

At your special service, say hotels to women guests

Now women have an added reason to travel alone! Leading Indian hotels are offering exclusive wings, separate floors and specialised services to protect and pamper them - a new concept in the country.

The ITC hotel chain, for instance, has Eva Floors - floors dedicated to women where men are simply not allowed.

'Since security is the prime concern, we bar men from entering this floor. The lifts don't stop at the floor unless you swipe the lift board with your room key card,' says Dhunji Kavarna, general manager at Mumbai's ITC Maratha.

'Even hotel staff such as butlers and housekeepers are women on these floors,' he says.

With the number of women business travellers shooting up in recent years, the hospitality industry in India has begun to catch up with international trends - sensitising their services to meet the women travellers' specific needs.

The Taj Group, the Oberois, JW Marriott, Hyatt, everyone has something special on offer for the woman traveller.

'Being sensitive to the needs of the woman travelling alone is a good concept. Extra security concern is equally welcome,' says Devita Saraf, executive director, Zenith Computers.

She personally prefers ITC hotels during her business trips.

The Taj Mahal Hotel in [New Delhi](#) has a separate ladies' wing. It also employs woman butlers or chauffeurs who assist guests while shopping or travelling in the city.

Many hotel rooms have been sensitised to women's needs - with provisions for sunscreen lotions, moisturisers, deep cleansing milk, scrubs, soft textured towels, satin bathrobes and silk slippers.

The food menu offers special health-oriented delicacies and low calorie options keeping women in mind.

Says Pankaj Sampat, general manager, Taj President, in Mumbai's upmarket Cuffe Parade area: 'There are skirt hangers in the cupboard, vanity mirrors for makeup, flowers, international women's magazines and a well designed cosmetics boxes in our rooms.'

Hotels in India began to offer such specialised services several years ago, but exclusive rooms and floors are a more recent phenomenon.

'This is an international trend and one must stay on a par with world class services,' says Sampat.

The hotel, is yet to offer exclusive floors, but is planning to increase the number of its women-only rooms from eight to 12.

ITC Maurya Sheraton and Towers, Delhi, was the first hotel to offer the concept of Eva Floors - dedicating an entire floor with standardised facilities to women guests.

The ITC Maratha, which has 18 rooms exclusively for women, also provides a videophone in each room to check from inside who's at the door. All calls are screened.

The Eva Floors don't stop at security alone. Even for a drink after a hard day's work, there is a ladies-only lounge. And for that there is no need to step off the exclusive floor.

'Ladies can also indulge in beauty treatments and spa facilities which are available at a discount. We also offer astrology and palm reading facilities while meditation, reiki and yoga classes are offered free of cost,' said Kavarna.

The service staff also helps with special requests like unpacking, packing, and even draping a sari for foreign guests. These 'Eva Floor' services are offered in all ITC hotels at no extra cost.

Even if they don't have dedicated floors, most business hotels worth their salt have at least woken up to the issue.

To ensure optimum security, most hotels these days at least offer free pick-up and drop-off services from the airport and rooms are offered near well-lit elevators where guards are present.

'We do not have dedicated rooms but we provide extra security and care to unescorted women guests,' says Deepa Sridhar, corporate communications manager, Sarovar Hotels Pvt Ltd.

As more and more women join the 'travelling' club, even the corner guesthouse will be forced to offer sensitised facilities that are now exclusive five-star offerings, say industry experts.

Who knows then, instead of turning white with worry, perhaps loved ones back home would be turning green with envy!

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