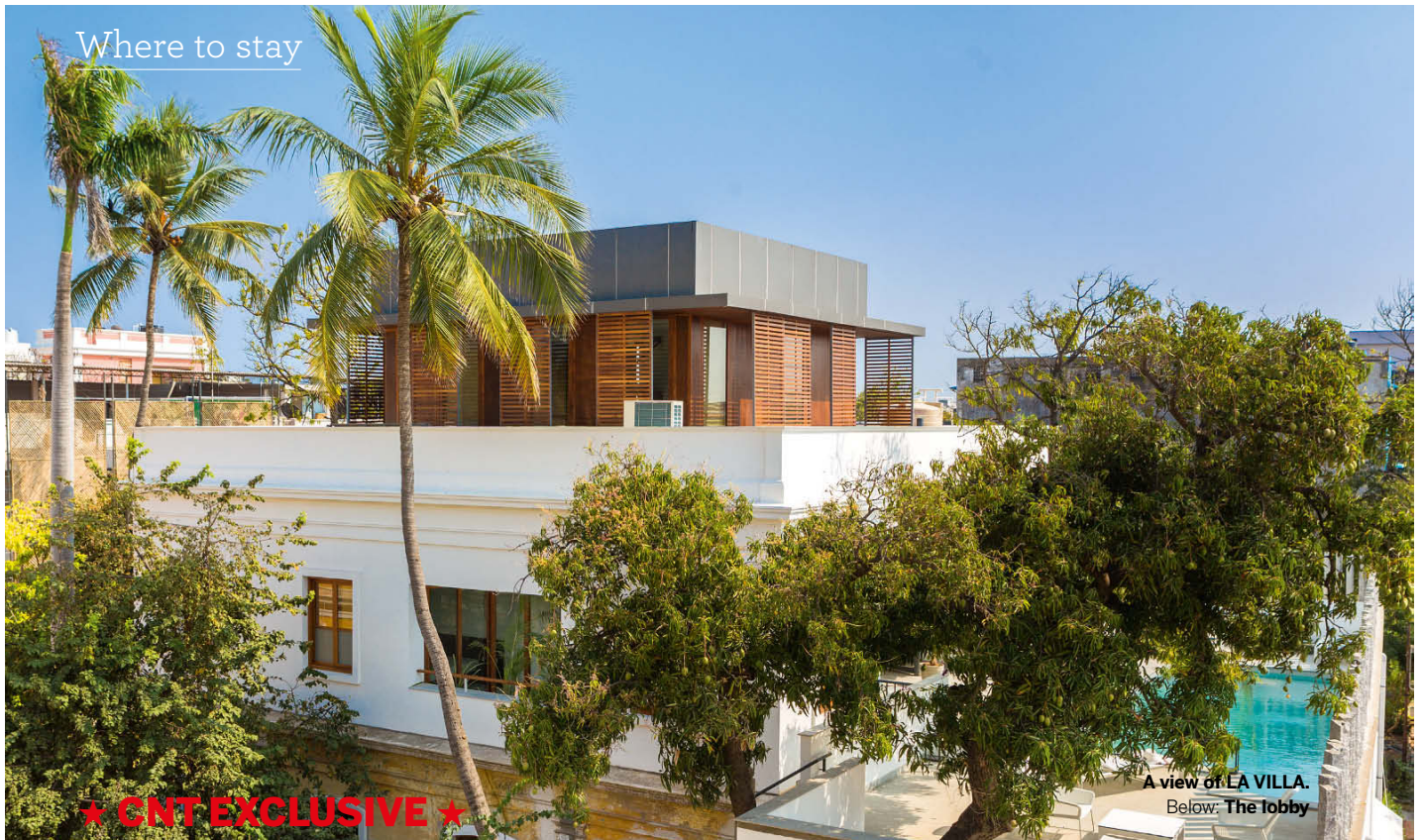


Where to stay



★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★

A view of LA VILLA.
Below: The lobby

LA VILLA, PUDUCHERRY

SNEAK PEEK The stylish new boutique hotel offers a wonderfully tranquil escape in this charming city, says **Laura Griffith-Jones**

You'll find this new six-suite beauty on a sleepy, cobbled street in Puducherry's delightful French Quarter. French architects Tina Trigala and Yves Lesprit (who also designed the popular Villa Shanti) have transformed the 19th-century colonial manor into a chic retreat, using local materials and traditional handicrafts to create contemporary design. The lobby's pillars and walnut-brown front door are original, but the wicker lanterns, coal-black Kadappa stone floor with vibrant

tree. The rooms are done up in muted colours, with teak wood, silver desk lamps and space-age extendable reading lights, and come with free wi-fi and flat-screen televisions.

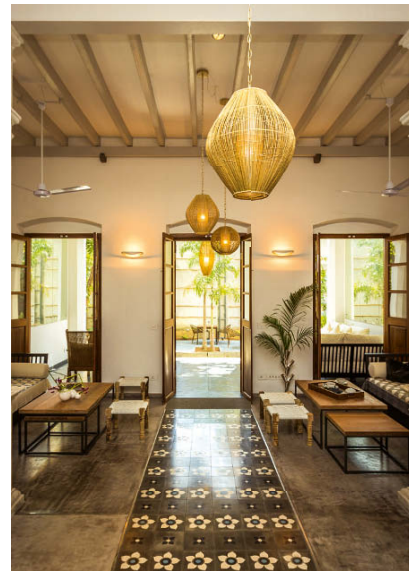
A corkscrew-like alfresco staircase takes you up to the aquamarine swimming pool on the first floor. At one end, there are smart sunloungers with old masala grinders as side tables and, at the other, there's an L-shaped sofa, with super-squishy cushions, under a leafy mango tree—the perfect spot to sip a cooling homemade herbal nannari juice.

‘Free wi-fi and flat-screen TVs don't take away from the charm of this quaint six-suite property’

Chettinad tiles and hand-painted maps of India and Tamil Nadu on the walls are all new.

The individually named suites all have their own quirk factor. For instance, scrawled across the bathroom door of India Song are the lyrics of a song from a 1975 French drama of the same name. On the private terrace of Timeless, bamboo sticks bunched around a lamp give the impression of an illuminated

The restaurant dishes up sumptuous (mainly) French dishes such as boeuf bourguignon and leek fondue with saffron shrimps on a bed of tagliatelle. Breakfast can be served by the pool, in your room or in the pretty garden, and includes natural yoghurt with deliciously sweet Coorg honey, croissants, pains au chocolat and baguettes so fresh that you could be in France. 🍷



LA VILLA

11 rue Surcouf, Puducherry (www.lavillaonpuducherry.com) Doubles from ₹13,490

GETTING THERE

Fly to Chennai with **SpiceJet** (www.spicejet.com) or **IndiGo** (www.spicejet.com) from any major Indian city. From there, it's a three-hour drive to Puducherry.