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Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry



Business

Weddings: Increasing Hotel Revenue

HRD

Training & Retaining Workforce for Hotel's Success

Property

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center

Housekeeping

Housekeeping in Hotel Public Spaces

Heritage Hotels

Heirlooms of Indian Tourism

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WA21 with & without Arms


AD23


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WA27


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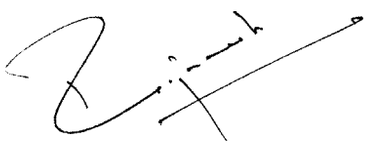
Numerous hotels in India are drenched in history and filled with antiques which tell a lively and vibrant tale of a bygone era while, at the same time, providing all the modern comforts, and all this is achieved by heritage hotels. Cover story views the different aspects of these heritage hotels and if there are any standard specifications codes to judge their standards of comfort, etc. assuring the tourists of their wellbeing and contentment.

Not only destination weddings but wedding, in general, are contributing to the hotel's revenue in a great measure. Hotels and resorts have been proving an attractive venue as compared to the other sites, like halls, for people of all categories. The ceremonies and other rituals are often conducted in venues within premises of reputed hotels across the country. Business story takes a look at the facilities and other plus points offered by hotels.

The hotels have to ensure that the employees remain loyal and dedicated to the property. HRD section in its second part delves on why it is important to train the employees and also probes on their aspirations and needs and other aspects to help in retaining them.

Good housekeeping of the public spaces as well as of the hotel rooms, helps retain many satisfied guests for the future. The Housekeeping section finds how with many other services of star hotels, the housekeeping of public areas has undergone a remarkable change.

Regular sections also update on the latest news & reports and people movements within the industry.



HAMMER
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An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

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HAMMER
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inside







Cover Pic:
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COVER STORY 18
Heritage Hotels: Heirlooms of Indian Tourism

BUSINESS 26
Weddings: Increasing Hotel Revenue

HRD 34
Training & Retaining Workforce for Hotel's Success

PROPERTY 40
Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center

HOUSEKEEPING 44
Housekeeping in Hotel Public Spaces

DEPARTMENTS

Event 04

News 06

Appointment 16

Product Preview 46

Interview 48



Concludes With Setting Higher Goals

The 7th edition of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE 2024) concludes along with four co-located shows on a successful note with 942 exhibitors showcasing their excellence in the hospitality sector. The integrated showcase of four co-located shows with IHE 2024 had exhibitions, discussions, and culinary excellence held at the India Expo Centre & Mart proven to be a cornerstone for innovation and collaboration within the hospitality industry by generating serious business enquiries estimated worth Rs12,000 crore.

The holistic showcase representing luxury hotels, resorts, homestays, restaurants, catering, decoration and the F&B sector drew a huge footfall of approximately 90,000 B2B visitors during 4 dynamic days of the Expo. Attendees witnessed a comprehensive range of products and services on display, from cutting-edge technology solutions to sustainable practices and innovative culinary trends. The final day of IHE 2024 solidified the expo's reputation as India's premier B2B hospitality event.

IHE 2024 was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. The grand beginning of the expo took place with a glittering ceremony attended by eminent dignitaries such as the Ambassador of Myanmar, H.E. Moe Kyaw Aung; Chief Trade Counsellor of the Embassy of Vietnam, Mr. Bui Trung Thuong; and Shri Premal Mehta, Director of Aakar Exhibition, among others. Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the pivotal role of IHE in promoting India's hospitality sector globally.



Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Chairman of India Expo Centre & Mart, expressed pride in hosting such a prestigious event, highlighting the collaboration with Vietnam as the Partner Country and Himachal Pradesh as the Focus State. This collaboration brought unique cultural and culinary experiences to the forefront, setting the tone for a vibrant and diverse expo.



The expo's diverse lineup included exciting culinary competitions, such as the Master Bakers Challenge India 2024, Pastry Queen India and the India Pizza League Championship, which drew participants from across the country. The Vietnam Food Festival, led by Chef Thong Nguyen Van, showcased authentic Vietnamese cuisine, leaving attendees delighted with its rich flavours and cultural heritage.

IHE 2024 has set new benchmarks for excellence in the hospitality industry. The organizers are already setting higher goals for IHE 2025, aiming to expand the expo's reach and impact even further. The commitment to fostering growth, innovation, and collaboration remains unwavering, with plans to continue showcasing the best of India's hospitality sector on the global stage.

The India International Hospitality Expo (IHE) is the largest hospitality expo in India, dedicated to showcasing the latest innovations, products, and services in the hospitality industry. Since its inception, IHE has been a catalyst for growth and development in the sector, bringing together industry leaders and professionals from around the world.

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Sterling Holiday Resorts Expands in Udaipur

Sterling Holiday Resorts opened the Sterling Aravalli Udaipur, in Rajasthan. This marks the 3rd resort in the royal city of Udaipur and the 6th in the state of Rajasthan.

The resort, set amidst 2.5 acres of landscaped outdoors with fantastic views of the Aravalli Hills has been purpose-built



as an Iconic Destination Wedding venue, in the renowned Destination Wedding capital – Udaipur. With 40,000 sq.ft of manicured lush-green lawns and multiple banquet venues that can accommodate up to 5000 plus guests for multiple pre/post ceremonies, the resort is ideal for a lavish Destination Wedding.

With live streaming, engaging fun-games and activities for the guests, curated theme decors, a choice of grand menus and dedicated wedding managers to take care of all the details from planning to execution of the wedding, the guests can relax and enjoy the momentous occasion.

Sterling Aravalli Udaipur, is inspired by the unique haveli architecture that is synonymous with the palatial Rajasthani design, with Jharokas adorning the façade and inner walls. The 67 well-appointed large rooms and suites include Classic Rooms, Haveli Rooms, Premier Rooms with pool views, spacious Privilege Suites overlooking the Aravalli ranges, and a Four Bedroom Haveli Suite that pay homage to the region's vintage architectural style.

A fine dining vegetarian restaurant, 'Airavat' is the trendsetter in signature Rajasthani cuisine along with popular global favourites. The swimming pool in the centre courtyard, and the soon to be unveiled Signature Spa and Lounge Bar offer additional opportunities for relaxation and entertainment, further enhancing the experience for the guests.

Shangri-La Eros New Delhi Unveils In-House Water Bottling Plant 'Essence'



In a significant move to lessen its carbon footprint and reinforce its eco-friendly practices, Shangri-La Eros New Delhi launches its in-house water bottling plant, 'Essence'. Dedicated to providing high-calibre amenities and an exceptional guest experience, Shangri-La Eros New Delhi has long been committed to sustainable conservation within the hospitality industry. With project 'Essence', the hotel now filters, purifies, and bottles drinking water on-site, ensuring clarity, cleanliness, and safety. This initiative seamlessly aligns with the hotel's environmental philosophy and aims to preserve indigenous ecosystems.

The bottling plant employs groundbreaking CDI (Capacitive Deionization) technology, demonstrating the hotel's dedication to environmental sustainability. CDI technology efficiently removes salts from ground or surface water without the use of harmful chemicals or membrane filters. Each drop of water undergoes meticulous refinement through a series of filtration stages, followed by the introduction of ozone, a disinfectant far superior to chlorine.

The program provides fresh water to guests in sterilized and sealed glass bottles, eliminating an estimated 122,304 single-use plastic bottles in approximately two and a half months. This bottled water is now a permanent amenity in all guest rooms, food and beverage outlets, and event spaces.

SAMHI Executes Agreement with Marriott for Rebranding Two Hotels

SAMHI Hotels Ltd, a hotel ownership and asset management platform in India, has entered into agreements for the rebranding of two of its hotels acquired as part of ACIC portfolio.

SAMHI has entered into a management agreement with Marriott for the rebranding of its 217 rooms hotel in Pune to a Courtyard by Marriott branded hotel. The conversion and rebranding will occur post a renovation set to conclude by the end of FY2026. The renovation and rebranding will allow the hotel to reposition itself in the Pune hotel market, which has performed well over past few years. This will be the second Courtyard by Marriott owned by SAMHI Hotels, the other being Courtyard by Marriott at Outer Ring Road, Bengaluru.

It has also entered into a management agreement with Marriott for the rebranding of its 114 rooms hotel in Jaipur to a Tribute Portfolio branded hotel. The conversion and rebranding will occur post a renovation set to conclude by the end of FY2026. The hotel, which is located in the heart of the city, will be redeveloped to be a part of the Tribute Portfolio, which is a collection of characterful, independent hotels drawn together by their passion for captivating design and their drive to create vibrant social scenes for guests and locals alike. The rebranding will allow the hotel to significantly improve its positioning in the market.

In addition, SAMHI has also signed agreements with Marriott for the other four ACIC hotels to be converted from franchise to management agreements.

Ashish Jakhanwala, Chairman & Managing Director of SAMHI Hotels Ltd. says, "We are pleased to announce a significant milestone in the integration process for the ACIC portfolio. Over the years, we have demonstrated our ability to drive performance & growth through turnarounds. With the proposed rebranding and conversion to management agreements, these hotels will be repositioned for better performance and improve their contribution to SAMHI".

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Small Luxury Hotels Partner with The MRS Group Of Hotels





Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH) announced its expansion into the Indian subcontinent through a strategic partnership with The MRS Group of Hotels. This collaboration signifies the entrance of an independent hotel group in India, renowned for its bespoke collection of boutique hotels, into the distinguished ranks of SLH, elevating their status as pioneers of contemporary Indian hospitality on the international scene.

The MRS Group of Hotels, dedicated to sharing a deep appreciation for diverse landscapes, cultures, and stories with the global traveller, currently encompasses award-winning brands such as Suryagarh in Jaisalmer, Narendra Bhawan in Bikaner, and Mary Budden Estate in Binsar. Each hotel serves as a gateway to India's rich, diverse, and extraordinary heritage, offering thoughtfully designed experiences that authentically reflect the character of their locations. This partnership allows The MRS Group of Hotels to leverage SLH's expansive global distribution network and marketing capabilities, showcasing their unique offerings to an international audience seeking exceptional and memorable experiences.



Karan Singh Vaid, President of The MRS Group of Hotels, shared his excitement about the partnership, stating, "We are incredibly proud to be the first independent hotel chain in India to partner with SLH, a brand synonymous with luxury and exceptional hospitality. This alliance not only highlights our dedication to reimagining hospitality in India but also amplifies our mission to offer travellers thoughtfully designed experiences that are rooted in our rich heritage and distinctive service. We are excited to embark on this journey with SLH, aiming to enhance our global presence and enrich the travel adventures of our guests."

The MRS Group of Hotels benefits from SLH's exclusive partnership with Hilton. Hilton Honors members, the award-winning guest loyalty program, can earn and redeem Points for SLH stays and enjoy exclusive benefits, including free WiFi and a guaranteed member discount. Gold and Diamond members will enjoy space-available room upgrades and continental breakfast for up to two guests.

Central Park Launches Sakura Town

Central Park, a leading Gurugram-based real estate developer owned by 'The Bakshi Group of Enterprises' launches Sakura Town, an exclusive member-only Japanese club. Led by Central Park's hospitality arm, St. Jerome, it is located in Sohna Road, Gurugram, within their coveted, The Room at Central Park Resorts, an in-demand, luxury, fully-serviced living space.



Drawing inspiration from the serene elegance of Japanese culture, Sakura Town intends to create a unique feeling of 'home-away-from-home' for the growing Japanese expatriate and delegate community in Delhi NCR. Every detail, from the architectural design to the curated amenities, is meticulously crafted to evoke the comfort and familiarity of home for them. Seamlessly blending the essence of Japan with 7-star hospitality, it sets a new benchmark in luxury residential experiences.

Sharing his view on the launch, Amarjit Bakshi, Chairman and Managing Director, Central Park, said, "At Central Park, we have always envisioned creating an unparalleled living experience that transcends mere residency and embodies a true sense of community and luxury. The launch of Sakura Town, our exclusive Japanese club, is a testament to our commitment to deliver beyond expectations. By integrating authentic Japanese cultural features and experiences, we aim to provide our residents, particularly our esteemed Japanese expatriates, with a unique and enriching environment. This initiative reflects our continuous efforts to blend cultural diversity with world-class hospitality, ensuring Central Park remains a beacon of luxury and innovation in the real estate sector."

Sakura Town embodies the spirit of Omotenashi, the Japanese philosophy of exceptional hospitality. Its spacious layout features Ofuro, the hot waters known for relaxing and healing in the world; Ginza, a restaurant that serves delectable Japanese cuisine curated by Japanese chefs; the Ariake-do Spa, offering an authentic Japanese spa experience; Bochi Bochi Salon that would pamper residents with hair and makeup services by professional stylists, along with several culturally appropriate and traditional Japanese amenities to complete the feeling of home for the Japanese community. Some additional amenities include a swimming pool, gym, Mahjong rooms, golf simulator and the Sakura Events Deck, perfect for hosting unforgettable gatherings.

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Pride Hotels Group's D.R.E.A.M 2.0 Program Achieves 50% Female Representation

Pride Hotels Group announced the completion of its D.R.E.A.M Program 2.0, which has welcomed a new group of management trainees into this esteemed initiative. This year, the program achieved a remarkable milestone, with 50% of its management trainees being women, reinforcing the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. The program commenced with an engaging three-day orientation at Pride Plaza Ahmedabad

"We are immensely proud of the success of the D.R.E.A.M Program 2.0, which not only reflects our commitment to nurturing exceptional talent but also highlights our dedication to diversity and inclusivity within the hospitality industry. By achieving a remarkable milestone of 50% women in our management trainee group, we are empowering the next generation of leaders to bring their unique perspectives and strengths to the forefront. This initiative is a vital step in shaping a more equitable future for our organization and the industry as a whole," said Atul Upadhyay, Executive Vice President, Pride Hotels Group.



The three-day orientation program, featured welcome sessions led by Shailendra Dharme, Head of Corporate Learning & Development, and Jayesh Wadher, Head of Corporate Talent & Culture. The event was graced by the presence of esteemed CEO Satyen Jain and Executive Vice President Atul Upadhyay, who shared valuable insights with the new trainees, referred to as "DREAMER'S."

The orientation included virtual greetings from corporate leaders, further underscoring Pride Hotels Group's dedication to nurturing talent within the hospitality industry. The enlightening sessions featured guest faculty from the International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM), who introduced participants to innovative concepts aimed at enhancing guest experiences through modern technology and culinary arts trends. This segment was part of a collaborative skill development initiative between IIHM and Pride Hotels Group.

The D.R.E.A.M (Determine Refined Excellence for Aspiring Managers) Program is specifically designed to offer exceptional career opportunities to aspiring associates interested in the Management Trainee (MT) and Hospitality Operations Trainee (HOT) Program at Pride Hotels Group. The initiative aims to equip candidates with a comprehensive understanding of the theories and operational processes that are vital for the growth and development of the hospitality industry, preparing them to become future leaders. Upon successful completion of the program, candidates will have the opportunity to advance to Assistant Manager or Executive positions within the organization.

Rosetta Hospitality Launches Elements by Rosetta- Varca, Goa



Rosetta Hospitality announces the launch of Elements by Rosetta-Varca, its newest venture in South Goa. The hotel caters to the growing affordable luxury segment, offering a well-balanced experience combining comfort and high-end amenities.

Elements by Rosetta will open in a two-phase rollout. Phase 1 features 74 meticulously designed rooms, while Phase 2 will introduce an additional 68 suites, bringing the total capacity to 142 rooms. Furthermore, Rosetta Hospitality plans to open Collins De La Mer, a three-level beachfront shack, along the serene shores of Varca. Each level will boast panoramic ocean views, creating a unique tropical escape.

At Elements by Rosetta, guests can indulge in various amenities designed for relaxation and enjoyment, including a swimming pool with a dedicated kids pool. Other amenities include a kids play area, a family activity center; Rosetta Engage, an all-day dining restaurant; Cucina Rosetta, Collins Bar- By the Pool, a gymnasium and a spa. The property features five room categories ranging from 400 to 600 sq. ft., some equipped with a bathtub and some with an outdoor jacuzzi. The property features versatile venues for any occasion: a grand ballroom of 4,000 sq. ft., a picturesque 5,000 sq. ft. outdoor lawn, and well-appointed board rooms for important meetings and conferences.

Rosetta Hospitality is renowned for its specialized regional delicacies, particularly since launching Ouzo by Fire in Indiranagar, Bengaluru. At Varca, they continue this tradition by bringing together the finest culinary offerings from around the world, providing a diverse menu available both in their restaurants and through in-room dining.

Club Rosetta stands as India's premier luxury hospitality club, offering an exclusive vacation ownership program. Members enjoy one week of holiday annually (four weekdays plus three weekends) for 10 or 20 years, secured with a refundable deposit. Through its exchange partner, the program provides access to a world of exclusivity, privilege, and unparalleled quality. Members can explore a diverse portfolio of the finest vacation properties and services worldwide, expanding their travel options to include 240 resorts across the globe.

Talking about the location, Errol Fernandes, the Chairman and Managing Director of Rosetta Hospitality said, "In our quest to establish ourselves as a leading hospitality brand within the leisure industry, we recognized Goa as the ideal location for our investment. Goa's unique blend of pristine beaches, vibrant culture, and thriving tourism industry makes it an attractive market for both business and leisure. The hotel, a five-star property, serves a diverse clientele, including corporate groups, wedding parties, and leisure travelers, making it a perfect addition to our portfolio".

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IHG Hotels & Resorts Recognized as One of India's Best Places to Work 2024

IHG® Hotels & Resorts, one of the world's leading hotel companies, has been named one of the Top Companies to Work for in India by Great Place to Work®, the global authority on Workplace Culture assessment. Renowned for its commitment to foster an engaging and fulfilling work environment, IHG Hotels & Resorts has secured its spot in India's 100 Best Companies



to Work For and ranked 27th amongst the nation's leading employers.

With over 2000 companies participating in this year's evaluation, IHG Hotels & Resorts' win reaffirms the company's unwavering commitment to foster an inclusive and supportive workplace culture, where all colleagues can thrive.

Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South-West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts, commented on receiving the recognition, "We are thrilled to be once again recognized as one of India's Best Places to Work in 2024. This achievement underscores IHG's ongoing commitment to nurture a positive and engaging workplace culture, where our exceptional talent can learn, grow as well as feel included and recognized. These accolades inspire us, as a leading hospitality player in the region, to continue raising the bar and creating even more rewarding work cultures for our colleagues.

Jain added, "Our colleagues are at the heart of our success, and we extend our appreciation to each individual who has contributed in making IHG a great place to work."

IHG's success in India reflects its continuous commitment to investing in talent development and creating opportunities for professional growth. Initiatives such as the IHG Academy, a pioneering global collaboration between IHG and local education and community provider, play a pivotal role in assisting individuals in kickstarting their careers in hospitality.

Moreover, in recent years, the company has launched industry-leading programmes to help colleagues grow in their roles and develop personally and professionally, such as Journey to GM, which focuses on accelerating the development of high-potential talent to become General Managers and RISE, a mentoring initiative that empowers female talent within the company to realise their career ambitions.

Taj Debuts In Bihar

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) announced the opening of Taj City Centre, Patna marking the iconic brand's debut in Bihar's vibrant capital city.

Speaking on the occasion, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, IHCL, said, "This opening is in line with IHCL's vision to bring world-class hospitality to India's state capital cities with growing economic prominence.



Taj's entry into Patna will open new avenues to develop travel itineraries and circuits to the culturally significant locations in and around the state. With Taj City Centre, Patna, we are delighted to extend our partnership with the Ambuja Neotia group."

Nestled in the heart of the city, Taj City Centre, Patna, offers 124 luxurious rooms and suites. Each space is meticulously designed to blend timeless elegance with modern comfort, providing guests with breath-taking views of the city. Guests can embark on a culinary adventure at Shamiana, the all-day dining restaurant, or House of Ming, featuring the finest Chinese cuisine. The J Wellness Circle offers a haven of tranquility with traditional Indian therapies and contemporary wellness practices. The meticulously curated multiple event spaces set the stage for grand weddings and corporate soirées.

Leisure Hotels Group Unveils Two Properties

Leisure Hotels Group (LHG) further strengthened its Bedzzz portfolio with two more prominent hotels – Bedzzz Xclusiv Ikshana Luxe in Nainital and Bedzzz Xclusiv Baikunth in Manali. Following the recent successful launch of Bedzzz Xclusiv in Goa, the dynamic "Sociotel" (A Social Hotel) concept continues to offer travellers a unique blend of lifestyle-acco experience that combines innovation with immersive guest interactions, and vibrant ambience, enhanced by the Group's quintessential hospitality and personalised service.



Nestled in the picturesque town of Nainital, Bedzzz Xclusiv Ikshana Luxe offers a charming retreat amidst the serene beauty of the Himalayas. Situated near the shimmering Naini Lake, also known as the Emerald Eye, the property features 48 elegantly designed rooms, ranging from cosy deluxe to expansive Xclusiv accommodations.

Bedzzz Xclusiv Baikunth in Manali, located amidst the majestic Himalayas, spans in an acre of pristine land, offering guests a truly immersive experience in nature. The 29-key accommodation boasts panoramic views of snow-capped peaks, ensuring a calm and rejuvenating stay. The Travel Diaries Café with its panoramic views, provides a perfect setting for relaxation and dining.

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Pride Hotels Group New Hotels

Pride Hotels Group announced a new collaboration with Promoters Rameshwaram Hotels, marking the signing of two new hotels in Jharkhand: Biznotel by Pride Deoghar and Biznotel by Pride Dumka. These are the first two Biznotel by Pride brand signups in the state, signaling a significant milestone in the expansion efforts.



Pride Hotels Group unveil the grand opening of Biznotel by Pride Deoghar, strategically located in the heart of Deoghar. This latest addition to its expanding portfolio offers an exquisite blend of comfort and traditional Indian hospitality, ensuring an unforgettable stay for every guest.

Nestled amidst the tranquil surroundings of the city, the hotel boasts 80 elegant rooms, exceptional service, and top-tier amenities, all designed to ensure a comfortable and warm stay. Whether on a spiritual pilgrimage or a leisurely retreat, Biznotel by Pride Deoghar guarantees a memorable experience, combining modern comforts with the rich cultural heritage of Deoghar.

New Biznotel by Pride Bharuch

Pride Hotels Group announced the opening of Biznotel by Pride Bharuch, marking the fourth Biznotel by Pride property in the state of Gujarat. Developed by Patel Hotels, Biznotel by Pride Bharuch features well-appointed rooms designed to offer a smart, practical, and comfortable atmosphere. The hotel provides a range of modern amenities, including free Wi-Fi, in-room dining (IRD), and 24x7 room service, ensuring guests have everything they need for a productive and relaxing stay.

Inspired by Pride's "5 Senses" philosophy, Biznotel by Pride Bharuch aims to create an easy-to-navigate experience tailored for today's multi-tasking traveler. The hotel is strategically located near the city's core business district and the Bharuch railway station, making it an ideal choice for business travelers.

Atmosphere Core Announces 11th Resort In India

Atmosphere Core has entered into a prestigious Hotel Management Agreement with Keemaya Resorts And Spas to develop Ozen Villas Jaipur, a luxury all-private pool villas resort set in the serene foothills of the Aravalli ranges in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Slated to open in Q2 2025, this inspiring destination reflects Atmosphere Core's ambition to establish 25 properties in India by 2025, marking the company's fourth venture under The Ozen Collection and its 11th signed property in the country.



Ozen Villas Jaipur will offer unparalleled luxury experiences with 181 one and two-bedroom villas, each boasting a private pool. This exclusive low-rise resort spans across 20 acres of verdant landscapes and is designed to cater to discerning travellers seeking a peaceful getaway, as well as for hosting refined meetings, elegant celebrations, and opulent Indian weddings. A 20,000 sq. ft. indoor event space along with a selection of sophisticated outdoor venues will enrich the experience.

Guests at Ozen Villas Jaipur will embark on an exquisite culinary journey with a range of exceptional dining options, including an all-day restaurant with an option of alfresco dining for relaxed yet refined meals and a specialty fine dining outlet serving gourmet dishes crafted from the finest ingredients. A gourmet snack bar will provide elegant quick bites, and a classic lounge bar will offer the perfect spot for savouring cocktails and premium drinks in a sophisticated setting.

Souvagya Mohapatra, Managing Director of Atmosphere Core - India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, & Bhutan, shared his excitement "Jaipur, the Pink City, has always captivated travellers with its timeless beauty and rich cultural heritage. I am thrilled to announce our fourth property under The Ozen Collection and our 11th signed property in India, Ozen Villas Jaipur, which is poised to become a premier luxury destination".

ITC Hotels Opens Welcomhotel Belagavi



ITC Hotels announced the opening of Welcomhotel Belagavi. Nestled in the serene locale of Kakati and close to the airport, Welcomhotel Belagavi offers breathtaking views of hills and lush greenery across its 5-acre expanse. The hotel features 116 contemporary, spacious rooms catering to both leisure and MICE travelers. It boasts nine versatile banqueting and meeting rooms, and three dining destinations: WelcomCafe, Dough & Co., and Swizzle Bar, providing a luxurious and comprehensive experience for all guests.

Commenting on this milestone, Anil Chadha, Chief Executive stated, "The expansion of the Welcomhotel brand is a significant achievement for ITC Hotels. Welcomhotel is the new age traveller's key to curated immersive experiences. Present in locations ranging from hills to beaches, and deserts to cities, the opening and signing of more properties under Brand Welcomhotel is aligned with ITC Hotels' asset right growth strategy to take our brand and services to tier-2 markets in addition to prime metro cities. Welcomhotel Belagavi, our 25th property, embodies our endeavour to create unparalleled hospitality experiences, ensuring that guests enjoy a stay that is both luxurious and in harmony with the environment. We look forward to continuing this journey of growth and excellence."

Fortunes Hotels Opens New Properties

Fortune Beach Resort ECR Chennai

The group announced the launch of Fortune Beach Resort ECR Chennai. Situated in the bustling, breezy East Coast Road (ECR), the upscale resort set against the serene backdrop of the majestic sea connects the cultural richness of Chennai with the picturesque landscapes of Puducherry, Mahabalipuram and beyond.

It's uniquely designed rooms sketched on neo-modern architecture are adorned with modern amenities. Tasteful interiors, a warm, contemporary décor, and spectacular views of lush green gardens or the serene sea ensure a relaxing and visually pleasing stay.

The resort offers numerous dining options to enhance the convenience and comfort of its guests. Zodiac, an all-day dining multi-cuisine restaurant with picturesque alfresco seating and an extensive a-la-carte menu, promises a delightful culinary experience. Neptune, the chic bar, is an ideal venue to relax and unwind with an excellent selection of spirits, wines, and beers, paired with scrumptious finger foods in a contemporary setting. Fortune Deli, a modern outlet, serves light snacks, cakes, pastries, chocolates, and breads, making it an excellent spot for endless conversations over coffee or tea. Other recreation facilities include a refreshing outdoor pool and a soon-to-open spa and a kid's play area.



Fortune Beach Resort ECR Chennai is ideal for intimate weddings and social gatherings, offering lush green lawns and a versatile banquet hall to spruce up the celebrations. The resort's expansive landscapes and proximity to the beach double up as a perfect getaway for weekends and team outings.

Fortune Select Candolim Goa

The group announced the opening of Fortune Select Candolim Goa, its third branded property in the state of Goa, further strengthening its presence in India's most sought-after travel destinations.

Burrowed in the bustling surroundings of Candolim, Fortune Select Candolim Goa, invites guests to unwind in its truly blissful environs, tucked away from the thrilling sounds of towering waves amidst the gentle sway of palm trees. Fortune Select Candolim Goa is home to 103 elegantly designed guest rooms and suites, each designed with utmost care, providing a contemporary ambiance and warm comfort. Most rooms peep into spectacular views of the swimming pool and bringing the outdoors in.



To further rejuvinate the body, mind and soul the hotel's wellness facilities include a well-equipped gym and a soon-to-open-spa that aims to spruce up the wellness quotient while its versatile banqueting and conferencing hall, complete with an exclusive pre-function area, readies itself to double up as an ideal venue for hosting corporate events, meetings, conferences, and social gatherings.

The hotel is also poised to offer exceptional culinary experiences with Zodiac, the all-day dining restaurant serving Indian, Chinese, and Continental dishes, perfect for any meal, and Neptune, a chic bar- a perfect indulgence for a relaxing evening that provides a fine selection of spirits, wines, beers, and delicious finger foods to entice your food cravings.

Hyatt Centric Hebbal Bengaluru Debuts

Opening of Hyatt Centric Hebbal Bengaluru, marks the eighth Hyatt Centric hotel in India. Located in the heart of the lively entertainment hub of Bengaluru and in close proximity to the airport, the hotel brings a modern yet playful twist to the city's cultural charm for savvy leisure and business travelers alike.



The hotel's contemporary design, coupled with eclectic touches, reflects the cosmopolitan vibe of Bengaluru. Its 152 guest rooms, including eight suites, seven long stay rooms and one presidential suite with terrace gardens overlooking the azure pool, have been tastefully curated, layered with touches of local culture and charm, and enriched with modern amenities. Offering stunning views of Hebbal Lake, the spacious rooms provide a tranquil retreat for guests.

Guests can enjoy a selection of culinary delights at two distinct dining venues, Craft and Cosmo. Whether they are craving coffee and light fare at Craft or global cuisine with a modern twist at Cosmo, there's something to satisfy every palate. The hotel's wide variety of ever-evolving menus featuring bites and beverages offers much to the savvy leisure traveler, inviting them to experience the essence of the destination through locally inspired flavors.

Socially connected guests seeking shareable moments will find that Hyatt Centric Hebbal Bengaluru is the perfect setting for group gatherings and special occasions, truly embodying a one space fits all approach to meetings and events. The hotel boasts eight customizable event spaces, including a ballroom. Guests can also look forward to continuing their routines away from home with access to gym, pool, and spa facilities.



Samarth Agarwal

Fortune Hotels has appointed Samarth Agarwal as the Head of Development. With over 20 years of experience, he had stints in equity research, specializing in the Gaming and Lodging industry in the USA. He then transitioned to hotel and real estate consulting at Cushman & Wakefield. He joined InterGlobe Hotels and worked on the buy-side of hotel investment. He led the Asset Light (management contracts) growth strategy for Lemon Tree Hotels. He will be instrumental in expanding the network of Fortune-branded hotels across India.



Jasvir Belwal

Sofitel Mumbai BKC has appointed Jasvir Belwal as the new Director of Operations. With over 19 years of experience, he was Director of Rooms at The Ritz-Carlton Bengaluru. He also worked as Director of Rooms at the Marriott Weligama Bay Resort & Spa, and Marriott and Hyatt properties in India and Sri Lanka. He will be responsible for maximizing room sales and revenue. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Hotel & Hospitality Management from the Institute of Hotel Management, Hyderabad.



Reuben Kataria

The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore has appointed Reuben Kataria as new General Manager. Renowned for his extensive experience and unwavering passion for luxury hospitality, his leadership has consistently driven success at The Oberoi, JW Marriott and Four Seasons. In his recent role as the General Manager of Four Seasons Hotel in Bengaluru showcased his ability to elevate the guest experience through exceptional service and meticulous attention to detail. His journey through the luxury hospitality landscape has been marked by his unwavering commitment to excellence.



Kazi Jamiroddin

Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity has appointed Kazi Jamiroddin as the Director of Engineering. With an extensive background in engineering and a proven track record of excellence, Kazi brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the team. He will lead engineering operations, ensuring the highest standards of maintenance, safety, and efficiency. He holds Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree from Visvesvaraya Technological University, Belgaum, and his experience at Sheraton, JW Marriott, and The Westin solidify his technical expertise and leadership potential.



Anant Leekha

Novotel Pune has appointed Anant Leekha as General Manager. He brings over 20 years of experience, held significant roles within Accor, as Cluster General Manager overseeing ibis Mumbai Vikhroli, ibis Navi Mumbai, and ibis Thane. His 16-year tenure with Accor provides him with deep insights into the company's goals, service standards, and brand identity. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management & Catering Technology. He will lead initiatives to drive business growth and enhance guest experiences through strategic and technological advancements.



Parul Jain

Shangri La Eros New Delhi has appointed Parul Jain as the Director of Finance. With two decades of diverse industry experience, her career includes roles at The Lodhi, New Delhi, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, and Barista Coffee, where she was instrumental in overhauling the financial department, ensuring robust economic health and operational efficiency. Parul brings expertise and a dedication to driving the hotel's financial success. She is a distinguished Chartered Accountant and holds an MBA from Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar.



Suprabhath Roy Chowdhury

voco Jim Corbett has appointed Suprabhath Roy Chowdhury as General Manager. With a career spanning across 24 years, he has excelled in various senior roles across prestigious hotel chains in India. His extensive experience also includes serving as the General Manager at Holiday Inn Mayur Vihar, New Delhi. In his current role he will spearhead the positioning and operational excellence of IHG Hotels & Resorts' first voco property in India, focusing on delivering exceptional guest experiences, innovative service standards and sustainable practices.



Ramesh Chander

Ramesh Chander is the new Food and Beverage Manager at DoubleTree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad. In over 16 years he worked at DoubleTree by Hilton, Hilton Garden Inn, Hinjewadi, Godwin Hotels and Resorts, Welcomhotel Katra by ITC Hotels, Seven Seas Hotel, Jaypee Hotels & Resorts, Taj Mahal Hotel New Delhi and ITC Maurya New Delhi. He demonstrated exceptional skills in food and beverage operations, restaurant management, and banquet management and now will be responsible for overseeing the food and beverage operations.



Dinesh Babu

Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort and Spa, Mahabalipuram has appointed Dinesh Babu as Assistant Director of Food and Beverage. With over 16 years of experience, he held various positions at Poison Night Club, JW Marriott Pune, and JW Marriott Juhu. He had international stint at The Westin, Langkawi, Malaysia. Later he served as Director of Beverage at Westin Pune and Food & Beverage Manager at Goa Marriott Resort & Spa. He is passionate about beverages and curates innovative collection of signature cocktails.



Srinivas Chippala

Srinivas Chippala is the new Executive Housekeeper at Hilton Embassy GolfLinks Bangalore. With over ten years of experience, he held managerial positions in housekeeping at Novotel Vijayawada Varun, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Novotel Chennai Sipcot, Radisson Hyderabad Hitech City, and The Park, Hyderabad. His expertise spans across various areas including housekeeping, front office management, resource allocation, team leadership, and administrative efficiency, and creating personalized training modules.



Ahmed Faisal

voco Jim Corbett has appointed Ahmed Faisal as Assistant F&B Manager. With 18 years of experience, with over 12 years of the journey being with IHG, he started as an F&B Executive at IHG in 2005 and worked as a restaurant manager with IHG from 2015 to 2019 before joining voco Jim Corbett as an Assistant Food and Beverage Manager. He is skilled in driving business growth through strategic partnerships, financial planning and effective leadership to achieve organizational goals and profitability.



Imran Khan

Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru has appointed Imran Khan as Executive Housekeeper. He has over 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry. His career includes key positions in the Oberoi Vanyavilas as the Housekeeping Supervisor, Trident Hyderabad as Assistant Manager, Housekeeping and Trident Cochin as Executive Housekeeper.. He has successfully opened four new hotels for the Oberoi group, overseeing the housekeeping operations, training the staff, and coordinating with multiple departments.



Sarfrazuddin Khan

Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel has appointed Sarfrazuddin Khan as the new Front Office Manager. With over 10 years at ITC Infotech, Sheraton Grand Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center, Bangalore, and JW Marriott Juhu Mumbai, his ability to understand customer needs led him to implement innovative hospitality technologies and initiatives, resulting in improved customer satisfaction ratings and increased staff productivity. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Studies from Rizvi Institute of Management and a strong foundation in hotel management



Sabrina Dey

Sabrina Dey is the new General Manager of ITC Windsor - a Luxury Collection Hotel. With a career spanning almost two decades, she began her career with Oberoi Hotels, graduating from OCLD in 2008, and worked in Food and Beverage across multiple Oberoi properties. In 2018, she transitioned to a general management role as Director of Operations at JW Marriott Kolkata and later the Hotel Manager at JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort and Spa, and won multiple industry accolades.



Preeti Raheja

Preeti Raheja has been appointed as the Assistant Front Office Manager at Eros Hotel New Delhi, Nehru Place. She holds a B.Sc. in Hotel Management and boasts nearly a decade of experience in the industry. She worked at Hyatt Regency, Lemon Tree Hotel, Radisson Hotel, Jaypee Hotel, and Heritage Village Resort and Spa, and recent position as Front Office Manager at Karma Lakelands. Her expertise in guest relations and operational management aligns seamlessly with commitment to excellence at Eros Hotel.



Deewan Singh Dhami

Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa has appointed Deewan Singh Dhami as the new Director of Operations. With over 17 years of experience his career began at Hyatt Regency Delhi. Starting as a Guest Service Associate, he climbed the ladder to become Assistant Director of Food & Beverage. He served as the Director of Food & Beverage at The Westin, Gurgaon. His diverse experience spans food and beverage management, event coordination, and overall operational excellence. He will oversee multiple operational departments.



Heritage Hotels

Heirlooms of Indian Tourism

A trip to the past in the modern world has a timeless appeal for travellers who are keen to immerse themselves in the cultural history of the destination by staying at a historic hotel itself. Numerous hotels in India are drenched in history and filled with antiques which tell a lively and vibrant tale of a bygone era while, at the same time, providing all the modern comforts. All this is achieved by heritage hotels! While historic hotels have always attracted the glamourous crowd their timeless appeal has caught the fancy of millennials and gen Z today. In this age of Instagram, historic hotels are shinning out with their periodic charm. **Ashok Malkani** views the different aspects of these heritage hotels, like their popularity with international tourists, and if there are any standard specifications codes to judge their standards of comfort, etc. assuring the tourists of their wellbeing and contentment.



India's old world charm is unimaginable. It is a home to one of the seven wonders of the world and 40 World UNESCO Heritage sites. Palaces, forts, havelis, mansions are some of the heritage sites that have, due to financial constraints over time, been converted into heritage hotels. They were built by the royalty or their nobility in the form of their residences. After India gained independence and abolished privy purses their maintenance became difficult, and a number of such properties were left unattended till their importance as heritage sites was realised and thus was born the concept of heritage hotels. These properties maintain the magnificence and grandeur of their heydays and, due to their ancient architectural excellence, have proved to be admired by the tourists.

According to Megha Bhatia, General Manager, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa "The recent Union Budget 2024 announcement and allocation towards building 'Incredible India 3.0' as a global tourism destination, through a focus on cultural experiences, has invariably turned the spotlight on heritage hotels. States like Uttar Pradesh are now accelerating their mission to transform their historic forts and palaces into luxurious heritage hotels to amplify tourism. This comes as no surprise as heritage hotels have always been the key drivers of Indian tourism as it offers a unique blend of royal indulgence, heritage and culture that strongly appeal to global travellers."

It is contended that besides offering immersive experiences, heritage hotels also make a significant contribution to the economy by creating jobs and stimulating local resources. Megha claims, "We have seen this transformation happen first-hand with our first luxurious heritage property, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa in Goa in 1974. Today we have 30 properties in the Goa, but it is the heritage luxury hotel property in Aguada, which is in its 50th year this year, transformed the tourism in the state and put it on the global tourism map. I may add, that the community engagement that is so integral in the functioning of heritage hotels also play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage – not only of the historical structures but also of traditional arts and skills that often get lost with time and development."



Comparison

One may wonder what exactly is a heritage hotel and how does it compare to a 5-star hotel?

Seema Taj, Director of Sales, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, explains, "Heritage hotels are former palaces, havelis, castles, forts, or mansions converted into hotels, retaining their historical architecture and cultural essence. Unlike modern hotels, they offer a unique experience rooted in history and tradition, with facilities such as antique furnishings, traditional decor, cultural performances, and personalized services."

She continues, "As far as their star-status is concerned they can be classified as 5-star if they meet the necessary criteria for luxury, comfort, and service quality. These criteria include top-notch amenities, exceptional service, fine dining and a certain standard of accommodation."

Ridhima Gandhi Puri, Director of Sales and Marketing, Taj Usha Kiran Palace, Gwalior, revealed, "A heritage hotel is a type of accommodation that has been restored and converted into a hotel. These buildings often were inhabited by reputed families of cultural or historical significance and are usually


Ridhima Gandhi Puri


Vibhas Prasad


Megha Bhatia


Seema Taj

several decades or even centuries old. Their architecture embodies the character of a location, sharing with the guest, in the case of a stay in a heritage hotel, a true sense of place."

She continues, "These hotels are often re-furbished homes, once loved and lived in buildings that are saved through revamp by passionate owners into wonderful boutique hotels. They offer most of the amenities like rooms, restaurants (highlight traditional local cuisine of the area) and general ambience that conforms to the overall concept of heritage and architectural distinctiveness."

Speaking about its star-value, she says, "Its not necessary that every heritage hotel will be a 5-star hotel. To receive a 5-star certification, certain guidelines must be met and accordingly categorization are provided to each hotel."

Vibhas Prasad, Director, Leisure Hotels Group, states, "Heritage hotels are properties of historical significance that frequently stay in structures that were formerly mansions, palaces, or forts. These hotels distinguish themselves from contemporary hotels by offering visitors a one-of-a-kind experience that reflects the area's cultural and historical background. The original building, design, and mood are still present. Luxury rooms with period furnishings, outstanding restaurants, historical and cultural excursions, spa facilities, and traditional entertainment options are common characteristics found in heritage hotels. Our hotel, The Naini Retreat, in Nainital, Uttarakhand, offers a blend of regal charm and modern amenities, providing guests with a serene and historic stay amidst breathtaking natural beauty."

"Heritage hotels", he disclosed , "are classified in a variety of ways; some may be opulent, well-appointed, and provide amenities that qualify them for a 5-star rating, while others may fall into another category entirely. The star rating of a heritage hotel, like that of other hotel types, is decided by its distinct features, level of service, and facilities. For instance, The Naini Retreat, offers a luxurious experience with top-notch facilities and services, often aligning with the standards of a 5-star hotel."

Megha describes heritage hotels as "luxury accommodations that are surrounded by historic monuments of yesteryears often former palaces, forts or mansions that have been kept as the central theme or as back drop of these luxury quarters. Typically found in regions with documented historic relevance and cultural backgrounds they are different from other resorts or hotels in terms of historical significance and might date back to several centuries. The topography and the essence of the architecture and interior design of heritage hotels reflect the mood of the historic value showcasing traditional styles, intricate craftsmanship, and unique decor that provide an immersive experience. Staying at a heritage hotel often offers a cultural experience that includes traditional music, dance performances, local cuisine, and other activities that reflect the region's heritage. Restaurants within heritage precincts often serve authentic local cuisine, prepared using traditional recipes and techniques. Overall, heritage hotels offer a blend of luxury, history, and cultural richness, providing guests with an experience that goes beyond just a place to stay."

As far as star rating is concerned, she disclosed, "Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa is the first five star luxury resort of Goa and hence has put Goa on the world tourism map. The resort offers luxury accommodations with spacious well-appointed 143 rooms and suites with the most luxurious furnishing and décor reflecting the Goan Portuguese colour palate and architecture. The personalised and attentive services with a higher staff to guest ratio is to ensure a luxurious experience. While maintaining the essence of a historic venue, modern day amenities such as swimming pools, fitness centre and spa and wellness facilities are integrated in the lush foliage intermingling within the heritage precinct and continues with the same essence of architecture."

Classification

According to the Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) these hotels have created a niche for themselves in the world of tourism. It is mandatory for these buildings, immaterial of their size to have been built prior to 1935. These properties must have their own distinctive architecture, ambience and history.

But for a tourist who is keen to know a property's star rating how does one classify a heritage hotel? What are the guidelines

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issued by Ministry of Tourism for these hotels?

Seema discloses, "The Ministry of Tourism in India classifies heritage hotels into three categories: Heritage, Heritage Classic and Heritage Grand. These classifications are based on the age of the property, the quality of restoration and the range of services offered. "

She adds, "the Ministry of Tourism has issued guidelines for heritage hotels. These include maintaining the original architecture, offering traditional hospitality, providing modern amenities discreetly and ensuring the property is over 50 years old. The classification also considers the quality of restoration and the standard of services."

Ridhima revealed, "The Department of Tourism & Culture, Government of India on 1 January 1990 formed the Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) whose main objective is to promote Heritage Tourism by preserving and reviving the heritage hotels. This, in turn, also helps in reviving the rich, cultural, historical and architectural heritage of India. Furthermore, it also gives a fillip to revive the traditional arts, crafts, music and folklore by projecting their skills through these Heritage Hotels. The Government of India recognised Heritage Hotels as a separate category in January 1991 and categorised the Heritage Hotels in three categories viz. Heritage, Heritage Classic and Heritage Grand."

"The Ministry of Tourism has structured guidelines for approval of these hotels thus:

Heritage: This category covers hotel in Residences/Havelies/Hunting Lodges/ Castles/Forts/ Palaces built prior to 1950. The hotel should have a minimum of 5 rooms (10 beds).

Heritage Classic: This category covers hotels in Residences/Havelies/Hunting Lodges/Castles/Forts/ Palaces built Prior to 1935. The hotel should have a minimum of 15 room (30 beds).

Heritage Grand: This category covers hotels in Residence/Havelies/Hunting Lodges/Castles/Forts/ Palaces built prior to 1935. The hotel should have minimum of 15 rooms (30 beds)."

Vibhas states, "Heritage hotels belong to the same categories as normal hotels. The Ministry of Tourism divides heritage hotels in India into three categories based on their size, historical relevance, and amenities. The Naini Retreat, with its rich history and luxurious amenities, would typically be categorized under one of these classifications, reflecting its blend of historical charm and modern comfort."

He adds, "Heritage hotels are defined by their historic architecture, antique furnishings, and décor that reflects the era in which they were built. Often, the setting includes artwork, ornate carvings, and antique furniture, providing guests with a unique and immersive experience. Furthermore, many historic hotels offer personalised services and lavish extras to enhance the guest experience. Our hotel, The Naini Retreat, stands out with its colonial-style architecture, elegant interiors, and panoramic views of the Naini Lake, offering a unique and memorable stay."

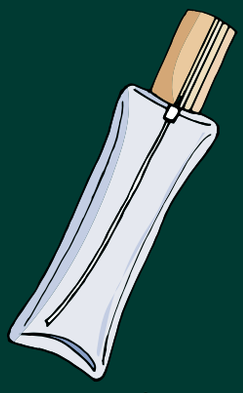
Popularity

Heritage tourism contributes greatly to cultural development and conservation of heritage. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 37 per cent of international tourism is culturally motivated, and demand is estimated to grow 15 per cent annually. Within the heritage tourism, heritage hotels have been playing a major role globally in wooing tourists. In India, heritage hotels have been the growth driver of Indian tourism and remain the mainstays. Heritage tourism plays a vital role in preserving and promoting cultural identity and heritage. According to IMARC, global heritage tourism market size reached $ 587.1 billion in 2023. Looking forward, IMARC Group expects the market to reach $ 813.5 billion by 2032. This speaks for the popularity of heritage tourism and, in turn, heritage hotels!

Megha maintains, "Heritage hotels are quite popular and attract both international and Indian tourists, though their appeal might vary based on several factors such as location, historical significance, and the unique experiences they offer. International tourists often seek unique cultural and historical experiences, making heritage hotels an attractive option. They provide a window into the rich history and traditions of the region. Many heritage hotels offer a blend of luxury and authenticity that appeals to high-end travellers looking for something beyond standard hotel experiences. The exotic appeal of staying in a palace, fort, or mansion is a significant draw for international tourists, offering a sense of romance and adventure. Indian tourists are increasingly interested in exploring their cultural heritage, and staying in heritage hotels is a way to connect with their history. Heritage hotels are popular for weddings, anniversaries, and other celebrations due to their grandeur and unique ambiance. Also, there's a growing trend among Indians to experience traditional lifestyles and cuisines, which heritage hotels

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often offer."

Ridhima reveals, "Many heritage hotels are in historic city centers, palaces, forts, or mansions, offering the guests a glimpse into the royal past and a chance to experience the charm and character of a bygone era. These hotels offer guests unique and immersive experiences, allowing them to step back in time and appreciate the historical and cultural significance of the property."

Vibhas avers, "Heritage hotels are becoming increasingly popular among both Indian and foreign travellers. These hotels provide a unique cultural and historical experience, allowing travellers to obtain a greater understanding of India's rich heritage. These hotels appeal to a wide range of tourists due to their distinct blend of elegance and history. Our hotel, The Naini Retreat, is an example of a heritage hotel that attracts both domestic and international visitors, offering them a chance to experience the historical charm of Nainital along with modern comforts."

Seema states, "Heritage hotels are popular with both international and Indian tourists seeking a unique cultural experience. These properties offer a glimpse into India's rich history and architectural splendor. There are many heritage properties, which have been converted into heritage hotels in places like Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Kolkata and Shimla."

Outstanding Features

Indian heritage hotels not only give you a glimpse of the culture and awe-inspiring architecture but enable you to experience the comfort of the maharajas as they have extreme large rooms and other features. In fact, some of the palaces-turned-hotels continue to house the royal families.

Vibhas declares, "Vintage hotels' room sizes can be significantly influenced by the building's original layout and architecture. Rooms are usually big, with high ceilings and a minimum size of 300 to 600 square feet. A heritage hotel's floor design and number of rooms can also vary; some may have been extended to accommodate more guests, while others may have stayed tiny to retain the property's private and snug character. In general, historic hotels strive to conserve the original architecture as much as possible while providing modern conveniences. The Naini Retreat features spacious rooms and suites that reflect its historical charm, providing guests with a comfortable and luxurious stay."

Ridhima states, "Our hotel, Taj Usha Kiran Palace, Gwalior, is a144-year-old heritage hotel ensconced within a sprawling nine-acre estate adorned with lush landscapes, yet its sun-drenched rooms and expansive event spaces make it feel even more opulent. Imbued with Gwalior's regal legacy, Taj Usha Kiran Palace showcases lavish details like ancient stone carvings and intricate filigree work gracing its 50 spacious rooms and suites."

Megha states, "The size, number of rooms, and floors in heritage hotels can vary significantly depending on the specific property and its historical architecture. Room size could vary from standard rooms to luxurious suites. The size of the rooms can vary greatly depending on the original structure and design of the building. Heritage hotels typically have a limited number of rooms compared to standard hotels, as they are often housed in buildings that were not originally designed to accommodate a large number of guests. The architectural style and historical period of the building often influence the number of floors. Some buildings, like old havelis, might have multiple levels with intricate staircases and courtyards."

Seema says, "Room sizes in heritage hotels are typically generous, reflecting their historical origins, with high ceilings and spacious layouts adorned with period decor. Many heritage hotels, despite having limited inventory, offer luxurious and expansive rooms."

Future

India is dotted with architectural gems which are testaments of the country's glorious past. Historic hotels, which have witnessed the ebb and flow of time have, today become an important element in the promotion of tourism. These historic heritage hotels, which are repositories of not only traditions, stories and artistic architecture have withstood the test of time, as far as their popularity is concerned. But what is their future is a moot question. What does the industry feel about this?

Megha declares, "While there has been a surge in the demand for heritage hotels, there is still a lot that is not known to the public about this segment. Often a luxury hotel gets confused for a heritage hotel."

She continues, "So much of what defines heritage hotels maybe steeped in history, but there is nothing that suggests it stays there. According to Mordor Intelligence Report, the Indian luxury hotel market, will be growing at a CAGR of 10.06% during the forecast period, 2024-2029. It is projected to reach at $ 2.72 billion in 2024, and $ 4.39 billion

by 2029. The segment that is expected to see strong growth in that market is the heritage theme, a.k.a heritage hotels. Need we say more? However, while the resurgence in heritage hotels in a post-pandemic world has been astounding – the corridors of these historic buildings are echoing with sounds of overflowing coffers as well as of change. These winds of changes are largely flowing from the priorities set by the new-gen travellers, from abroad as well as domestic tourism; they not only seek immersive cultural experiences, but one that is enhanced by modern lifestyle needs of mindful technology and sustainability."

She adds, "We have been able to not only leverage smart technology to enhance our services, but also implement sustainability measures on our heritage properties of Taj Hotels. These include water conservation efforts like efficient water treatment and low-flow aerators, waste reduction programs that promote recycling and the introduction of a bottling plant to eliminate single-use plastics, and energy efficiency initiatives like LED lighting, among others. We've also added electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to encourage sustainable transportation options. It's a continued and intense effort as we believe that by investing in heritage, we are also investing in the future of our history."

Ridhima states, "Heritage hotels have their own distinctive character which exemplifies authentic culture and traditions of a region. A glimpse into the bygone era and years' worth legacy of the royal family does pique curiosity of the discerning travellers thus seeking more insights into the history of a region. Indeed, Heritage hotels have a bright future ahead with more travelers seeking experiences that are beyond the usual tourist type and offer an in-depth insight into the old-world charm in perfect amalgamation with modern amenities and luxurious surroundings. The heritage hotels are the center of attraction for luxury, leisure as well as business travelers."

She adds, "Heritage hotels are a true identity of a nation that still honors a storied past. These hotels offer unparallel experiences that transcend time, offering a glimpse into an era of splendor."

Seema avers, "The future of heritage hotels is bright, with increasing interest in cultural and experiential travel. These properties will continue to attract tourists seeking unique and authentic experiences. Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, with its blend of historical design and modern luxury, is well-positioned to meet this growing demand for culturally rich accommodations. Some of hotels in Jaipur, Udaipur prioritize quality and exclusivity over quantity, providing personalized service and a luxurious ambiance that enhances the guest experience."

Vibhas states, "The future of vintage hotels appears bright, as there is a rising trend towards experiential travel, in which travellers seek for unique and original encounters. Heritage hotels are well-positioned to capitalise on this trend by providing a unique combination of luxury and historical significance. The growing awareness of cultural preservation and sustainable tourism is anticipated to improve the appeal of heritage hotels. Our heritage hotel, The Naini Retreat, with its blend of history and modern luxury, is well-poised to attract travelers looking for an enriching and memorable experience." ■





Weddings: Increasing Hotel Revenue

The trend of wedding ceremonies and receptions being conducted in hotels has been increasing over the years. The "eat, drink and be married" now has a tag attached to it, which is "in hotels". The result is that not only destination weddings but wedding, in general, are contributing to the hotel's revenue in a great measure. The saying "Marriages are made in heaven" now has an attached segment "But expenses are borne on earth". Hotels and resorts have been proving an attractive venue as compared to the other sites, like halls, for people of all categories. Ashok Malkani takes a look at the facilities and other plus points offered by hotels.

Marriages, it is said, are made in Heaven. But they are celebrated on earth in choice locations. The ceremonies and other rituals are often conducted in venues within premises of reputed hotels across the country. It is thus an acknowledged fact that a sizeable slice of the revenue of the hotel is derived from venues hosting wedding ceremonies and receptions.

Realising the revenue involved in weddings, not only the hotels but also the country is promoting weddings to be held in India. Thus, the nation is, today, promoting itself as the next big wedding destination. At the first "Wed in India" Expo held in Jaipur, tourism ministry official, Manisha Saxena, said that the rapid infrastructure development across India is aiding destination weddings. Incidentally, the call for "Wed In India" was first made by Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

Promoting weddings in the country is the latest buzz in India. In keeping with this trend Hilton (NYSE: HLT) India has relaunched a reimagined version of its flagship 'Wedding Diaries' initiative which was launched in 2021. Wedding Diaries introduces 'Wedding Ambassador', an expert serving as the crucial bridge between the family and the hotel. Manish Tolani, vice president and commercial director, South Asia, Hilton, says "The launch of Wedding Diaries is a pivotal moment for us."

Today, destination weddings have become the latest buzz in India. According to Timothy Chi, global chief executive of The Knot Worldwide, which runs the wedtech platform, WeddingWire India, 25 % of world's weddings occur annually in India. The wedding industry in India is believed to be a trillion-dollar industry. So how is India ramping up its promotion as a wedding destination and how can it prove lucrative for resorts?

Suniil Bhatia, Director, Sales & Marketing, The Mirador hotel, Mumbai declares,

"India is an attractive destination for HNIs (high net worth individual) and Ultra HNI's living within and outside our country. This is all because of our Rich Culture and Heritage of Food, Song, Dance and Attire which creates a strong pull. It benefits Hotels in India in reaching out to the affluent classes and generating better cash flows. Wedding Exhibitions taking place in Metros and other Indian Cities generate interest in destination Weddings, facilitate B2B and B2C connections and help market the concept in general. Much credit goes to Bollywood for initiating these wedding themes."

He continues, "Resorts catering to such weddings get an exposure to well placed families within and outside our country who are willing to even book the entire facility for their event. They usually make wedding Brochures and Videos with Wedding Specialists who go into the detailing and management of the Event along with the Host. Destinations of Cultural and Tourist interest are much sought after, however Metros and other cities with Branded Hotels



Suniil Bhatia

are also good for weddings depending on the choice of the families going for the same."

Gurmeet Singh – AVP Operations, Brigade Hospitality, Bangalore, states, "India is actively promoting itself as a premier wedding destination, leveraging its rich culture, diverse landscapes, and cost-effective offerings. This strategic move is significantly benefiting the hotel industry through increased occupancy rates, higher revenue generation, year-round business, job creation, and the impetus to upgrade facilities. As a result, the Indian hotel industry is poised for substantial growth in the wedding tourism sector."

He adds, "Destination weddings are a lucrative opportunity for Indian resorts, especially those in Bengaluru. To capitalize on this, resorts should offer comprehensive wedding packages, create dedicated venues, and partner with wedding planners. Digital marketing, influencer collaborations, and participation in wedding events are crucial for popularizing the property. Exceptional service and attention to detail are key to creating unforgettable wedding experiences and driving positive word-of-mouth."

Deep Vahi – Director of Sales and Marketing, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu states, "India is actively promoting itself as a wedding destination, which benefits the Indian hotel industry in several ways. Increased revenue streams result from a higher volume of wedding bookings, leading to more income from room bookings, event spaces, and catering services. Enhanced

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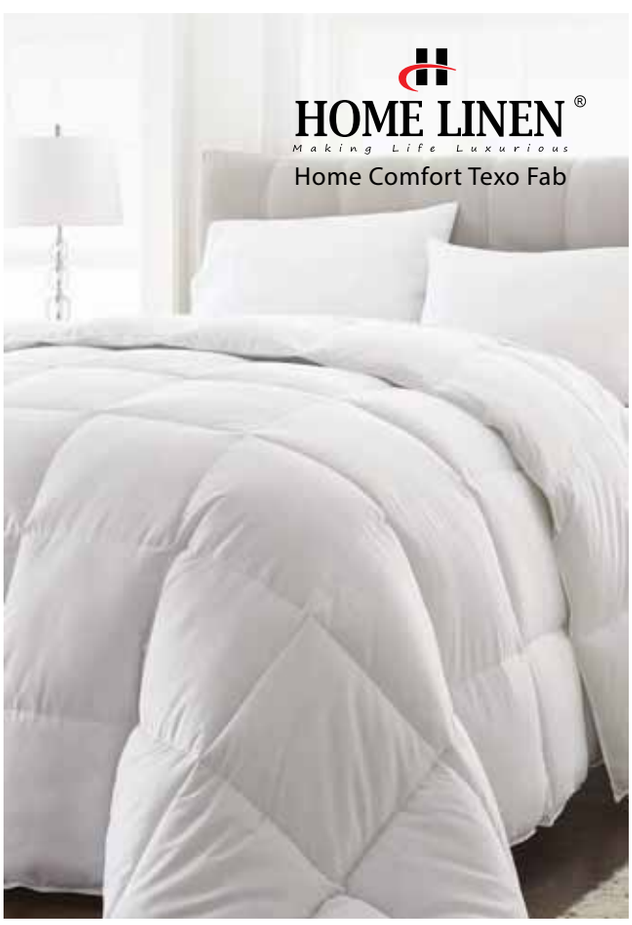
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occupancy rates occur as weddings typically involve large guest numbers, boosting hotel occupancy. Additionally, the growth in wedding tourism creates employment opportunities in hospitality, event management, catering, and tourism services. Effective promotion elevates India's profile as a premier wedding destination, attracting more international couples. JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu exemplifies these benefits by offering loyalty rewards under Marriott Bonvoy and creating unique experiences for guests, thus attracting repeat customers and enhancing revenue."

He adds, "Destination weddings can be highly lucrative for resorts due to multiple revenue streams from room bookings, venue rentals, catering, and guest amenities. Resorts can increase occupancy rates and attract affluent clients by offering comprehensive wedding packages and personalized services. To popularize their properties, resorts should highlight unique offerings such as beachfront ceremonies or vineyard settings. They should also focus on sustainability by adopting eco-friendly practices and offering green wedding packages, provide comprehensive services including bespoke themes, customizable packages. Innovative event management tools, like the Marriott Services App, and creation of memorable experiences for guests that extend beyond the wedding event, also helps out hotel. I may add that JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu markets itself as a premier wedding destination and a place for guests to relax and rejuvenate."

Facilities

Hotels are burgeoning day by day to take the full responsibility to make your marriage a beautiful and unforgettable event. Hotels, today, are not only expanding their banquet services but also modernizing them to cater to the rising trend of personalized and lavish weddings. Wedding venues at hotels, today, endeavour to provide best catering, decoration, banquet and DJ facilities. Throughout the country, hotels make arrangements to provide all these facilities. Hotels are also catering to their clients' pre-wedding events such as poolside "mehndi" ("henna") rituals, sundowner parties, bachelor and bachelorette parties



Deep Vahi

and "haldi" (turmeric powder being applied in a beauty ceremony and ritual).

Large banquets halls (with or without mandap), excellent food have become a norm for the hotels. The hotel management at almost all the hotels is helpful in releasing stress and tension of the family members of both bride and groom because these hotels take full responsibility of the entire event.

One may ask, what facilities are being offered by the hotels and how much percentage of the marriages are being conducted in hotels?

Deep declares, "Hotels offer a variety of facilities and services to attract couples to host their weddings and receptions on their premises. JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, for instance, provides diverse event spaces with 14 banquet areas, each equipped with the latest audio-visual technology. The hotel boasts of a team of professional event planners who expertly



Gurmeet Singh

manage and execute grand, intimate, and niche weddings. With comprehensive amenities including 358 sea-facing rooms and suites, five distinctive restaurants and bars, three outdoor pools, Quan Spa, and a state-of-the-art fitness center, the hotel ensures a luxurious experience for all guests. Personalized services such as customizable wedding packages, bespoke themes, and unique gourmet spreads crafted by expert chefs further enhance the appeal. Additionally, innovative tools like the Marriott Services App streamline event management, significantly enhancing the guest experience."

He adds, "While precise data on the percentage of marriages conducted specifically in hotels across India is not available, it is evident that hotels are increasingly popular for weddings due to their amenities and services. Hotels cater to both Indian nationals and international couples, thanks to India's cultural richness, diverse landscapes, hospitality, and affordability. This trend is expected to grow, with hotels continuing to innovate and cater to diverse wedding preferences."

Gurmeet Singh asserts, "Hotels offer a plethora of facilities to entice couples to host their weddings on their premises. Our clubs, Signature Club Resort in Devanahalli, Bangalore and The Woodrose in JP Nagar, Bengaluru, include a variety of indoor and outdoor venues suitable for different guest counts, from intimate gatherings to grand celebrations. In-house catering and decor services ensure seamless events. Many hotels provide complimentary locations for pre-wedding photoshoots. Additional amenities like spa treatments, fitness centers, and swimming pools enhance the overall guest experience. Some hotels even offer wedding planning services, taking the stress out of organizing the event. By providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities, hotels aim to create unforgettable wedding experiences for couples and their guests."

He adds, "The percentage of marriages being conducted in hotels in India is rapidly growing. Bengaluru has witnessed a surge in destination weddings, both among Indian nationals and foreigners. The city's cosmopolitan atmosphere, coupled with

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world-class infrastructure and a thriving hospitality industry, has made it a preferred choice for couples seeking a modern yet culturally rich wedding experience. While most weddings conducted in Bengaluru hotels are Indian, there's a noticeable increase in international couples opting for the city as their wedding destination. This trend is not only boosting the hotel industry but also enhancing India's image as a global wedding destination."

Suniil, however, has a different view. He states, "Hotels mostly offer the accommodation, food services and available spaces for the Wedding functions. Rest all arrangements are done by the Wedding Planner."

He continues, "As many standalone Banquet Halls are also available, a certain percentage of local weddings go there. Rest all go to Hotels of varying Star Categories. It's mostly Indian Weddings that take place at Hotels in India."

Trends In Destination Wedding

Destination weddings are becoming widespread in India. Popularised by prominent personalities like Priyanka Chopra & Nick Jonas (held in Umaid Bhavan Palace, Jodhpur), Vicky Kaushal & Katrina Kaif (held in Six Senses resort in Sawai Madhopur), destination weddings are becoming good revenue earners for hotels in India. But how lucrative are they and what are the current trends?

Deep claims, "Destination weddings



can be highly lucrative for resorts due to multiple revenue streams from room bookings, venue rentals, catering, and guest amenities. Resorts can increase occupancy rates and attract affluent clients by offering comprehensive wedding packages and personalized services. To popularize their properties, resorts should highlight unique offerings such as beachfront ceremonies or vineyard settings, focus on sustainability by adopting eco-friendly practices and offering green wedding packages, provide comprehensive services including bespoke themes, customizable packages, and innovative event management tools (like the Marriott Services App), and create memorable experiences for guests that extend beyond the wedding event. JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, for example, markets itself as a premier wedding destination and a place for guests to relax and rejuvenate."



Elaborating on trends, he said, "Trends in destination weddings in India include cultural and historic settings, exotic scenic locations, vineyard backdrops, and pristine beach venues. These diverse options attract couples with their romantic ambiance, unique landscapes, and luxurious resorts. Hotels in these destinations benefit from increased bookings, higher occupancy rates, and a diversified clientele. By offering tailored experiences and leveraging their unique features, hotels can enhance their revenue and attract a global clientele.

Gurmeet Singh avers, "Destination weddings are a lucrative opportunity for Indian resorts, especially those in Bengaluru. To capitalize on this, resorts should offer comprehensive wedding packages, create dedicated venues, and partner with wedding planners. Digital marketing, influencer collaborations, and participation in wedding events are crucial for popularizing the property. Exceptional service and attention to detail are key to creating unforgettable wedding experiences and driving positive word-of-mouth."

He continued, "India's metropolitan cities are emerging as strong contenders for destination weddings, complementing the country's traditional wedding hotspots. Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad offer a blend of modernity and cultural heritage, attracting couples seeking lavish celebrations. While cities like Jaipur, Udaipur, and Jodhpur are renowned for their regal charm and picturesque landscapes, catering to those seeking a traditional, royal wedding, Bengaluru offers a contemporary blend of modernity and sophistication. The

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city's cosmopolitan atmosphere, coupled with its growing reputation as a fashion and entertainment hub, makes it an ideal location for couples who want to create a wedding that reflects their modern lifestyle and personality."

Suniil states, "Resorts catering to destination weddings get an exposure to well placed families within and outside our country who are willing to even book the entire facility for their event. They usually make wedding Brochures and Videos with Wedding Specialists who go into the detailing and management of the Event along with the Host. Destinations of Cultural and Tourist interest are much sought after, however Metros and other cities with Branded Hotels are also good to go for weddings depending on the choice of the families going for the same."

Speaking on the latest trends prevailing in the industry he says, "The usual trends being adopted by couples planning destination wedding is adopting Bollywood themes with different attires and colors for different function of Mehndi, Haldi, Chooda, Wedding and Reception etc."

Profitability In Resorts

As far as profitability is concerned, which is main issue to encourage marriage in hotel venues, it is believed that the average profit margin for hosting wedding receptions varies from 30-50%. Factors like locations, size and amenities influence the profit margin. Proper management of staffing, careering and other costs are the key factors affecting the profit margin. As far as resorts are concerned weddings, particularly destination weddings can be a rewarding experience.



Gurmeet Singh claims, "Destination weddings are a lucrative opportunity for Indian resorts, especially those in Bengaluru. To capitalize on this, resorts should offer comprehensive wedding packages, create dedicated venues, and partner with wedding planners. Digital marketing, influencer collaborations, and participation in wedding events are crucial for popularizing the property. Exceptional service and attention to detail are key to creating unforgettable wedding experiences."

Suniil believes that wedding ceremonies and receptions in a resort can benefit the property as "by catering to such weddings the resort gets an exposure to well placed families, within and outside our country, who are willing to even book the entire facility for their event. They usually make wedding Brochures and Videos with Wedding Specialists who go into the detailing and management of the Event along with the Host. Destinations of Cultural and Tourist interest are much sought after."

Deep disclosed, "Destination weddings can be highly lucrative for resorts due to multiple revenue streams from room bookings, venue rentals, catering, and guest amenities. Resorts can increase occupancy rates and attract affluent clients by offering comprehensive wedding packages and personalized services. To popularize their properties, resorts should highlight unique offerings and focus on sustainability by adopting eco-friendly practices and offering green wedding packages, provide comprehensive services including bespoke themes, customizable packages, and innovative event management tools like the Marriott Services App. They should also create memorable experiences for guests that extend beyond the wedding event. JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, for example, markets itself as a premier wedding destination and a place for guests to relax and rejuvenate.

Future of Weddings in Hotels

Over the past two decades, India has seen

a significant growth in the size of wedding business due to increasing disposable income and a demand for lavish celebrations. Several big hotels have recognised the potential of hosting wedding ceremonies. Programmes like Marriott's "Shaadi by Marriott Bonvoy," Hyatt's "#PerfectlyYours," and Taj's "Timeless Weddings" are examples.

All this points to the revolutionization that is taking place within the industry. With all these changes what is the future of destination weddings?

Suniil reveals, "India's wedding business greatly adds to the city and State's image once the guests start pouring in. It generates employment and revenue for the wedding planners, DJ's, Artists, Florists, Fashion Designers, Decorators, Suppliers and all others associated with making the wedding a grand success."

Speaking about future of weddings being hosted in hotels, he says, "The future of destination weddings is bright as they also garner media attention thereby making the destination more popular. The attendees themselves add to the buzz by posting pics, videos and reels of the wedding in their social media feeds furthering interest in the wedding and the destination as a whole."

Deep declares, "India's wedding business is revolutionizing hospitality by driving innovation and growth through destination weddings. Key trends include the exploration of new locations beyond traditional destinations and a strong emphasis on sustainability, with eco-friendly practices and responsible tourism attracting environmentally conscious couples. The future of destination weddings in India holds significant opportunities for hotels and resorts to capitalize on these trends, enhance guest experiences, and establish the country as a top choice for unique and unforgettable wedding celebrations. For instance, JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu incorporates local materials and energy-efficient practices in its venues, reflecting a commitment to sustainability and innovation."

Gurmeet Singh asserts, "India's wedding industry is reshaping the hospitality landscape. With escalating budgets and a penchant for grandeur, weddings have become mega-events driving demand for luxurious accommodations, exquisite catering, and impeccable service. This surge has prompted hotels to invest heavily in wedding infrastructure, creating specialized venues and curating bespoke experiences. Bengaluru, with its cosmopolitan ambiance and growing economy, is at the epicenter of this transformation. The city's potential as a destination wedding hub is immense, given its proximity to international airports, modern infrastructure, and a thriving hospitality sector. As the wedding industry continues to evolve, Bengaluru's resorts and hotels are poised to capitalize on this growth by offering innovative packages, personalized services, and unforgettable experiences to attract discerning couples seeking a perfect blend of tradition and modernity."

So it looks like the future for weddings being conducted in hotels is bright! ■





Training & Retaining Workforce for Hotel's Success

(Part-II)

Success of a hotel depends on the manpower. Staff, from the receptionist, who is the first step of the guest towards his hospitality during the stay, to the attendant who handles his luggage during his departure, help in the guest being attracted by the property and compelling him to stay at the same hotel on his future trips to the destination. The employees, it may be said, are the backbone or the mainstay for a hotel's success. The hotels have thus to ensure that the employees remain loyal and dedicated to the property. Since there is lack of sufficient trained employees in the industry the problem of employees unflinchingly opting to skip from one hotel to another is common. Ashok Malkani delves on why it is important to train the employees and also probes on their aspirations and needs and other aspects to help in retaining them so that the property continues to prosper.

Advancement Opportunities

Hospitality brands are keen on improving employees' engagement and satisfaction. One of the requisites of the employees is the advancement opportunities. They are also apt to opt for other establishments due to the difference in salaries. So how do hotels tackle these issues to help in their retention programme?

Aditya disclosed, "From our 15+ years of association with 12,000+ hotels across 100+ countries, we can attest that the sector is rich with advancement opportunities for ambitious and committed professionals. The global nature of the hotel industry opens up opportunities for international career advancement for those willing to relocate. the hotel industry offers fertile ground for entrepreneurship for those inclined towards creating their path. With experience and industry knowledge, many professionals venture into starting their hospitality businesses, from boutique hotels to hospitality consulting firms. Thus the industry provides ample opportunity for advancement."

He adds, "Yes there is a difference in the salary structures across different hotel categories. This can be attributed to the scale of operations, revenue generation capabilities, and the level of service and amenities the hotel offers. However, despite paying lower salaries, small hotels employ several strategies to retain their workforce effectively. These include creating a positive and inclusive work environment, offering non-monetary benefits, and recognizing and rewarding good work. Most importantly, in the small hotel segment globally, we are witnessing a rapid shift toward cloud PMS adoption for digitization

and automation of daily tasks. This is very important as technology makes staff lives easier in many ways."

Deepika is vehement about advancement opportunities. She avers, "In the hospitality industry, advancement opportunities abound, with structured career paths, mentorship programs, and internal growth initiatives. Professionals can progress from entry-level roles to managerial positions, supported by ongoing training and mentorship. Yes, there can be significant differences in salaries among different categories of hotels. Due lower salaries, smaller hotels often focus on other aspects to retain manpower. They may offer non-monetary incentives such as opportunities for skill development, flexible schedules, or a strong sense of community.

Neha claims, "At our hotel, Hyatt Centric, Bangalore, advancement opportunities are plentiful and are based on the dedication and exceptional performance of our team members. We value hard work, commitment, and a passion for excellence. We provide various training programs, opportunities to take on leadership roles, and the chance to work in different departments to broaden skills and experience. We encourage all our employees to reach their full potential and achieve their career goals within the hotel industry. As far as salaries are concerned, they are aligned as per the Karnataka minimum wages act."

Srinivas states, "We understand the ambitious nature of hospitality professionals and are committed to nurturing and supporting their career growth. To understand the skills, knowledge, ability and employee performance, we have implemented 3 Box Talent Rating exercise every quarter and each and every employee will be rated on 3 Box Model which consist of Top Talent, Solid Talent and Need Improvement. Also, during first half of the year, each and every employee has an opportunity to pause and reflect his/her progress against objectives and set goals. Mid-Year Check-Ins provide a forum for these important discussions with an emphasis on performance, career growth, and development and by the end of August, we ask that managers meet with all our Team Members individually for a Mid-Year Check-In.

At Hilton, we prioritize internal mobility and career development. We have a structured process where employees can express their career goals and aspirations during the annual appraisal. Based on their aspirations, we provide opportunities for trainings and skill development to help them progress in their chosen career path.

Speaking about the difference in salaries between various hotels he maintains, "At Hilton Hotels, we strive to ensure a balanced salary structure across different categories of hotels, taking into consideration factors such as location, market demand, and specific job roles. While it is true that smaller hotels may sometimes have limitations in terms of salary budgets, they often compensate by offering other benefits such as flexible working hours, training and development opportunities, and a supportive work environment."

He avers, "It is important for all hotels, regardless of size, to prioritize employee engagement and create a positive work





Srinivas Rao



Sarbendra Sarkar



Shweta Singh



Ojas Vagal

culture that fosters loyalty and commitment."

Sarbendra disclosed, "Hotels typically have various specialized departments, such as sales and marketing, revenue management, human resources, and operations. Ambitious professionals can pursue career advancement within these departments by specializing in areas of interest and gaining relevant experience and qualifications. The global nature of the hotel industry means opportunities to work internationally are present too. International assignments can provide valuable cross-cultural experience and open doors to advancement opportunities in diverse markets."

He adds, "As far as difference in salaries among different categories of hotels is concerned, this gap is wider in senior or managerial positions. However, for industry entrants, the gap in salaries is much narrower. A supportive and positive work environment helps smaller hotels foster a sense of belonging, teamwork, and mutual respect among employees. Small hotels tend to create a kind of close-knit community so that employees stay for a longer period."

Mahesh declares, "Working in the hospitality business offers significant opportunities for personal and professional growth. Hospitality professionals are exposed to fast-paced business operations, developing soft skills such as customer service, communication, problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork. The hospitality industry is the most globally diverse of all, which means exciting job opportunities let you work in different locations and countries. This allows you to gain international exposure, learn about different cultures, and expand your horizons."

He affirms "Salary structure of every employee is distinct and is decided based on several factors like minimum wages of that state, the level of education, experience, location of the job and the cost of living, the skill sets that employees possess and the demand for those skills, Position & Role. Salary structure is totally depending on business scenario of that property and varies property to property."

Srivasta claims, "The hotel industry offers ample advancement opportunities, including promotions, specialized training, and opportunities to move up the ranks within the organization. As far as salaries are concerned, they vary across hotel categories. To retain manpower, smaller hotels may emphasize other benefits like work-life balance, training opportunities, and a supportive work environment."

Purnima proclaimed "Ambition is a common trait among professionals in the hospitality industry, just as it is in other industries. Ambition drives individuals to seek growth opportunities, take on challenges, and strive for success in their careers. Professionals can advance through various opportunities including internal movement into different job roles, varied markets, national & international relocation, etc."

She adds, "There can be significant differences in salaries among different categories of hotels. Luxury or upscale hotels typically offer higher salaries compared to budget or economy hotels due to the level of service and amenities provided. Smaller hotels often pay lower salaries due to budget constraints but may compensate through other means to retain manpower."

Ojas states, "The hotel industry and its work scope by nature creates a very dynamic workforce from across various fields of education. Very traditionally we look at hoteliers as hotel management students who graduate into receptionists, housekeepers, chefs or servers, and bartenders. However, we, at Ritz-Carlton, also house professionals from management institutes and educational backgrounds in various departments like Revenue Management, Engineering, Finance, Human Resources, Sales and Marketing, and Public Relations. We also create opportunities for our aspiring ladies and gentlemen to take inter-departmental transfers into administrative yet strategic roles in Human Resources, Sales, Finance etc. My career is a testimony to this commitment as I began my career as a Food & Beverage server and eventually over the years graduated into Learning & Development before moving into Human Resources operations for hotels. At The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore we also operate a management training program just like most of the reputed hotel brands do, college graduates undergo an 18-month management training program to eventually graduate into mid-management leadership roles across the hotel.

He avers, "As far as salaries are concerned,

this is guarded by the minimum wage law of the respective states. Hotels with smaller inventories will definitely have a smaller workforce and vice versa, However, that does not really impact the salary benchmarking for hotels."

Annepaul says, "The pandemic opened a lot of doors for a lot of people, particularly here in Asia. What hotel employers are looking for today is not just the dedication but also the character and mindset to always go the extra mile, not just for guests – but for colleagues too. In some ways, the pandemic united the hospitality workforce as associates are working closer together than ever before. Roles can be split, and hybrid employment conditions means that staff can move more easier through departments to learn new skills, depending of course on the need of the hotel operation at a specific time. So, taking on board the elevated training and new opportunities arising, we see great potential for all our employees to advance and enjoy a prosperous career in hospitality."

He continues, "Salaries are, of course, extremely important but they are not the be-all-and-end-all of the job. No matter the size of the hotel and scale of operation, camaraderie, friendship, socialising outside of work and having a sense of place, safety and security, all add up to the overall package for an employee."

Rajiv iterates, "We pride ourselves on providing our employees with a clear path for career progression, as well as opportunities for cross-functional experiences to enhance skills and knowledge. Our Learning & Development programs are designed to support continuous growth and development."

He continues, "While there may be differences in salaries among various categories of hotels, we prioritize employee retention through avenues such as job security, personalized support, comprehensive benefit packages, promoting a healthy work-life balance, and ensuring a positive and inclusive work culture."

Shweta asserts, "The advancement for the people with the right mindset is enormous. There are many opportunities for crew that is ready to learn and train themselves. We have crew from our Housekeeping who are working as Hosts and Stewards today, getting a handsome remuneration."

She continues, "As per our knowledge, most industry players follow the minimum wages act and salaries are at par as per the current market rate. However, what might differ is the service charge amounts, the incentive structure and amounts might differ based from hotel to hotel or restaurant to restaurant."

Future Prospects of Workforce

After a difficult period during the Covid-19, the hospitality industry is slowly resuming normalcy with consumers returning to hotels. Even with signs of recovery the sector still faces a storm as far as the workforce is concerned. This is a global dilemma. In a recent report the Office of National Statistics (ONS), U.K., stated that shortages are at an all time high, with an increase of 83% more vacancies advertised and a shortfall of 170,000 hospitality jobs currently available



in the UK.

So, what are the problems visualised in the future for the workforce environment of hospitality industry?

Deepika, declares, "In anticipation of future challenges in the hotel industry's workforce environment, we, at Hotel Marriott Whitefield, prioritize talent attraction and retention. We address these challenges by investing in employee welfare, providing competitive benefits, and fostering a positive work culture. Furthermore, we continuously invest in training and development programs to upskill our workforce and adapt our workforce strategies to meet evolving needs and expectations. This proactive approach ensures a resilient and motivated team capable of overcoming future workforce challenges."

Srinivas says, "One of the challenges we anticipate is the shifting mindset of hospitality management students towards other industries such as retail, banking, cruise lines, and overseas jobs. This could potentially impact the talent pool available for the hotel industry."

He adds, "To address this potential issue, we, at Hilton, have been actively engaging with hotel management colleges to connect with students and showcase the opportunities and growth prospects within the hotel industry. Continuing to foster relationships with educational institutions and proactively engaging with potential talent will be crucial in addressing the workforce challenges that the hotel industry may face in the future".

Sarbendra says, "The expectations of the younger workforce, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are different from previous generations. They value work-life balance, opportunities for skill development, and a sense of purpose in their work. Hotels need to adapt their HR practices and company culture to attract and retain these 'new' age workers. Moreover, with technological advancements, there may be a widening digital skill gap. This could be particularly relevant in roles that involve digital marketing, data analysis, and automation. Hospitality players need to invest in training and development, embrace technology, and offer competitive wages, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement to increase retention rates."

Shweta declares, "Availability of labour might be an issue in the future. Lesser number of students are enrolling for hospitality degrees and programmes, which will, in time, lead to an issue of labour availability in future. At that time, skilled labour will become a long shot!"

Mahesh states, "Hiring and retaining the staff has always been one of the most common problems in the hospitality industry. Only solution is: Competitive Salary scale along with other benefits and Training the new workforce on a regular basis. Retaining a qualified staff requires you to employ a few tactics. For example, cultivating a feeling of belongingness (culture) and value for the team members will make them attached to their jobs and instill a sense of responsibility in their minds"

Srivasta declares, "Future workforce challenges may include adapting to technological advancements, addressing demographic shifts, and ensuring diversity and inclusion. Solutions involve investing in training, fostering a supportive work environment, and embracing innovation in recruitment and retention strategies."

Purnima states, "In the Indian hotel industry, future challenges such as labor shortages, technological changes, employee well-being, diversity, and sustainability will require strategic responses. This involves investing in training, improving recruitment tactics, offering flexible work arrangements, promoting diversity and inclusion, prioritizing employee welfare, and integrating sustainable practices. By proactively addressing future challenges through innovation, investment in employee development, and a focus on sustainability and well-being, the hotel industry can adapt to the evolving workforce environment effectively."

Ojas disclosed, "One of the rising concerns for the hotel work force is the rising cost of living in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and more. The younger generation that aspires to begin their careers with hotels in major cities has to overcome the challenge of paying the annual incremental housing rentals. Hotels now actively engage in annual studies of salaries and benchmark compensation based on city intel and by partnering in various salary surveys that provide strategic insight into salary benchmarking. This could help the industry in the future."

Annepaul announced, "Post pandemic, hygiene was possibly the single biggest challenge that needs to be overcome immediately. But along with sterilising rooms, sheets, doorhandles and balustrades, also come on the challenge of menus."

He adds, "You will not find a hotel in the world that doesn't have at least one QR code stuck somewhere these days. For many hotels, QR codes are now standard for check-in, menus and customer satisfaction survey, but even more properties are adopting technology with the use of Apps. Technology is not slowing down even in the people-centric hospitality industry. With robots now delivering room service and greeting guests for check-in, sadly some roles are being lost to such progress. After all, a robot works 24/7 without a break. But robots are just the start. We don't know how Artificial Intelligence will shape the hospitality world, it's too soon to say, but it is coming, we will be watching this space for sure."

"But," he continues, "the positive news for the hospitality industry is that whilst many sectors like manufacturing and finance fall to the mercy of AI, no robot or computer will every truly replace the 'human-touch', the intangible moment of two people communicating and caring for others needs and wants. This is what makes our industry so precious and some-what futureproof."

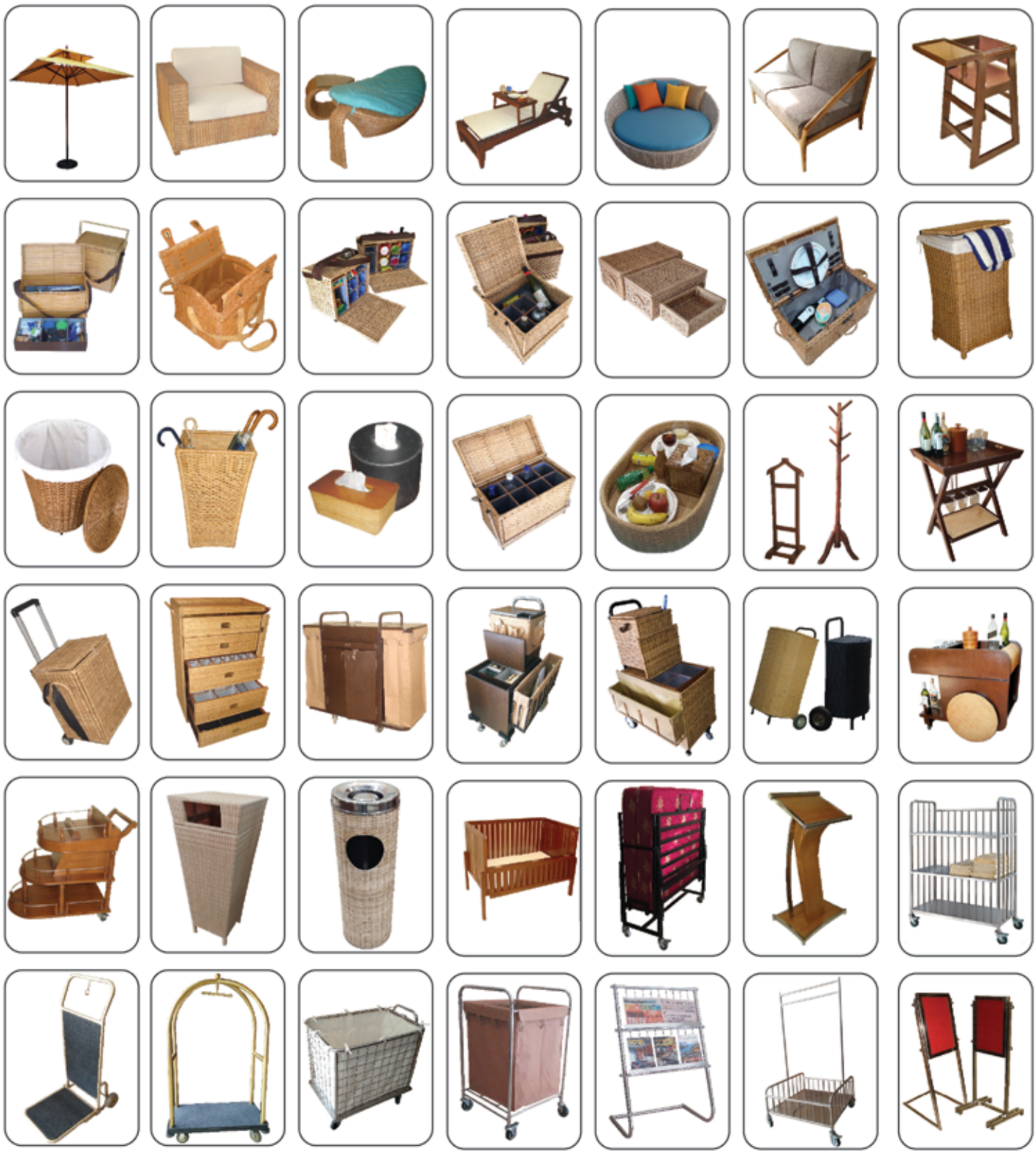
Rajiv declares, "In the dynamic landscape of the hotel industry, we foresee challenges such as labour shortage, employee retention, automation, and workforce wellbeing. To tackle these potential issues, we suggest prioritizing continuous training and career development opportunities to attract and retain top talent. Embracing technology while providing upskilling programs will ensure successful adaptation to automation."

Neha says, "In the coming years, we anticipate challenges related to technology & innovation and sustainability. To tackle these issues, we are committed to providing continuous training and upskilling opportunities for our team members. It is imperative that we focus on sustainable practices and create awareness about building a more sustainable future for the industry." ■

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Redefining The Art Of Luxury Hospitality

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center

By Sharmila Chand

Located in the heart of Bengaluru's thriving IT hub, Whitefield, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center aims to deliver exceptional hospitality and cutting-edge convention facilities, redefining the concept of luxury and convenience for its guests.

The commitment to Sheraton's core values of being "Welcoming," "Assured," and fostering a strong sense of "Community" is evident in every aspect of the hotel's operations. "We are not just a place to stay; we are a hub for creating meaningful connections among travelers and locals alike," says Sanjay Gupta, the General Manager. He further adds, "We are committed to staying at the forefront of the meetings and events industry by investing in cutting-edge technology, expanding our convention facilities, and enriching our guest experiences. Our goal is to consistently exceed guest expectations and maintain our status as a premier destination for conventions and events in Bengaluru."

Design and Décor

The design at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center emphasizes simplicity and functionality. The decor aesthetics features clean lines, neutral colours, uncluttered spaces, and a specific atmosphere that amplifies the sense of luxury and relaxation.

The hotel lobby features organic swirls, creating a relaxing ambiance that eases the transition from journey to arrival.

Accommodation

The hotel offers 360 guest rooms, including 39 suites, suitable for single travelers, couples, and families on business or leisure. The rooms feature views of lush gardens, the pool, or cityscapes. Each room includes high-speed internet access, a 48-inch LED flat-screen television, a mini-bar, a tea/coffee maker, a rain shower, and a bathtub, ensuring comfort and convenience.

The Sheraton Signature Sleep Experience guarantees a refreshing rest. Club rooms offer upgraded amenities, and Club guests have exclusive access to the Sheraton Club Lounge on the sixth floor.



The spacious suites feature charming terraces, exclusive study rooms, and convenient kitchenettes.

Dining

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center prioritizes creating unforgettable dining experiences. The hotel offers a diverse range of culinary creations catering to various tastes.



"Our hotel offers a range of diverse and enticing dining options, welcoming both in-house guests and walk-in patrons seeking a remarkable Food & Beverage experience. Whether guests crave the comfort of international cuisine or the rich tapestry of local dishes, our restaurants satisfy discerning palates."

- Jatinder Pal Singh, Director of Food & Beverage, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center



'Feast' is a casual all-day dining restaurant with an impressive wine wall and a live interactive kitchen, serving regional flavours and world cuisines. Guests can also enjoy the fine cuisine of Feast restaurant in one of the hotel's private outdoor cabanas at Plunge.

'Inazia,' the Pan-Asian restaurant, stands out for its commitment to authenticity and innovation, offering a carefully curated menu featuring both classic and contemporary Asian dishes. At Inazia, Chef Rungtiwa Sorlae, is at the helm. As a Thai Specialty Chef, she has garnered immense popularity amongst the discerning diners and patrons. She says, "Whether it's the intricate layers of flavour in our signature dish, the Thai Crab Omelette, or the comforting richness of a well-made Massaman Curry, every dish we serve is a celebration of Thailand's diverse food culture. We aim to transport our guests to the bustling street markets of Bangkok or the serene countryside, offering not just a meal, but a journey through the heart of Thailand."

After a day exploring Bangalore, guests can unwind with exclusive cocktails, mocktails, wines, martinis, and single-malt whiskies, accompanied by live music at the chic Chime Bar.

The new specialty fine dining Indian restaurant, 'Zarf,' showcases the rich tapestry of Indian cuisine in a vibrant, opulent, and welcoming atmosphere.

Spa & Fitness

The Shine Spa boasts an awe-inspiring reception and five treatment rooms offering transformative spa treatments, along with steam and sauna facility. There is also a dedicated manicure/pedicure lounge and a Jacuzzi. Personalized programs feature special Ayurvedic treatments and sauna therapies, designed to leave guests revitalized and rejuvenated.

The fitness center is open round-the-clock and equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and personalized trainers. The facility also includes a special space for meditation, allowing guests to practice mindfulness and yoga with trained professionals.

Personalized Guest Engagement

In today's competitive hospitality landscape, the ability to personalize hotel guest experiences is crucial. Personalization



helps distinguish the hotel from the crowd and creates memorable experiences that encourage guest loyalty. At Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center, the hotel team offers guests unique and memorable experiences tailored to their specific needs and preferences. Recognizing and valuing guests through personalized experiences fosters strong loyalty to the hotel brand, leading to repeat bookings, longer stays, and higher lifetime value.

The hotel creates tailored guest experiences in several ways:

Pre-arrival communication: Sending emails with local event suggestions or restaurant recommendations based on guest interests and needs.

Upgraded rooms for special occasions: Celebrating birthdays or anniversaries with a room upgrade (subject to availability).

In-room touches: Stocking the minibar with the guest's favourite drinks or providing welcome amenities based on preferences (fruit and local wine).

Mobile check-in & checkout: Offering contactless convenience for tech-savvy guests.

Loyalty program rewards: Recognizing repeat guests with personalized rewards like room and F&B discounts or discounts on spa treatments.

Personalized recommendations: Using guest data to suggest activities, restaurants, or tours aligned with their interests.



"A key aspect of our success lies in the delegation of dedicated resources to handle event confirmations and logistics, ensuring seamless coordination and clear communication. Our commitment to incorporating the latest technology, coupled with strategic marketing initiatives and a focus on fostering networking opportunities, solidifies Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center as the premier choice for hosting high-profile events and conferences in the dynamic city of Bengaluru"

-Varun Mehrotra, Director of Sales & Marketing, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center

Events and Conventions

The hotel is a preferred venue for high-profile events and conferences, underpinned by strategic initiatives and innovative offerings. The convention center stands out with its expansive and versatile event spaces, including state-of-the-art meeting rooms, elegant ballrooms, and advanced conference facilities. This range of venues allows the hotel to cater to events of varying sizes and formats, offering customization flexibility. The hotel tailors services for convention associations, aligning offerings with the specific needs of different industries and professional groups.

The property features 10 event spaces that can be divided into 16 breakout venues, hosting up to 3,000 guests. It is known as one of India's largest convention hotels, offering a premier destination for grand weddings, trade shows, conferences, or private events. The convention center, spanning approximately 20,000 sq. ft, boasts the city's largest premium meeting and conference destination, with an unobstructed height of about 40 feet. The hotel excels in the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) and wedding markets, featuring state-of-the-art facilities, experienced event planners, and flexible packages.

"My journey in hospitality has been one of passion, growth, and continuous learning"

Sanjay Gupta, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield & Hotel Convention Center



Sanjay Gupta is a seasoned and versatile hospitality professional with a career spanning over two decades. He has worked with brands like Hilton, Hyatt Hotels, Grand Hyatt and Oberoi Hotels and Resorts. Over the years, Sanjay has honed his skills in managing a diverse team of people and has also advocated operational excellence. Through his profound knowledge and dedication to championing the ethos of travel and hospitality, he is always at the helm of day-to-day operations as the General Manager at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield & Hotel Convention Center, ensuring personalized and high-quality service to all the guests.

Sanjay is a graduate from IHM Kolkata and is an alumni of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. He has also completed his Executive Development Program from IIM Ahmedabad and IIT Delhi. He has been the recipient of the Spirit To Serve Associates Marriott 'Take Care' award Asia Pacific Except China (APEC) for the year 2022 and the General Manager of year 2022 from Business World Hotelier as a National winner. Furthermore, he is the third Indian hotelier to be awarded an Honorary Diploma by the Les Clefs d'Or Paris, France.

In an exclusive interview with By Sharmila Chand, he talks about his work philosophy and more...

Tell us how your journey has been in the hospitality industry?

My journey has been one of passion, growth, and continuous learning. Starting in entry-level roles, I gained a strong foundation in service and operations. As I advanced to leadership positions, my focus shifted to strategic planning and team development. Now, as a General Manager, I balance profitability with guest satisfaction, ensuring our property delivers exceptional experiences. The challenges and long hours are rewarding when I see my team thrive and our guests leave with lasting memories. My career is a testament to the dedication required to succeed in hospitality.

What is your working philosophy?

A. My working philosophy revolves around fostering collaboration, innovation, and accountability. I believe in leading by example, staying involved in daily operations, and understanding each team member's strengths and challenges. By encouraging open communication and creating a culture of feedback, I empower my team to take ownership of their roles and contribute to our collective success. Setting clear, achievable goals and regularly reviewing our progress ensures we stay aligned with our strategic vision while remaining adaptable to changes.

What is the secret mantra behind your success?

The secret to my success is a strong commitment to guest satisfaction and team empowerment. I focus on creating memorable guest experiences through personalized service and attention to detail. Behind the scenes, I work on building a supportive and motivated team, recognizing that happy employees are the key to delivering exceptional service. By listening to both guests and staff, I can address concerns quickly, anticipate needs, and continuously improve our offerings. This dual focus on guests and team members forms the foundation of our hotel's success and reputation for excellence.

What makes Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel a preferred choice?

Our location near major tech parks provides business travelers with quick access to corporate centers, making it ideal for conferences and meetings. Simultaneously, we offer a serene retreat within the bustling city, allowing guests to unwind after a busy day. A vibrant array of dining, shopping, and entertainment options, all within close proximity to the hotel, also makes a difference.

What would be your advice to upcoming professionals in the industry?

Success in hotel management requires a blend of effective communication, continuous learning, and strong leadership. Prioritize guest satisfaction by exceeding expectations and addressing feedback promptly. Empower your team through recruitment, training, and support, enabling them to excel in their roles. Stay adaptable to industry changes and maintain strong relationships within the community. Passion, positivity, and a balanced approach to work and personal life are essential for sustaining long-term success in this industry.

How do you like to de-stress?

I de-stress by prioritizing tasks, delegating responsibilities, and engaging in regular physical exercise like jogging or yoga to boost my mood and energy. Mindfulness practices such as meditation help clear my mind, while hobbies and strong social connections provide a necessary balance. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal life is crucial, and I make sure to take breaks and vacations to recharge. Reflecting on accomplishments also helps me stay focused and balanced in managing the hotel.

What is the best compliment you received?

The most cherished compliment I've received is when a guest shares that their stay was transformed from ordinary to extraordinary due to the personalized service my team and I provided. Hearing that our efforts made a meaningful difference in a guest's experience reinforces the value of our commitment to excellence and is a sentiment I'll always hold dear.



Housekeeping in Hotel Public Spaces

The work of the housekeeping department of any hotel or motel is the most unseen, but the most needed in many ways. All aspects of cleanliness and ancillary services attached to the property are under the scope of housekeeping. Good housekeeping of the public spaces as well as of the hotel rooms, helps retain many satisfied guests for the future.

As with many other services of star hotels, the housekeeping of public areas has undergone a remarkable change. For example, the impressive cloak rooms that were bastions of sheer luxury with attendant opening the taps and offering you towels followed by hand lotion, and even an ashtray if you seemed inclined to have one, have now been outsourced in many properties to outside agencies.

The supervision is still that of the housekeeping department of the hotel, but the actual chores are being carried out by another company. However, the approach remains unchanged – housekeeping in hotels is still geared to provide a level of cleanliness, hygiene and feel good factor that a visitor is expected to desire and welcome.

Housekeeping Challenges

Even today, if the bathroom amenities in the hotel are not well placed, the housekeeping department is easily blamed, even when this service and its overseeing are outsourced, for the final responsibility lies with the housekeeping department. Moreover, some jobs in the purview of housekeeping in hotels simply cannot be outsourced. For example, cleaning of hotel rooms shouldn't and cannot be outsourced for there is security of the guests involved.

Here it must be remembered that housekeeping is an ongoing process, requiring extensive training. Most hospitality properties would provide on the job training, which helps the housekeeping professional to keep himself/herself abreast with the recent trends in housekeeping. However, besides training, which can be imparted, a basic aptitude or interest towards clean and hygiene issues is always required from the housekeeping professionals.

Like any other department of the hotel, the head of the housekeeping

staff also has to perform within a budget. The Housekeeping Manager has the responsibility for all aspects of the department from maintenance of operational expenses, to training, motivating the staff, and ensuring that the standards never slip, all within or below the prescribed budget.

Public Space V/s Rooms

While the hotel guest is more influenced by the standard of housekeeping in the room in which he stays, most other hotel visitors for F&B outlets or those who come to the hotel to visit somebody or even just to drop off somebody, are exposed mainly to the public access spaces, which include mainly the lobby, rest rooms, parking (which is often not cared for by the hotel's housekeeping department), and sometimes the business centre or the conference venue.

As far as the housekeeping standards in public access spaces of the hotels are concerned, impressions are quickly made. Any shortcoming during a meeting or a visit to the hotel's public access space is often immediately noted by the people. For example, the threadbare or dirty and smelly carpet gets immediately noticed. When some of the hotels in Delhi, it was the floor stains in the lobby or the smell in the toilets that irked the day guests the most, who could not be bothered with the standard of the rooms, if indeed there was any.

We can say that for the guest who stays overnight in the hotel, cleanliness of the rooms is of greater importance, but for the day guest, spic and span public access spaces make for the first impression.

Enduring Impressions

The standard of housekeeping in a hotel largely depends upon the professional level of the person, who is at the helm of the housekeeping department of the concerned hotel. Clean environment or rather in-vironment in the hotel does not begin and end only with carpets, walls, floors and fittings. It also includes the hygiene level of the waiter who serves you. If the waiter is wearing sweat-stained uniform or has a strong offensive body odour, that is a sure sign that somebody in the housekeeping department has ignored his/her responsibility.

The first hotel employee most of us encounter while entering the hotel premises is the doorman, and a well turned out person is always a welcome sight. Remember noticing many a guest clicking or nodding their head in approval of the doormen of major hotel properties. Carrying themselves with a sense of pride, well turned out, often gloved and majestic in their bearing, they are an apt reflection of how the housekeeping department contributes to the image of the hotel in more ways than one. Similarly, the visual beauty aids in public spaces of hotels like flower arrangements, etc. contribute greatly to make the first impression among the hotel guests.

Revenue Generation

Hygiene, along with apparent as well as latent standard of cleanliness of public spaces, contributes greatly to guest inflows, which is a primary object of any hospitality property. No customer would be keen on spending any amount of money in a hotel that gives a grimy, messy and dirty impression. So, accommodation, that is the most revenue generating department of a hotel, is dependent on astute and quality housekeeping standards in public spaces too.

Most travellers who travel light, depend on dry cleaning facilities, shoe polishing, or other help and it is the housekeeping department of the hotel that has to take the responsibility of quality and prompt delivery of these services, as promised. This way, the housekeeping department of a hotel can even earn direct revenues.

Attention to Detail

If most hotels have housekeeping departments headed by qualified and experienced personnel and if they understand the importance of good housekeeping, then why are certain properties cleaner and more appealing than others? The difference is obviously in the details.

Certain seasonal details like a Christmas tree, colourful displays around Holi or sparkling paraphernalia around Diwali is common to almost all properties, and they bring the festivities in focus, but it is the daily mundane details that need to be taken care of.

Consistent standard need not be mistaken for boring repetition. Imagine, if all hotels only followed the rule of allowing white lilies in their lobby! Or consider if all hotel toilets had only paper towels and no luxury of soft 'real' towels? Like in life, in housekeeping too, variety adds to the spice, but standards regarding small minute details need to be consistently maintained.

Unseen Angels of Cleanliness

The hotel housekeeping department must be able to work quickly and efficiently, without invading the guests' privacy. Guests and their visitors have often admired the extra polished floor of the property but rarely would one have seen it being done. The few hours when no guest is expected, not even the airline staff, is when these heavy duty polishers and carpet hoovers come out to do their duty. If there is an odd customer walking in, the old-school housekeeping employees would get out of the way and rarely make eye contact with the guest, at the same time ensuring that the machine is silent as you check-in or walk towards the 24 hour coffee shop.

The light bulbs do get fused even in hotels but unlike homes, they rarely stay out of duty for longer than a few hours. Again, thank it to housekeeping. Yes, the central maintenance might be needed for the errant air-conditioning leaking duct, but to replace the single bulb on that high ceiling chandelier is the duty of the housekeeping department. This they do without the guests' knowledge.

The housekeeping of the hotel's public spaces is a challenging job indeed, requiring continual monitoring. Over the years, the only duty that has reduced totally for the housekeeping department is the job of emptying of the ashtrays from the public spaces. Before smoking was banned in all public spaces around the world, it was the solitary cigarette butt that was often enough to mark the hotel lobby as 'below standard.' ■

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Based in Delhi, India, Mehta Furnishers is dedicated to providing its customers with products that are of the highest quality. It take pride in its ability to manufacture products that are not only beautiful, but also durable and long-lasting. The product range includes baskets, furniture, dustbins, hampers, trolley-carts, and caddies, all of which are made using materials such as cane/rattan, wood, and metal.

The company believes that its products should not only meet our customers' needs, but also exceed their expectations. Proper care and attention is taken in every aspect of manufacturing process, from sourcing the best materials to crafting each product by hand. The goal is to provide customers with products that they will enjoy using for many years to come.







The all new housekeeping strollers and the mobile caddies have carved a niche for themselves in boutique hotels that are always looking for unique ideas and aesthetic values.

Mehta Furnishers is a company with a rich heritage of quality and craftsmanship. With a commitment to excellence and a passion for its products, they are dedicated to providing their customers with the very best that they have to offer.

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AKASA INTERNATIONAL PVT. LTD.	35	MODI WOOD SPACE	11
AKSAI CREATIONS	BC	PUSHKAL TEXTILES	29
ANDY MANNHART VERPACO INDIA PVT. LTD.	21	RANS TECHNOCRATS (INDIA) PVT. LTD.	BIC
CLEANCARE INDIA	37	REMINGTON STEEL ARTS	47
ECLECTIC BAY	25	STACKWELL	FIC
HOME COMFORT TEXO FAB	27	UNIFORMS UNLIMITED	33
HOME ZONE INDIA	09	VEDIC AROMA LAB	23
KESRI TRANSCONTINENTAL	01	VENUS INDUSTRIES	05
LOOMCRAFTS FURNITURE INDIA PVT. LTD.	07	WINTERHALTER INDIA PVT. LTD.	13
MEHTA FURNISHERS	39	WYNTRONIX INNOVATIONS PVT. LTD.	31



"Leadership is not a License to do Less, it is a Responsibility to do More"

Amit Kumar Sharma, Cluster General Manager – Maharashtra, The Fern Hotels & Resorts

Amit Kumar Sharma is a seasoned hotelier with a career spanning 23 years. A graduate from IHM Lucknow, he began his career with Grand Hyatt, Delhi as a pre-opening team member from where he developed deep interest into the fast- paced career of Food & Beverage operations & management. Thereafter, he worked with brands like Le Meridien, Intercontinental The Grand, Movenpick Hotels, Sayaji Hotels etc. He also worked for the Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee which gave him a great exposure to the event industry. He specializes in pre-opening Hotels, financial reporting, training & development, strategic planning, team management and brand representation through his strategic leadership.

Amit is responsible for overseeing multiple properties, driving operational excellence, and ensuring superior guest experiences across the region. His role involves strategic oversight, operational management, and fostering a collaborative environment to enhance the overall performance of all the 15 Fern properties under his purview.

In an exclusive interview with Sharmila Chand, he talks about his work philosophy and more...

How has your journey been in the hospitality industry?

My journey has been incredibly rewarding and diverse with some great learnings as I have worked in various capacities with numerous great leaders, colleagues and organizations. Throughout my career, I have focused on enhancing guest experiences, implementing innovative solutions, and leading successful teams. Each role has provided me with unique challenges and learning experiences, contributing to growth and expertise in the industry. I am passionate about the industry and committed to continuous improvement and excellence.

Tell us about the sustainable processes in your property?

We follow numerous community engagement practices at our property. The hotel implements robust waste, water, and energy management strategies, including using recycled materials, reducing water and energy consumption, and adopting eco-friendly products and technologies.

What is the marketing strategy you have adopted to promote your property?

I personally feel that the word-of-mouth marketing is the best marketing till date and we at Amanora, The Fern have quite strongly leveraged on that. Also, right use of technology in marketing enables us to get enhanced guest insights and provides us good results on the guest engagement front along with better efficiency and reach. it also gives us a real time analytics with personalization. Targeted Digital Presence: Leveraging digital platforms through SEO, social media, and targeted online advertising to reach specific audiences and engage potential guests with tailored content and promotions

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

Being the Pre-Opening General manager of Amanora The Fern, Pune has been the most rewarding moment in my career as I, with the unparalleled support of my team was able to position it as amongst the top most hotels in Pune and within our Fern group within few months of opening. We also received quite a few industry awards for operational excellence which was immensely gratifying. The ability to build great guest loyalty and a positive reputation has provided a deep sense of fulfilment. Our hotel has hosted quite a few high-profile events, ranging from conferences to big weddings and other corporate events.

What is your working Mantra, your guiding philosophy in work?

Leadership is not a license to do less, it is a responsibility to do more...

Leadership is about setting a higher standard and leading by example, not simply delegating tasks. It involves taking on greater responsibilities, inspiring others, and driving positive change through your actions and decisions.

What do you enjoy most about being at the helm of affairs at the hotel?

There are multiple things that I enjoy about being at the helm of affairs at the hotel. Some of the highlights are:

Crafting Unique Guest Journeys: The thrill of designing bespoke experiences that cater to individual guest preferences and watching those moments turn into cherished memories is unparalleled.

Fostering a Culture of Excellence: Leading a dynamic team where innovation, passion, and commitment to excellence are encouraged and seeing that reflected in the service we provide is incredibly fulfilling.

Driving Transformative Projects: Spearheading ground-breaking initiatives, from sustainability projects to tech-driven enhancements, and witnessing their positive impact on both guests and the environment excites me every day.

One advice you would like to give youngsters aspiring to excel in Hospitality?

My advice to youngsters aspiring to excel in hospitality is to embrace a genuine passion for service and continuous learning and always believe in themselves. Success in this field comes from a heartfelt commitment to creating exceptional guest experiences, coupled with a willingness to stay up to date with current industry trends and innovations.

Cultivate strong interpersonal skills, be adaptable, and always seek to exceed expectations. Think differently, think creatively, and keep challenging yourselves. Be a lifelong learner. Have the curiosity alive in you and moreover enjoy what you do. Also, keep your social responsibility in mind and think about sustainability. Be a people's centric person!

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Modular deck oven available in single, double, and triple deck configurations

Each deck model offers 2-tray, 3-tray, and 4-tray per deck options

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Indicators for thermostat, express heat and service

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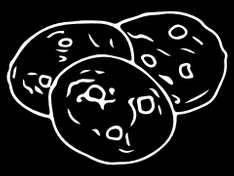


Essential modular deck ovens for

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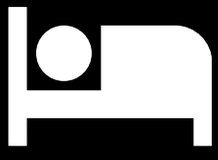
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