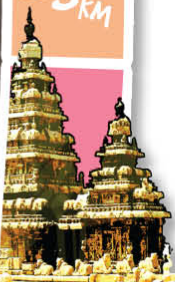


CHENNAI

55 km



74 km



89 km



105 km



138 km



PONDICHERRY



Barefoot at Gratitude

Leave your footwear and worries behind as you enter the 200-year-old building that is Gratitude in Pondicherry



Pics: Pattabi Raman

Souvenirs with a cause

Take your time to browse through a collection of handmade organic cotton kurtas, scarves, stoles, tops and more at the boutique. If lucky, you will find dresses and skirts of the raw cotton material, Malkha. And check out the hand-picked antique jewellery. You can also find handbags and leather footwear. Prices of the items range approximately from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 15,000.



inspect the curios and elegant furniture collected by the two owners, Kakoli Banerjee and Jyoti Cariappa. Opposite the lobby is La Boutique de Maison Gratitude, an extension of the social project, Satya-Jyoti, that supports marginalised women in Rajasthan. It includes handmade clothing, jewellery, footwear, handbags and soft furnishings. The building opens into the courtyard, dotted with antique furniture and surrounded by the guest rooms and a common dining area. Gratitude is



check in

partly a 200-year-old restored building; the rest was newly constructed with the help of INTACH, Pondicherry's devoted rescuer of heritage buildings. Eight long-stay rooms where guests can stay from three to four days to even a month or more are kept simple and furnished with antique or restored pieces from around the city. Lost among four poster beds, teakwood desks, and simple pieces of restored art, I almost forget the presence of the world outside.

Finding inspiration

"The structure is only the outer shell," believes the owner, Banerjee. "Gratitude is a retreat for creative people. We love to host writers, artists, painters, filmmakers alike, to whom the ambience here is ideal for inspired thought," says the manager, Vijay Raghavan. He has been here since the opening of this hotel and gives me a thorough tour of the place. Each door and staircase opens into an even more inviting space, where one can picture engaging conversations, brimming creativity, and endless mind space. I'm keen to note that all the common areas of the building like the dining hall, massage rooms, yoga room and terrace are accessorised with aesthetic caution and are spacious. Their only criterion is that their house guests maintain the same philosophy as theirs and enjoy its sumptuous harmony.

Elsewhere

Addressing requests from guests for a place for longer home-stays, the team behind Gratitude introduced Mantra, amidst the fishing hamlet of Pondicherry, Vaithikuppam. A large white building within a garden offers patrons a chance to discover the town during a longer holiday. Opened less than a year ago, Mantra offers three bedrooms and a large common hall, dining area, kitchen and terrace. Cool tiled and oxide flooring and calming minimalist interiors offer you the same nurturing space as Gratitude. You can rent individual bedrooms, or even the whole house, while a minimum of a one-week stay is the norm.

The tariff for an individual room at Mantra costs ₹ 8,000 plus tax for one week, and the whole house costs ₹ 20,000 plus tax for a minimum of four days. Details: gratitudeheritage.in

— Ruella Rahman Khound

