



TAPPING the PULSE

After Conrad's big debut in India two years ago, **Conrad Bengaluru** has launched in the country's IT capital. SHIKHA PUSHPAN checks in to find out what the buzz is all about.

During the British rule, the Kingdom of Mysore saw an unusual trajectory under the Wadiyar Family, earning it the title of one of the most progressive princely states of India. King Chamarajendra Wadiyar, who was at the helm of developments at the time, called the shots from the Bangalore Palace, a two-level granite structure with an avant-garde interior he lovingly built along the lines of the Windsor Castle in Berkshire. Today, the palace sits pretty in the heart of Bengaluru as a testimony to the progressive pulse of the city. About three miles from this iconic landmark, looking out through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the Executive Lounge on the 20th floor of the new Conrad Bengaluru, I try to trace the city's journey—from a preferred destination of the elite for its salubrious climate to the world's second fastest growing startup ecosystem.

CLETUS REBELLO

FROM ABOVE: COURTESY OF CONRAD BENGALURU; SHUTTERSTOCK

Complementing the dynamic vibe of the country's IT capital, a young and vibrant team at Conrad Bengaluru is all set to provide what is termed as 'intuitive service'. From the Golden Key concierge (there are only a handful in India) to the private cabby—the hotel staff is eager to present an unparalleled experience from the very moment you arrive at the lobby, graced by *The Dome*, a striking Czech-import lighting installation made of matte and engraved glass and fine-cut crystal beads.

FUTURISTIC

The newest entrant in the club of five-star properties in the Central Business District, the hotel rises 24 storeys high and offers expansive views of the Ulsoor Lake and the city's skyline from each of its 285 rooms and suites. Inside, a whole new world of intuitive motion technology awaits: the curtains open automatically, the air-conditioning switches into gear, and the lights turn on to match the time of the day when you walk into the room. A panel of switches next to your bedside allow you to complete basic tasks without getting up. As you sink deep into your comfortable bed, pull out the pillow menu to choose from six variants—from the Memory Foam pillow that's designed with a contour shape to support the neck, to the Big Cozy pillow, best for reading or watching TV. The vanity mirror in the bath, with an in-built television, is testimony to how the guests will be spoilt with creature comforts.

From above: The Executive Lounge at Conrad Bengaluru; Bangalore Palace should top your bucket list while you're here. Opposite: The floor of the hotel lobby is adorned with Mandala, a spiritual symbol associated with the cosmos.



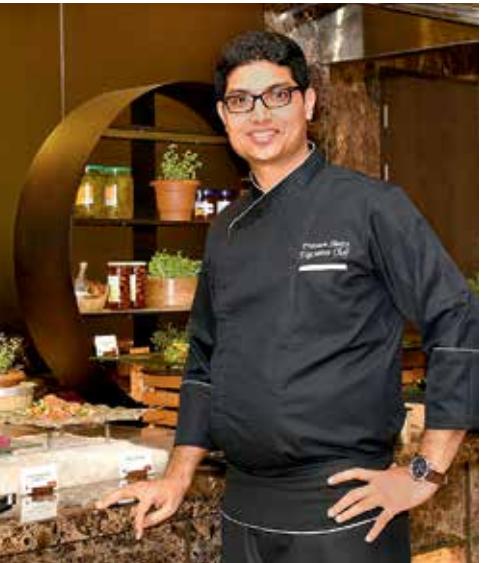
RELAX & UNWIND

If you're in the city for business, there will be times you'll want to unwind: book a deep-tissue therapy at the Conrad Spa, or, to spend time under the open sky, a temperature-controlled infinity pool awaits you on the second floor. Enjoy the swim while soaking in the stunning skyline of the city. Grab your favourite sundowner from the poolside restaurant, Tiamo, or treat yourself with the Bitter Warm Dark Chocolate dessert.



CHEF SPEAKS

A hands-on taskmaster, Chef Praveen Shetty is unlike many executive chefs. All of 34, one would find him juggling between the five restaurants he helms at Conrad Bengaluru. A veteran in the Hilton group, he heads a team of 70 'MasterChefs', as he would like to call them. His favourite restaurant at the hotel? Tiamo, for its Mediterranean cuisine and open-air setting.



FOR JOURNEYS BEYOND

Just two weeks into its launch, the hotel has already made an impact: a fact evident from the festive mood in the lobby, thanks to the richly-dressed wedding guests streaming down the striking spiral staircase. Parag Sawhney, General Manager, tells me the hotel has hosted over 12 large scale (read: 1,500 guests) social and business events in its initial days. He credits this success to a cadre of "well-travelled millennial leaders" running the show backstage.

CITY WATCH

Bengaluru enjoys benevolent weather through the year due to the city's enviable location at the centre of the southern peninsula—a cause of envy for its neighbours and a matter of pride for its residents. This favourable climate has led to the establishment of some of the best vineyards in the country. Though Sula has been the face of Indian wines for decades, not many know that most of the award-winning varieties come from Karnataka. To explore these on your own, drive down to Grover Zampa Vineyards for an experiential tour. Situated on the foothills of the Nandi Hills, the vineyard is



GOURMET TRAIL

Tiamo

The star attraction at the hotel, save this poolside Mediterranean dining area for evenings. Try the comforting Minestrone Genovese, a rustic Italian vegetable soup, and the Sea Bass in Grenobloise. The Mango Chilli Ravioli amuse-bouche will be your takeaway from here.

Mikusu

Chef Dolphy Lobo doles out the best of Japanese, Thai, and Chinese cuisine at this intimately-designed restaurant. While the sushi platter with Spicy Tuna Maki and Salmon Nigiri is a must here, try the Shrimp Tempura Roll if you're not a sushi lover.

Indian Durbar

Featuring a traditional setting, Indian Durbar is a pan-Indian restaurant, quite literally. The lavish space serves cuisines from the country's 28 states. The Mangalorean thali, with time-honoured dishes such as Kundapur Ghee Roast Chicken curry, tops our list.

Caraway Kitchen

The all-day restaurant serves global cuisines from its four live kitchens. Walk in any time of the day to enjoy cuisines from Asia to the Americas while watching the chefs in action. A high-tea, with local snacks is recommended here.

The Lobby Brew

The go-to space for your early morning cuppa, this café is now popular for its business breakfasts not just with hotel guests, but also locals. Tapas and finger food are the top performers here, besides a wide range of vintage drinks.

CLETUS REBELLO (3)

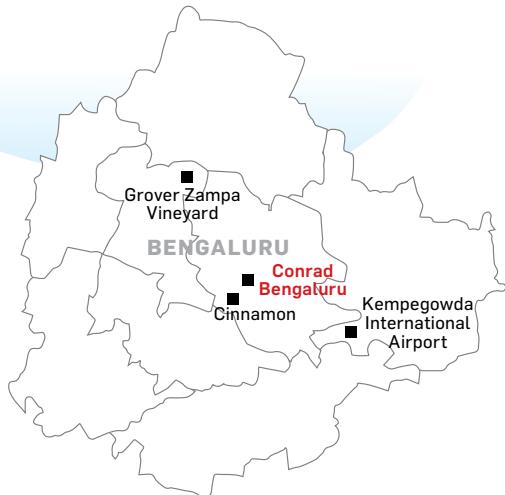
FROM ABOVE: COURTESY OF CONRAD BENGALURU; CLETUS REBELLO; DAVID PEARSON/ALAMY



From above: The temperature-controlled swimming pool offers stunning views of Ulsoor Lake; a serving of sushi at Mikusu restaurant; Tipu Sultan's Summer Palace is another must-visit in the city. *Opposite:* The interior of Indian Durbar complements its traditional cuisine; the private dining area at Caraway Kitchen.

spread over 400 acres and produces some of the best red wines—La Reserve, Insignia, and Vijay Amritraj Reserve Collection. Sign up for a winery tour and learn the finer nuances—from crushing of the berries to the bottling and storage of wines. While you're here, train your binoculars to spot Asian paradise flycatchers, thrushes, eagles, and bulbul on the rolling meadows of Nandi Hills, which are a birdwatcher's paradise. On the way back to the hotel, Mysore Silk Udyog (mysoresareeudyog.com) on Commercial Street is a good stop to shop for authentic Kanchipuram silk sarees. The store is a favourite with city traditionalists, so spend some time here to learn how to spot artificial silk. "A traditionally woven Kanchipuram silk saree will have the body and border woven separately and then interlocked together," I remember the sales person telling me, beaming with pride at the century-old legacy of the store.

Bengaluru, arguably one of the most cosmopolitan city in India, has always been my favourite destination down south. Something about the place evokes a sense of inspiration and positivity. I found the same traits in the warm hospitality of Conrad Bengaluru, because you know you have had a great stay when you look back at your room and smile, hoping to be back soon. ■



THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Conrad Bengaluru is an hour's drive from the Kempegowda International Airport (35 kms).

STAY

Choose from the 285 lake-facing rooms and suites at Conrad Bengaluru (conradhotels3.hilton.com). For a more private experience, stay in the Executive Suite, which also gives access to the Executive Lounge—a private space for dinner, relaxation, and business meetings.

SHOP

Check out the popular *ikat* label called Translate, which made

its debut in the city last month at the 19th-century bungalow, Cinnamon. ikatindia.in

NIGHTLIFE

Go on an exploration tour of the new craft breweries in town. Try Toit (toit.in) in Indira Nagar for their signature Tintin Toit, a Belgian brew, or visit Arbor Brewing Company on Magrath Road for Raging Elephant, a popular drink among locals.

WINE TOUR

Tours of Grover Zampa Vineyard take place in two sessions, beginning at 10.30 am and 1.30 pm. Tours start at ₹850; groverzampa.in

