red brick mansion that until recently was the family home of Cochin's most prominent Jewish family, the Koders. It's steeped in history, and filled with heritage pieces, but with a touch of modern Indian styling that is both comfortable and inviting.

ROOMS

Just eight two- or three-room suites, as if the living quarters of the individual Koder family members have been maintained. Soft furnishings in neutral patterns and textures are charmingly retro without being kitsch. The bathrooms are gigantic, with torrents of hot water. Heavy double doors to deep balconies overlooking the park provide light and my plush, high, antique bed ensured a fairy-tale night's sleep. The original floorboards are a bit noisy overhead, so get a top floor room if you can.

FOOD

While there is a Jewish menu (chicken soup, dumplings), the main menu is traditional southern Indian, beautifully done, with an emphasis on seafood. Breakfasts include Western and Eastern dishes: my Keralan idli was the best I've had in Southern India.

WE LIKE

This place is faultless – it's just so homely yet splendid at the same time – as if a millionairess exotic great aunt were having you to stay.

ESSENTIALS

0091 484 221 8485; www.koderhouse.com Five nights from £198 per person.

WHY COCHIN?

This cosmopolitan south-west Indian port town, on the Arabian Sea, was once home to Moorish, Portuguese, Dutch, Jewish and British settlers, and today has an eclecticism in its history, architecture, cuisine and art redolent of all these cultures.

Vasco da Gama was buried here in India's oldest church, St Francis (1509); the Jewish quarter has a history spanning 17 centuries; and large Dutch, Portuguese and Moorish buildings dot the already exotic Indian cityscape. Well placed on the Keralan coast, it serves as a travel hub for other places of interest: Alleppey (an hour away) for house-boat journeys on the backwaters; the hilly beauty of the Western Ghats (four hours); and the elephant and tiger sanctuaries at Kodanad (two hours) and Periyar (five hours).