

NEW RULES TO EXPERIENCE, SAFE AND SECURE — t2 CHECKED OUT THE ALL NEW RESPONSIBLE LUXURY STAYCATION EXPERIENCE AT ITC ROYAL BENGAL



PICK-UP

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The last time I stayed at an ITC property was around my birthday, happy as always with the service of the hotels. A lot has changed since March and here after three months since the coronavirus pandemic hit us, I was all set to step into ITC Royal Bengal to experience the new normal. I will admit, I was quite apprehensive as I was waiting for the hotel car to pick me up from home. My apprehensions, though, were somewhat put to rest as the car arrived. As part of their Safe Car Promise programme, the chauffeur was wearing his safety gear — mask and gloves — and before I could open the door of the car he took out his disinfectant spray and sprayed them first on the door and then all over my luggage. He showed me his “safe” status on his Aragya Setu app and his temperature recording. Convinced, I sat inside the car to be further impressed as the car had a shield that separated the front and back seats of the car. I had a pair of fresh gloves and mask waiting for me, secured safely in separate envelopes.

ARRIVAL & CHECK-IN

S-M-O-O-T-H! The moment I got off at the porch, my luggage was quickly fumigated, sanitised and labelled ‘sanitaged’. Temperature check, sanitisation of hands was mandatory and I was offered fresh mask and gloves too. Upon entering the sprawling lobby, I missed the buzz and noticed that the floral centrepiece was missing. Floor marking, safe distancing and awareness initiatives about the virus ruled instead. Since I was a pre-registered guest, all I had to do was sign the registration card. The front desk had shields and there were holders for sanitised pens and trays for me to drop the registration form. Welcome to the new normal, I told myself.

ROOM EXPERIENCE

As I reached my room with a sanitised room key I noticed a seal on my door that I needed to take off. This meant, after a thorough cleaning of my room in the absence of any in-room guests, the housekeeping staff had sealed the room, indicating no one else had entered the room post-cleaning with high quality disinfectant Virex that is used in hospitals. Once a guest

checks out, housekeeping staff wearing PPE gear fumigate the room and it is offered to the next guest after 24 hours at least.

From the last time I stayed, the room had some changes. Digital communication through

At ITC Hotels, offering our guests experiences that are in harmony with the best environment and social standards is integral to our philosophy. Our WeAssure initiative is an industry first in enhancing hygiene and safety protocols within our hotels. We have also re-engineered our guest experience with special training to staff and zero to low-contact engagement. Legendary standards in accommodation and our chef curated menus offering the best from our kitchens combine to offer an unforgettable Staycation — Tejinder Singh, area manager East ITC Hotels & cluster general manager ITC Royal Bengal & ITC Sonar



scanning of QR codes has replaced any sort of physical contact. Other amenities like dental kit, sewing kit and minibar were absent and were available on request. Everything else was on point, I missed having a

personal butler but then, welcome to the new experience.

DINING

Hungry, I walked into Darjeeling Lounge (after a temperature check, again!), the only F&B outlet open in the hotel. The lounge is now divided by glass walls to maintain social distancing. Once seated, one is bound to notice the stark changes — hand sanitiser bottles and QR codes, crockery and cutlery and even glassware are packed and sealed in food grade covers. The e-menu is supported with digital billing options too. To begin my meal, I had an *amla* and basil-based immunity booster shot followed by a fave North-eastern dish from the well-curated menu that has a fine balance of cuisines.

SALON SERVICES

With spa services being suspended by the government for the time being, I walked into the Salon Di Wills — yes, salon after more than three months! For the time being, the salon offers limited services like haircut, wash, hair spa, manicure, pedicure, hair colouring and hair treatments. Staff in proper PPE gear? Check. Equipment sterilising machine? Check. The pamper session was stress-free and just what I needed after what seemed like ages.

LAUNDRY SERVICES

I happened to spill some tea on my white shirt. Panicking, I



CHECK-IN

ROOM



DINING



SALON



LAUNDRY



CHECKOUT

IN-ROOM DINING

called for ITC Hotel's signature laundry service — Lavandaria. Contactless being the key, I filled out a form, put it in a bag, hung it on the door knob and called laundry service to collect it. I was informed that the shirt would be delivered within some hours after rigorous wash cycles at 70 degree Celcius with anti-bacterial disinfectants.

IN-ROOM DINING

Netflix kept me hooked and I didn't want to step out of my room for dinner so it was contactless in-room dining time for me! QR code scanned, food order placed... after 35 minutes food was delivered, properly covered, right at my doorstep.

Since buffet services are suspended for now, you can call for your breakfast menu, where you can tick on the options you wish to go for and also select a time you would want to go and collect it from Darjeeling Lounge. The Grab & Go menu is specially designed for breakfast and ideal for takeaways. But if you are lazy like me, opt for the Knock-and-Drop service where your selected food items will be dropped carefully outside your door. All the edibles came in disposable and biodegradable corn starch packaging and the beverages in disposable paper cups.

Plastic bottles have been completely discarded at ITC Hotels and has been replaced by SunyaAqua, a responsible luxury initiative, where portable water is produced in the premises of the hotel using high-end purification technologies that meet the best international standards. The water is packaged in air-tight glass bottles.

CHECKOUT

Just like check-in, you can decide if you would want someone to carry your luggage or if you would like to go for self service. I opted for the latter. The checkout system was the easiest, I had to just drop my room key in the box kept outside the elevator (that is equipped with floor marking, sanitisers, wastebins and tissues) and I was ready to bid goodbye.

OFFERS

There are an array of staycation offers for you. City Getaways offers include luxury accommodation for two, signature breakfast, Wi-Fi and more. You can also modify stay dates till October 31, 2020. Prices starting at Rs 5,969-plus (T&C applied). If you want more, opt for All in Getaway — an all-inclusive holiday package with accommodation, all meals and other facilities like laundry, early check-in/late checkout among others. Packages start at Rs 8,999-plus.