



NO GILT PLEASE

The classic and the contemporary meet in a traditional handshake at **La Villa, Puducherry**, where a heritage bungalow transforms into a six-suite residence exuding an authentic southern flair and vintage European charm

IMPECCABLE LINEAGE

In the cobblestoned French Quarter of erstwhile Pondicherry, later christened Puducherry and lovingly called Pondy, sits a 100-year-old bungalow that sports a refurbished avatar since one year. Housed in a quaint courtyard replete with clay figurines, a spiral staircase and an al fresco restaurant, the solid structure that used to be the residence of a school principal has been transformed into a charming boutique hotel under the able direction of Puducherry-born Sylvain Segiyane Paquiry and Paris-based architects Tina Trigala and Yves Lesprit. Rescued from certain demolition, a fate that most heritage homes succumbed to, the 19th-century Villa Notre Dame de la Garde was given a new lease of life.

TRADITIONAL TEXTURES

Handcrafted Athangudi tiles sourced from neighbouring Chettinad are placed in a welcoming carpet-like pattern in the lobby that is accessed by a colonial-style veranda splashed with sunshine. It is from here that you check in while sipping the local favourite: a tall glass of herbal nanari juice. An innovative use of granite, marble, teak and wicker that complement the original beams and columns bequeath the hotel with a villa feel are aided by the presence of a century-old mango tree that shades the rooftop pool from the summer sun. Breakfast on coffee and croissants lathered with pure Coorg honey or Auroville-produced cheese to the sound of quiet conversations and squirrels rushing up trees.

SERENE SUITES

There are six of them, all unique in size and style with individual names and mood lighting. The bedrooms, furnished with soft Tirupur linen, mosaic-finished wardrobes and wooden door knobs are nestled between spacious bathrooms flaunting Fragonard amenities and rain showers and glass-encased patios with reclining chairs that make a perfect spot for a mug of early morning brew. The casual sitting areas are surrounded by flat-screen television sets, mini bars, work desks and coffee makers. Bridge to Heaven, perched on the top floor is the largest suite and haven of secluded luxury and contemporary design. With its own private terrace, it is popular with couples who crave privacy and solitude.

ENVIABLE LOCATION

Tucked away in the genteel environs of Rue Surcouf, a brief stroll from its boisterous older sibling Villa Shanti, the luxury residence is in the heartland of the old quarter at nudging distance from delectable cafes, owner-driven stores, the famed Aurobindo Ashram, the historic lighthouse and the ochre-tinted French Institute which boasts the most breathtaking view of the crashing waves. But the tranquil feel of the hotel that mirrors the indulgent laissez-faire of the town may not prod you past the gates. If the active life indeed beckons, La Villa's cheery crew willingly arrange bicycles and yoga sessions. They are even adept at propelling you in the right direction for scuba-diving lessons!