



CHITRASWAMINATHAN

Meet the new Indian traveller who wants to combine multiple experiences into a single holiday. One day, he may be adventurous enough to ski on the steep snow-laden slopes of Gulmarg. The next day, he may soothe his senses with the sight of blooming tulips in the gardens of Kashmir or rekindle romance with a leisurely boat ride on the mirror-calm Dal Lake. He may even love to indulge his spiritual side by going on a road journey to Jammu and taking the long walk to the Vaishno Devi temple.

But the modern tourist's journey may necessarily not be in this order. There may be those who do not like to miss out on their annual pilgrimage to a prominent temple, yet would like to add some fun and relaxation to make it a fabulous family outing.

Here step in resorts like Marasa Sarovar Premiere. Have you ever imagined making your visits to Tirupati truly memorable experiences? Of course, a good *darshan* of Balaji and tucking into delicious laddus is the focus of a visit to the seven hills. But Marasa Sarovar Premiere, one of the country's few theme-based resorts, combines divinity, décor and fine dining to provide the new-age vacationer the pleasure of a break from the routine. The resort is styled on the 10 avatars of Vishnu, with the design of various areas

imbibing the spirit of Dasavatara.

With 70 hotels in 48 destinations, the resort boasts of not only five-star facilities, it is also easily accessible for pilgrims – 30 minutes from Tirumala, 18 km from the airport, 4.5 km from the railway station and 4 km from the bus stand.

"It is important today to design a hotel or resort keeping in mind the on-the-move Indian, who wants to explore leisure options, sometimes combining it with work. And that is what we looked at when we came up with this concept-driven

resort-cum-hotel in Tirupati. Even if most of our guests are pilgrims, we want them to enjoy their stay in this upscale facility," says general manager Rishu Roshan.

There are two speciality restaurants (including one vegetarian) – Lotus Café and Krishna – a swimming pool, a games room, a health club and a spa. With a spacious business centre, banqueting and conferencing facilities, the hotel is also looking at drawing the corporate and business crowd to host meetings, workshops, product launches and exhibitions. Besides 121

rooms, there are suites for those who seek extra comfort and luxury.

If you are the kind who enjoys going to ancient temples and monuments, you could extend your stay and visit Kapila Theeratham, Padmavathy temple and Chandragiri Fort.

Those who have been to Tirupati earlier can perceive the change the city is undergoing with multi-storied apartments, malls and stores making their way into this spiritual hub. After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, Tirupati has been gaining prominence with the state government's proposed plan to transform it into a 'mega city'.

"And we are happy with this decision. With increased activity, we expect to draw more crowds in the coming years," adds Roshan.

(The writer was at Marasa Sarovar Premiere on invitation of the hotel.)

Temple run

Here's how you can turn a temple visit into a fun-filled holiday