The Suite Life

For a homely vibe
Serviced residence company Ascott is slowly growing its apart-hotel brands across India

At home, elsewhere
A view of rooms at Citadines, Chennai – a 188-room, branded Sandal Suites for Ascott locally.

While there are plenty of unorganised serviced apartments all over the country, those resemble guest houses more than anything. There are only a handful of big branded players in the segment in the country. Apart from Ascott, there is Oakwood, and Fraser suites, and now, Sandal Suites has entered the fray. Of course, a lot of hotels have been trying to edge into the same space. For instance, Leela offers residences, as does ITC Eldora.

But there’s a difference in the hotel offering and a pure play service residence, insists Ajit Konchili, area general manager of Ascott in India. The larger room sizes, the amenities, the service style, and the fact that the model is based on 80% of guests staying long (defined here as at least a month). Since the idea is to make the place seem like a home away from home – the staff is more unostentatious.

An overnight stay at Citadines reveals the differences. You can opt for either a basic studio room, a one-bedroom or a two-bedroom apartment here. I am staying at a one-bedroom unit, with a separate living room space, a fully-equipped kitchenette, and a lovely little sit-out overlooking a lot of foliage. From large water bottles is lots of charging points, a big work space, a media hub, washing machines. There’s everything that the extended-stay visitor would need. F&B is unassured.

At Citadines, it is operated by Delhi Highway, and currently only hotels, the 24-hour coffee shop is open, though an Indian cuisine restaurant will open soon. The space for a bar has been built, but the new highway rule has stalled its opening.

From the rooftop swimming pool, you get a faint glimpse of the coastline. At an introductory price of INR 222,854 for the base unit, including buffet breakfast and WiFi, obviously the serviced residence seems more valuable for money than a hotel room. Even more so, when you hear from Vijayasekar that they are thinking in pick-up-and drop-services to executives of IT firms in the vicinity as well.

The writer (as a guest of the property)

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