

Colours On The Mind – Touch Down

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INSOUND

Colours on the mind

Kerala backwaters tempt you to discover hues on their gorgeous canvas. **Purva Grover** shares the colours that brought her stay at Kumarakom alive.

It's strange how sometimes one has to travel some 100 kilometres to have the meaning of two simple words, slow and peaceful. Anyone who's been to Kerala backwaters will tell you so in addition to narrating tales of dreaming under an open sky, singing softly amidst the forgotten waters and confusing secrets to the land of greens. How what else can you expect from a water-level traveller? But simply, my heart and soul were bound to look forward to discovering the goodness at my destination, Kumarakom, much before I even set foot on the Cochin Airport. As expected, in the next few days among many other things I learnt that that one could at times chase butterflies instead of deadlines.

Colours make me happy so I chose to stay at The Zen Kumarakom Kerala Resort & Spa on the banks of Vembanad Lake, for a true Kerala-style experience. In short, all I had to do was to play along with the flow.

On reaching I let the short boat of rain breeze me as I walked to my cottage, just like I was in the quiet hills of Pondicherry, the miles here took a charming and quiet. It touched you softly and leaves almost nothing disturbs the goodness and beauty of the place, which is not about a man-made legend. Here and only nature says you to the next. The

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bedecked elephant in the royal colours greets you gorgeously, vermillion *sikka* sits humbly on your forehead and the local artistes put up a pleasing act. An extension of the cultural experience is of course the way the cottages have been dressed up. However, the best part of the cottage is neither the coir fans nor the traditional handicrafts, it is the garden shower. Well, don't they say the best things in life come free? One look at it and I assure you will ditch the luxurious tub with aroma oils for it. And anyway there are enough aromas and oils waiting to pamper you at MayaSpa; I let the masseurs spoil me on two occasions.

Now it's hard to be in Kumarakom and stay untouched by the colours of their cuisine, culture or crafts. Interestingly, their simple acts become a part of one's lifestyle, unknowingly. We were surprised to see the 'urban' us dexterously use our hands to indulge in the Onam feast, Sadya, at their 24-hour restaurant, Lime Tree. When a traditional lavish meal comprising banana chips, sharkara puratty, papayathoran, pineapple kalam, Kerala dal curry, beetroot padhadi, paal kootu curry, avial, sambhar, eriseri and Kerala paratha and rice lies in front of you, you know you need to do justice to it the local way. Right? Subtly you will fall in love with all things

local. One evening when I was at the amphitheatre at the resort I got a chance to interact with the local artistes who put up a Kathakali, a dance-drama act and Kalarippayattu, Indian martial art, performance for us. We talked about their simple lives and simpler expectations as we enjoyed our share of filter coffee. Next morning my coffee spot was my room's sit-out (on the shores of the lagoon). Keep your watch aside, you don't have to feel guilty for an extended date with your coffee mug. The calm water and unhurried breeze will keep you occupied for hours without a companion, newspaper or mobile. When I stepped in, I let the doors open,



The pool area at The Zuri Kumarakom Kerala Resort & Spa, overlooking the Vembanad Lake



A stay at the at Zuri Presidential Villa is indeed a pleasurable experience

some places just want you to invite in nature. Don't they? And it was to engulf in nature that the following morning I willingly headed to The Body Temple area of the resort. Even if early morning yoga is not your idea of fitness, it will be a good idea to make friends with the soft sunrays here.

A day later we left the resort behind to meet the waters that had been calling us ever since we had arrived. We were on board the traditional houseboat, Kettuvallam, at 1100 hours. Untamed, wandering and unending, the backwaters gradually drifted me to a different world. It's not tough to know that in this part of the world people don't

wake up to the sounds of alarms or quench thirst with aerated beverages. When we stooped at the R-Block, a manmade island, we gave the Toddy a try, Kerala's local alcoholic beverage made out of the sap of coconut tree. You may not like the sour-acidic taste but locals will be so happy to serve you that you'd end up enjoying the hospitality that came in a small glass. Sit with them for a while and you are sure to feel envious. Their workstations have no boundaries. "It's quite open," the fishermen will smirk as they point towards waters. Be foolish enough to ask them to trade it for the world of technology and targets

and you'll learn that innocence and simplicity are not things that can be traded.

Once back on the houseboat we had lunch, all seafood delicacies. The showstopper was the Karimeen fish wrapped in a banana leaf, the tangy sauce complementing the grilled fish. As for the rest of the evening we sat quietly on the deck, discovering and absorbing the colours around us, something I were to take back with me. Yes, the backwaters introduce you to their fascinating colour palette where blues and greens aren't just hues on a shade card but spell the wonders of non-photoshopped nature. ▀

Track your way...

The Zuri Kumarakom Kerala Resort & Spa is a space to dream and relax.

Kumarakom, Kerala is just 16 km from the nearest city, Kottayam. As entry point to India, you can fly to Mumbai or Chennai. There are daily flights to Kerala where, as entry points, you have a choice of three international airports – Kochi (Cochin), Kozhikode (Calicut) and Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum).

