

Your Keys to the Andaman

By Reema Lokesh on March 2, 2018



That Andaman is a prized possession and a tourism jewel is an understatement and Port Blair as its capital is a place that articulates India's history and eco tourism wealth in many ways. There are few quality hotels in the region, the latest entrant being Keys Select Hotel Aqua Green, Port Blair, a stone's throw from the Port Blair airport

I was rather shocked on my recent work trip to the Island jewel of India, Andaman, that there are Indians who still feel one needs a passport to enter the Andaman region. The shock did not stop there. I was further informed by a local at the Keys Select Hotel Aqua Green, Port Blair, that there are people who feel Andaman Express (an Indian railway network) brings people to the island region by rail. Is it our education, lack of awareness of just general pure ignorance, I wonder. For me a two day work trip, planted me in the heart of history and heroism, the Cellular Jail, where the walls still echo the undeterred spirit of grit and glory, only if we care to listen. We need to wake up to the power of domestic tourism and speak to the citizens on both facts and fables, that keeps the intriguing and inspiring nature of the country alive. It is hospitality ventures like the Keys Hotels, that go beyond just playing the traditional role of accommodation suppliers, but also double up and serve as ambassadors of tourism in these powerful tourism hotspots.

Chintan Shah, cluster head-sales (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana & Andaman & Nicobar) – Keys Hotels, has been with the property since its inception and has only praise for the locals and the region. From staff training to managing the property keeping in view the high standards of sustainable tourism, he feels the property is a perfect spot for both general tourists – groups and FITs and also for the MICE business. The strategic location, which is at a stone's throw distance from Veer Savarkar International Airport, makes travelling hassle-free. The hotel's 48 spacious

rooms, with modern amenities complimentary breakfast and quality room service, works as a perfect stay option when in Port Blair. The property is also rightly placed close to major tourist attractions, such as the Cellular Jail, Japanese Bunkers, Fisheries Museum, Anthropological Museum, Samudrika Marine Museum, Carbyns Cove Beach, and Science City, all within an 8-kilometre radius. For those who wish to explore more, the property provides its guests with travel facilities and guided trips to Jolly Buoy (21 km), Ross Island (5 km), ChidiyaTapu (22 km), New Wandoor Beach (23 km) and Andaman and Nicobar Jetty (4 km), which are easily accessible by road. Spacious room size of over 270sq ft, the place promises to give its visitors and guests a comfort experience.



Chintan Shah



For food lovers, the hotel and the region promises to offer some island specialties especially those who have a liking for seafood. Step into Cascades, to experience some well crafted dishes. Chef Manish Kusumwal, corporate head chef, Keys Hotels, has handpicked some interesting ingredients sourced locally and along with his in-house team of locals, introduces you to flavours that are unique to the region. The detox drink and health mix, which is readily available in the lobby area is highly recommended. It works well on your system and gets you all set for your walk to explore a stunning region of India.

A food journey by Chef Manish Kusumwal

Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a melting point of Indian culture. This is even reflected in the food and cuisine of the local people of these islands. The finest of Indian cuisine is as rich and diverse as its civilisation. Andaman's cuisine is heavily influenced by all the cultures that came into contact with the region. Like many other aspects of Andaman culture, the influence of Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh religions in traditional food is very strong. For generations, people of south India have migrated and settled in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. They also carried their food habits and cuisine to these islands.

South Indian food is revered and loved around the country and beyond it. The unique flavours, the tangy twist, the sweet infusions and the plethora of vegetables used in any recipe is a head turner for vegetarians and non – vegetarians alike. But, it is also considered criminal to group all south Indian food under one broad banner. At Keys the daily breakfast has an array of South Indian dishes, from idlis, vada, dosa, uttapam and upma. In South India there are countless types of milagai podi one can make and we have four most popular ones on our buffet every day.

In Kerala's history, spices have always played an integral part. Their food is an example of the very same and they have offerings for people from all over the world and have everything a foodie could ask for prepared with that special Kerala taste to it. The cuisine here caters to vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. Appams from Kerala is also regularly served as a part of the buffet along with Kerala curries.

Most of the vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes of these regions have a generous use of spices and coconuts. The final tempering with oil, mustard seeds, curry leaves, red chillies and urad dhal is almost the same for most of the dishes. Bengali cuisine is known for its subtle (yet sometimes fiery) flavours, and its spread of confectioneries and desserts. It also has the only traditionally developed multi-course tradition from the subcontinent that is analogous in structure to the modern style of French cuisine, with food served course-wise rather than all at once.

Macher jhol and panch phoran chorchori are the most commonly known dishes from this region. Use of mustard oil is a must in all food preparations. With an in house Bengali chef we try to produce some of the best recipes from the region for our guests.

Sea foods are the main cuisine of Andamanese. So Andaman is the paradise of sea food lovers. Lobsters, crabs, prawns and a variety of fish are found here, that can be prepared in choice of preparations, South Indian, Bengali style curry, Oriental or Continental by our trained chefs in all cuisines. There is plenty of delicious vegetarian food as well.

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