



When you walk to your villa along a twisty garden path through a traditional entrance, you find yourself right in front of the outdoor Jacuzzi. **Opposite:** The resort with 21 villas all inspired by noted architects Laurie Baker and Geoffrey Bawa is situated 50 kilometres away from Thiruvananthapuram and is a 45-minute cab ride from Marthandam railway station. Dress and hat, Dior; loafers, Tod's.



## LAKESIDE LUXURY IN TRAVANCORE

Geetika Chandra explores a new resort on the borders of the pristine Chittar lake, a place miraculously still untouched by hordes of tourists.

Photographed by Vikram Bawa  
Produced by Ragini Singh

# Chittar Lake is a beautiful,

hidden-away and hardly talked about jewel, on the borders between Tamil Nadu and Kerala. I only came to know about it when a cousin spoke about her research on plant life around lakes in Southern India, and mentioned how beautiful and virgin this area continued to be unlike many other such places in Kerala. A little Googling lead me to a new property that had opened here called Anantya Resorts. We decided to drive down along with my cousin to explore the area and get a long over-due reboot from Coimbatore. The resort is best connected through Thiruvananthapuram—the drive from there is just 45 minutes. But I've been posted in Coimbatore for the last two years and find the best way to explore the region is to drive. It was an eight-hour drive to Chittar Lake, right along beautiful villages that bordered dense forests of Ranni, Periyar and Thenmalla.

The last stretch of this drive takes you through unspoiled plantations on the foothills of Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari district, where lush green vegetation appears along a clear blue lake with rolling mountain slopes. Even the journey of gradual ascent leading to this mesmerising retreat, through the meandering roads dotted with rubber and areca nut trees, pepper and beetle leaf creepers, is a treat.

A little offshoot off the major highway takes you to the resort in Thuckalay, not far from the southernmost tip of India, which is fittingly named Anantya—infinity or the endless in Sanskrit.

Once a part of the erstwhile Travancore state, the sprawling 1,000-acre area that is home to the resort was bought by some British planters in the early 20th century. Around the late 1920s, it passed on to its present owners, Vaikundam Estate—named after the divine abode of Lord Vishnu.

The 20-acre resort itself is on a peninsula overlooking the clear blue Chittar Lake and forms a part of the larger rubber plantation of Vaikundam Estate. It is truly Travancore's best-kept secret!

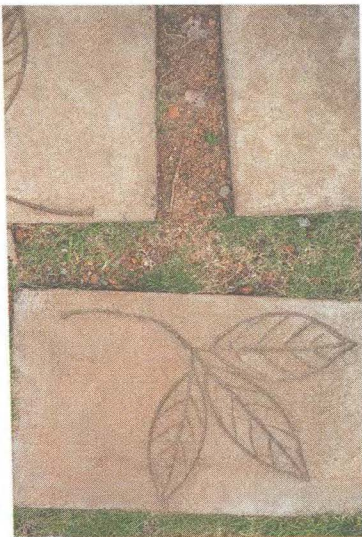
Here on the plantation, founder and director Lakshmy Ashok spent many weekends during her childhood. Over the years, the weekend home developed into a resort concept that allowed the



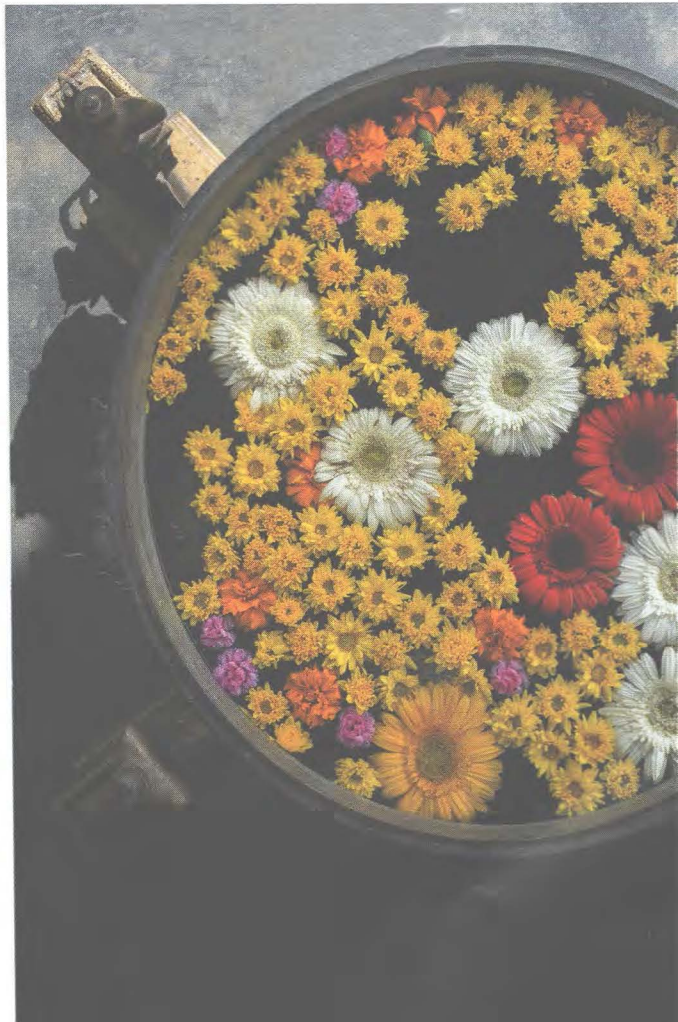
family to share this magical lakeside with guests, too.

“Having spent infinite moments here as kids, with the butterflies, birds, insects, the beautiful lake, the mountains, trees, the rains and the rainbow, we decided to name it Anantya. The experience can truly be endless, infinite,” she added.

“My kids, too, spent a lot of time here. They wouldn't want to leave, even when we had a simple, functional bungalow, with nothing really fancy to do but enjoy nature. Now, we want many more children to experience what we cherished and continue to do so.”



Clockwise from far left: Model by the infinity pool; room numbers; the villas have private gardens that overlook the lake; a wooden and metal urli with flowers at the entrance to Svaad; Siddhi villa at the resort; brass detailing on the doors to the pool villa; rocks with stenciled leaves on the pathway. Bodysuit, Surendri; shorts, Shivan & Narresh; sunglasses, Fendi @ Safilo; watch, Tag Heuer.





A tree-shaded path leading to the villas.  
**Opposite:** Steps that go to the spa, wooden architecture inspired by Padmanabhapuram Palace.





For a location so mesmerising, it is not too far away from the hustle and bustle of a city. Thiruvananthapuram airport is around 50 km away to its northwest. One can also take a train to Marthandam and from there on a 45-minute cab ride.

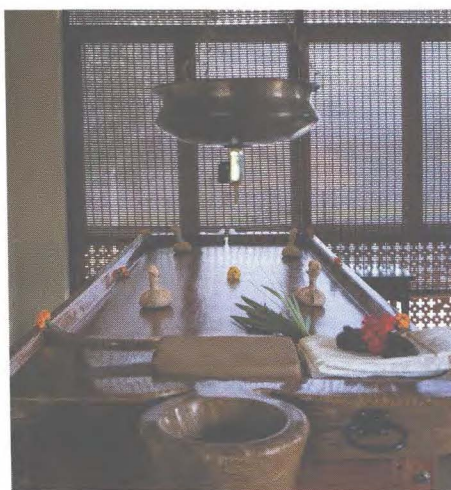
Those looking for a break away from city life will find Anantya a very rewarding option, where you can unwind and reboot.

Each of the 21 villas of the resort—inspired by noted architects Laurie Baker and Geoffrey Bawa—are built along the Chittar Lake. Named after the 7 Yoga Chakras they have a veranda facing the rising sun. Each of them is also slightly

detached from the rest, ensuring quietitude and privacy.

Anantya also has the comfort and the refined luxury one expects from a resort. Yet, it exhibits a sense of minimalism and simplicity. After you walk to your sanctuary along a twisty garden path through a traditional entrance, you arrive at a beautiful outdoor Jacuzzi, perfect for spending late afternoons in.

A special, candle-lit dinner under the stars and overlooking your private lily pond is just a call away. Otherwise, a sumptuous spread of Indian, continental, Italian, Mexican and Asian cuisines, besides spa food, is an option at their alfresco dining hall, Svaad. As the resort is just about in their first big season, not all dishes on the menu may be available.



Clockwise from far left: Beautiful lotus motifs decorate Svaad; a model walks through the garden; a spread with Chettinad and Kerala specialities at the restaurant, a traditional Ayurvedic spa room at Astitva. Dress, Selvage; necklace, Vinita Michael; earrings, Ritika Sachdeva; heels, Christian Louboutin.

One of the treats when you're here is to hear the chirping of birds of a wide variety early morning and watching the horizon where the earth and water meld with the skies to create some breathtaking hues of colour between the gentle slopes of the mountains and beyond.

A hot cup of south Indian coffee is a welcome companion.

Being in a region famous for its Ayurvedic heritage, it is only natural for Anantya to have an authentic spa on the property. The wellness and spa centre called Astitva, meaning existence, is minimalistic and extremely calming.

The resort has partnered with the

Pankajakasthuri Group, highly respected for their Ayurveda Medical College in the region as well as their leading research.

After a quick consultation with the doctor, a revitalising and therapeutic treatment awaits you in the aroma-filled rooms—again overlooking the lake. Trying to stay awake is a futile exercise.

There are several other options as well for those who want more from Anantya. One can pick up a picnic basket and head to the dense plantations, go for a ride on one of the several bicycles kept for guests, take a dip in the swimming pool right next to the lake or enjoy a game of volleyball, badminton, chess or carom. The more adventurous can also book themselves for rock-climbing or nature treks. +