

A lavish check-in

JW Marriott Kolkata's just opened doors with grand weddings, sumptuous meals and premium services, says Yashodeep Sengupta



Calcutta has added a brand new luxury address to its portfolio of five-star hotels. With its unmistakable presence on EM Bypass (its colossal glass architectural structure stands out), the JW Marriott Kolkata is the US hotel chain's first property in eastern India. And within a month of its launch, JW Marriott Kolkata has become the city's wedding hotspot of sorts.

When *The Telegraph Graphiti* visited the hotel for an exclusive chat with the general manager, Ranju Alex (it's the first hotel she's opening), the lobby was buzzing with the wedding guests of two families. "We have already hosted nine weddings in three weeks," says an upbeat Alex, 45, whose last assignment was at the Goa Marriott Resort & Spa.

In fact, people are making a beeline to Sangam — the 13,450sqft in-hotel ballroom, which is "the largest pillarless ballroom in the city" with a 32ft high ceiling, four dividable sections, an elegant bridal room and a spa-

rious pre-function area. A 64-panel LED wall ("India's largest"), rose gold panels and six exquisitely crafted chandeliers flown in from the Czech Republic add to the ballroom's glamour.

That apart, JW Marriott Kolkata also boasts a 3,200sq ft business meeting space called The Living Room, which offers five meeting studios, seating and dining areas, and an open kitchen.

"Calcutta is a huge market when it comes to weddings, food and conferencing," says Alex.

However, JW Marriott Kolkata also aims to put its best foot forward with luxury offerings for its guests. The hotel has 281 rooms (191 have opened in the first phase of the launch) — all with four-fixture bathrooms and 49-inch LED TVs. There's also the in-house luxury Spa by JW, a spectacular outdoor infinity pool and Jacuzzi, and the JW Fitness Centre.

And when you are opening a five-star hotel in Calcutta, how can you not ensure the best spread of food? Take a look at the JW Kitchen, a multi-cuisine, all-day dining restaurant that serves buffet spreads as well as a la carte din-



(Facing page) JW Marriott Kolkata has an unmistakable presence on EM Bypass with its colossal glass architectural structure; (Left) The all-day dining restaurant JW Kitchen scores with its thematic gastronomic hubs; (Below left) The interiors of the soon-to-open Gold nightclub and bar is done up in shades of gold

cakes and pastries. The lounge will soon offer afternoon tea experiences and cocktail evenings. On the outside, the Pool Bar will captivate you with great, unobstructed views, a wooden deck and intimate cabanas. Perfect for charming sundowners and Sunday poolside brunches.

What's more, the nightlife scene in Calcutta's going to take a turn for the better with the soon-to-open Gold nightclub and bar. Done up in shades of gold and bearing motifs of gold mine, the bar is set to serve mixes "with a lot of innovation".

Says Alex, who was with The Oberoi Grand till 2010: "It's a myth that Calcutta is a slow city. Our internal research shows that the average occupancy in Calcutta hotels is 75 per cent, which is at par with those in other cities like Mumbai, and is good for business."

In fact, Alex has also gone all out to "ensure that there's a touch of Bengal in all corners of the hotel". So while there are *kolke* (paisley) patterns on staff uniform, hotel carpets, chandeliers and bed headboards, turnaround services include offering *moa*, sandesh and macarons made of *gondhorajlime*.

There's more. The hotel corridors are lined with pictures of Calcutta scenes and gifts for guests include griffin (the hotel's logo) models made in Kumortuli. "We are even planning to organise *dhumuchi* dance sessions in front of the hotel," says Alex.

While the hotel has made a dashing debut in the city, the second phase launch in March 2017 will see the opening of the remaining 90 rooms including the Presidential Suite, and restaurants like Tuscan Grill and Rooftop Lounge. "We have big plans for the New Year's Eve too, wait for it," says Alex ebulliently. ♦

ners. The popular grub-spot is up and running and also booked for several days ahead.

Check out its thematic gastronomic hubs — there's one that serves South East Asian cuisine like satays and dimsums; and another that offers a mix of Mediterranean, Italian and European. There's also an Indian counter doling out biryanis, dal makhani, kebabs, mutton curries and even chaats. However, the crowd-puller is the colourful desserts section with a wide array of cheesecakes, Indian sweets, panna cotta and more on display.

Says Raheel Ahmad, executive chef, JW Marriott Kolkata: "We emphasise using fresh local ingredients in our selections."

Another hot new offering is the Asian fine dining restaurant, Vintage Asia (80-cover) that specialises in Thai and Chinese dishes. "Vintage Asia specialises in reviving lost Asian food. We

have a Chinese chef who's a master in wok style and noodles," says Ahmad.

That's not all. In the offing are Tuscan Grill, an Italian speciality restaurant (think wood fire-burnt pizzas) and the Rooftop Lounge, ("the highest rooftop lounge in a star property in Calcutta," says Alex) that boasts sweeping views of the city from the hotel's 24th floor.

JW Lounge offers a panoramic view of the city through its all-glass façade and is the perfect place to unwind over a steaming cuppa and freshly baked

JW Marriott's Sangam is the largest pillarless ballroom in Calcutta and comes with a 64-panel LED wall and imported chandeliers

HOTELS