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Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry



Business

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What's in for the Hospitality Industry

Feature

Hotel Amenities: A Crucial Element

Operations

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Future Hotels

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Technology is expected to play an increasingly important role in enabling the hotel industry to meet the rising desires and prerequisites of the guests over the decades. It is believed that AI would be playing an essential part in enabling the hotel industry to meet the needs of the new generation of travellers. Cover story looks at some of the changes that are likely to take place based on the changing needs of the guests.

Union Budget 2024-25 has received a favourable response from the hospitality industry. There have been positive comments made by several prominent personalities of the industry. Still few major points were missing in the current budget. Business story discusses various views of the industry stalwarts and how the industry feel it will affect the progress and future of the industry.

The hospitality industry today is more competitive than ever and offering thoughtful, high-quality amenities is one of the most effective ways to distinguish oneself from others. Feature story finds it is not just about luxury but to create a meaningful connection with guests through offerings that align with their values and expectations.

Banquets department is often overlooked by a client, unless he has need for these facilities. It is only when a customer needs to organise a banquet event himself that he remembers all the events he has attended and start judging which hotel was the best experience for him. Operations story elaborates on how to ensure high profits with minimum errors in banquet operations.

There is some interesting industry related information being presented between the pages of this issue, which we hope our regular readers as well as the new readers at Aahar 2025 would appreciate.

HAMMER HOTEL Business Review

An Exclusive Business Magazine for the Hotel Industry

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Aahar 2025

The International Food & Hospitality Fair

March 04-08, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



The forthcoming edition of AAHAR 2025 - the International Food & Hospitality Fair, to be held during March 04-08, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, is the most awaited B2B event in Asia. It is the largest fair in the food & beverage and the hospitality sectors in India. The 39th edition will feature new trends in F&B as well as hospitality services, food processing, culinary tech, retail and new innovations.

The specialised B2B event for the food & beverage and hospitality industry has grown by leaps & bounds during the recent years and is today regarded as a well-known destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals from the food & beverage and hospitality industry across the planet.

AAHAR is being organized by ITPO with support of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Agricultural and Processed Food Products Development Authority (APEDA) and apex industry associations, Association of Resource Companies for

Hospitality Industry of India (ARCHII), Hotel and Restaurant Equipment Manufacturers Association of India (HOTREMAI), All India Food Processors Association (AIFPA), Forum of Indian Food Importers (FIFI).

The fair is poised to grow in size this year covering over 1,00,000 sqm.+ (Gross Area), with more than 1700 exhibitors. The show will have overseas participants from major countries this year. The 17th edition of 'Culinary Art India' will simultaneously held at the same venue during the show. This year more than 1 lakh visitors are expected at the show.

The fair features a wide range of Food Products, Machinery, F&B equipment, Hospitality and Décor Solutions, Confectionary item from participants from India and overseas. The fair has elicited participation for the foreign companies. A part from the meaningful display, the fair offers an insight to operational and food safety concerns and innovations to become energy-efficient,

finding budget friendly raw materials boosting productivity, while still aiming for greater profitability.

It is expected that the large number of trade visitors will visit Aahar 2025. These include top echelons of the Hotel and Hospitality industry including CEOs, General Managers, Executive Chefs, Executive Housekeepers, Purchase Managers, etc. Besides, senior representatives from catering industry and academic institutions, training hotel management professionals will also visit the fair.

Besides the potential to foster business revenues, Aahar also provides an effective platform for the players across global food & beverage and hospitality industry to disseminate/gather relevant information and gauge ongoing and future trends, which can greatly benefit the participants at the fair.

The forthcoming mega event can be the right place for importers, overseas trade delegations and Indian players in the food & beverage and hospitality space, and also for policy makers and media personnel to exchange knowledge and information. India's food retail industry is also going through impressive growth phase. Especially, in the backdrop of the impressive growth potential of the Indian food services and food retail industry and with the revival of the Indian hospitality industry, the relevance of a mega event like Aahar simply cannot be overlooked.

Going by the emerging and futuristic trends in the Indian food & beverage and hospitality industry, we can safely assume that the forthcoming edition of Aahar is expected to grace by impressive numbers of visitors.

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India International Hospitality Expo (IHE) 2025

A Premier Platform to Redefine the Future of Hospitality

03 - 06 August, 2025 at the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida



The India International Hospitality Expo (IHE), India's foremost B2B platform for the hospitality and food & beverage (F&B) industries, is set to return for its 8th edition from 3rd to 6th August 2025 at the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida. As the single largest global platform for the hospitality sector, IHE continues to stand at the intersection of innovation, expertise, and business networking, building on its legacy of success since its inception.

Over the last seven years, IHE has become a hallmark event, uniting the key players of the hospitality industry, including luxury hotels, high-end resorts, boutique homestays, bustling restaurants, emerging cloud kitchens, and prominent F&B brands. The event has witnessed tremendous growth, offering manufacturers, producers, and service providers in the hospitality sector an unparalleled opportunity to showcase their latest innovations to a global audience.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Chairman, India Expo Centre & Mart while speaking about the IHE 2025 said, "IHE 2025 is poised to

redefine the benchmarks of the hospitality industry. With a global outreach, cutting-edge innovations, and a strong focus on collaboration, this expo offers unmatched opportunities for businesses to connect, engage, and grow."

IHE 2025 promises to be a transformative experience, featuring groundbreaking exhibits across key sectors, including Food & Beverage, HoReCa, Hospitality Technology, Housekeeping, Furniture, Maintenance, and much more. The event will bring together global leaders, buyers, innovators, and influencers, with participation from over 16 countries, ensuring a truly international experience. Highlights of IHE 2025 will include:

Groundbreaking exhibits that are shaping the future of hospitality.

Dedicated B2B meetings to foster impactful collaborations and partnerships.

Culinary competitions, industry-led conferences, and the prestigious IHE Excellence Awards celebrating innovation and excellence.

IHE has proven its worth as a catalyst for the industry, generating immense brand

value and goodwill with each successive edition. IHE 2024 was inaugurated by Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister for Culture & Tourism. The legacy of IHE 2024 was nothing short of remarkable, featuring over 1,000 brands, attracting 25,000+ B2B visitors, and generating 12,000 crore in estimated business inquiries.

The event also featured four co-located hospitality events and was punctuated by memorable highlights like the Pastry Queen India, Master Bakers Challenge, and the HRANI Convention, all of which solidified IHE's position as a cornerstone for industry transformation. Vietnam's participation as a partner country also brought it huge appreciation and added to its enormity.

Building on this momentum, IHE 2025 will elevate the hospitality landscape even further, aligning with India's rich cultural heritage while embracing the modern vision of hospitality excellence.

Hari Dadoo, President, IHE said that the last seven years have brought IHE global recognition and there are many more feathers to be added to the hat. We're moving forward with utmost resilience, and I am sure that sooner it'll double in size.

Whether you're a stakeholder, innovator, or enthusiast, IHE 2025 offers an unparalleled platform to network, showcase solutions, and drive the future of the hospitality industry. Join us at this vibrant, game-changing event, and be a part of shaping the future of India's hospitality sector.

For more information, visit: <https://ihexpo.com/>

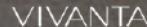
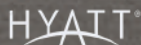
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Hotel & Shop Plus 2025, organized by IM Sinoexpo, will connect industry professionals with the latest trends and solutions. It will be held at SNIEC in Shanghai from March 31 to April 3, 2025, focusing on sustainable development and offering comprehensive solutions for hoteliers, designers, real estate firms, engineering firms, operators and distributors.

Hotel & Shop Plus 2025 will feature over 2,100 exhibitors, attract 140,000 professional buyers, which will showcase cutting-edge advancements in building materials, engineering design, smart hotels, lighting, and hospitality supplies. Attendees can expect to explore the latest trends in sustainable and intelligent solutions, which are becoming increasingly vital in the modern hospitality and retail sectors. The exhibition will also host a series of high-level forums, award ceremonies, and competitions, which will bring together leading architects, designers, and industry elites from around the world to share insights and shape the future

of urban development and design. Key events include the China International Building & Interior Design Forum, Hotel Uniform Show and Hotel Housekeeping Competition.

Moreover, Hotel & Shop Plus 2025 will introduce new interdisciplinary integration zones, such as the Hotel Brand Investment and Franchise Zone, Public Space Landscape Engineering Design Zone, and the International Intelligent Sun Shading & Energy-Efficient Building Zone. These zones will highlight innovative concepts and practical applications, driving the industry forward with a focus on sustainability, efficiency, and customer experience.

Hotel & Shop Plus 2025 invites international professionals and companies to join us. This event is not just a showcase of products and services; it is a unique opportunity to network, explore new markets, and gain valuable insights into the future of hospitality and commercial spaces. Register now for free and secure your place at the forefront of the industry.

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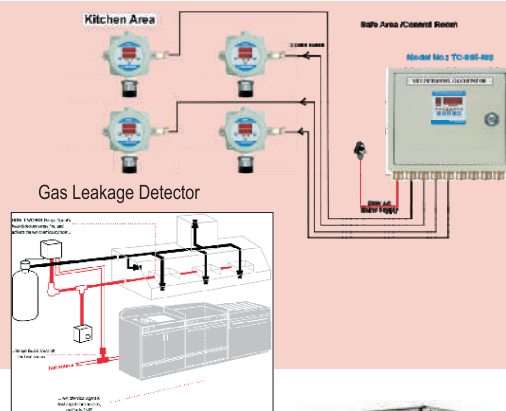
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IHCL Announces Taj Bandstand, Mumbai

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) unveils Taj Bandstand project, a new landmark set to redefine Mumbai's skyline. The Bhoomi Pujan took place in the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis, and N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons.



Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer at IHCL, said, "IHCL opened its first hotel - The Taj Mahal Palace, in Bombay in 1903 and has for over a century woven itself into the cultural fabric of the city. Taj Bandstand, a testament to this legacy will be the torchbearer of the iconic brand Taj for the next century. Envisioned to be a defining edifice of Mumbai's skyline, this landmark development is a tribute to Mumbai's spirit, its people, and its growing global prominence."

He added, "We have received key pre-construction approvals including IOD and provisional Fire NOC. Upon receiving all approvals, IHCL expects to commence construction in 2025 and complete the project over the next four years."

Taj Bandstand, spread over 2 acres will house 330 rooms and 85 apartments with multiple dining options, convention spaces and world-class facilities. The project will also include development and maintenance of surrounding area with landscaped gardens, sporting and recreation activities as well as entertainment options paying tribute to the city's diverse and rich cultural heritage.

Club Mahindra Expands in Uttarakhand

Club Mahindra, the flagship brand of Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Limited (MHRIL), has unveiled its latest property, Club Mahindra Patkote Jim Corbett, nestled in the misty hills of Kumaon, this serene sanctuary is a haven for nature enthusiasts. Surrounded by



scenic trails, dense forests, vibrant wildlife, hidden treasures, and the melodious calls of birds, it offers an idyllic escape into the nature.

The Club Mahindra Patkote Resort spans across 4.7 acres and features 72 well-appointed rooms, providing a range of thoughtfully curated experiences for guests. From an inviting swimming pool and exquisite dining options to engaging indoor activities and a rejuvenating spa, the resort ensures a perfect blend of adventure and relaxation, making every stay memorable.

Commenting on the launch, Manoj Bhat, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd, said, "Uttarakhand has always been a cherished destination for nature lovers. With our strong presence in the state through resorts in Mussoorie, Almora, and Kanatal, the launch of Club Mahindra Patkote further reinforces our commitment to providing exceptional retreats in some of India's most pristine and picturesque locations. This addition reflects our vision of delivering unparalleled vacation ownership experiences that seamlessly combine comfort, culture, and nature."

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Signum Hotels and Resorts Partners with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

Signum Hotels and Resorts has partnered with Wyndham Hotels to operate hotels under Wyndham's Trademark Collection in India, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. This collaboration aims to add 5,000 keys over the next five years, combining Wyndham's global reputation with Signum's operational expertise and regional reach.

As part of this collaboration, properties will join under Trademark Collection by Wyndham© and will be managed by Signum Hotels, combining

Wyndham's global standards with Signum's expertise in local markets to enhance guest experiences. The properties will offer a distinctive proposition for both guests and stakeholders.

Dimitris Manikis, President of Europe, Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa (EMEA) for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts said: "Independent hotel owners in India, the UK, and the UAE are looking for strong partners to help them compete in a dynamic hospitality landscape. Through this collaboration, we are combining Signum Hotels' strong regional footprint and management expertise with the Wyndham Advantage under the umbrella of our Trademark by Wyndham brand. Our powerful distribution network, our global and regional sales teams, our marketing support, and award-winning loyalty program make Wyndham the right partner for growth. Together, we are creating new opportunities for hotel owners, enhancing guest experiences, and strengthening our presence in these key regions."

"Partnering with Wyndham Hotels, a globally renowned brand, marks a significant milestone for Signum Hotels as we take a major step forward in strengthening our presence across India, the UK, and the UAE. These regions already feature a substantial inventory of our serviced apartments, and this collaboration further solidifies our commitment to expanding our footprint and delivering exceptional hospitality experiences," said Mehul Sharma, Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels and Resorts.



Ramee Group of Hotels Launches Ramee ColleXtion, Amritsar

Ramee Group of Hotels has announced the opening of Ramee ColleXtion, Amritsar. Located in the heart of Amritsar, this Boutique property blends modern amenities with the rich cultural heritage of the city. Located on Ratan Chand Road in Amritsar, Ramee ColleXtion, features elegantly designed rooms, equipped with contemporary amenities to provide comfort and convenience.

The property offers a range of services, including Chef's Theory, a multi-cuisine restaurant that serves a blend of local and international flavours. Additionally, the property features the "Occasion Banquet", a versatile event venue spanning 1,080 sq. ft., ideal for hosting corporate gatherings, celebrations and other social events.

Rajit V. Shetty, Managing Director, India, Ramee Group of Hotels said "With the launch of The Ramee ColleXtion in Amritsar, our first boutique property, we are embarking on a new chapter of personalised hospitality."



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Chalet Hotels to acquire The Westin Resort G Spa, Himalayas at Rishikesh

Chalet Hotels Limited (CHL) has received the approval of the board of directors for the acquisition of Mahananda Spa and Resorts Private Limited, owning company of The Westin Resort and Spa, Himalayas (TWRS) in Rishikesh, a stunning 141-room luxury resort, nestled in the Himalayas. This strategic acquisition strengthens the company's position in the high-growth leisure, spiritual and wellness tourism market, unlocking new opportunities for premium experiences and long-term value creation.

CHL is in the process of entering into a definitive agreement with Mankind Pharma Limited, for 100% stake of Mahananda Spa and Resorts Private Limited, the owning company of the property at an enterprise value of Rs. 5.3 billion. CHL will be concluding the formalities shortly.

Strategically located in the foothills of the Himalayas, near the spiritual and yoga hub of Rishikesh, the resort features 141 elegantly designed rooms, over 10,000 sq.ft. of event space, world-class dining options, and premium wellness amenities, including the Heavenly® Spa by Westin and the WestinWorkout® Fitness Studio. The pillarless Grand Ballroom is one of the largest conference halls in the region. The outdoor lawns of the resort provide idyllic settings for weddings.

Speaking on the acquisition, Dr. Sanjay Sethi, MD & CEO, Chalet



Hotels Limited, said: "This proposed acquisition will be a key milestone in Chalet Hotels' strategy to expand footprint in India's high-growth luxury and leisure segment. The Westin Resort & Spa, Himalayas, is a premier wellness destination that perfectly aligns with our vision of offering world-class hospitality experiences. With its breathtaking location and exceptional amenities, this property will strengthen our leisure portfolio and allows us to cater to the evolving preferences of modern travellers. We look forward to elevating the guest experience and further driving sustainable growth with this new addition."

Sterling Unveils Sterling Bagh Ranthambore

Sterling Holiday Resorts announces the opening of Sterling Bagh Ranthambore, its 10th wildlife resort and 7th property in Rajasthan. Nestled in



the heart of Sawai Madhopur, this quaint retreat redefines wildlife getaways by blending the raw beauty of the jungle with refined comfort, cultural immersion, and bespoke curated experiences.

Guests are welcomed into tastefully designed accommodations that combine nature-inspired elegance with modern conveniences. Suites feature separate living spaces & scenic views & pool-facing rooms bring the outdoors closer for a peaceful, immersive stay.

"We are thrilled to launch Sterling Bagh Ranthambore, our 7th resort in Rajasthan. This exclusive retreat embodies Sterling's vision of creating unique wildlife experiences, combining immersive storytelling, cultural richness, and Sterling's signature hospitality to redefine wildlife getaways," said Vikram Lalvani, Managing Director & CEO, Sterling Holiday Resorts Limited.

The resort's signature restaurant, Sawai, treats guests to a culinary journey through Rajasthan's authentic flavors. Local delicacies like Jungli Maas, Ker Sangri, and Panchkutta ki Sabzi complemented by dishes crafted with Sawai Madhopur's famed guavas. The menu also features popular Indian & international options, served in a wildlife-inspired ambience that enhances the dining experience.

Sterling Bagh Ranthambore's bar combines the timeless charm of a classic British pub with a creative local twist. Alongside its curated selection of fine spirits and signature cocktails, the bar offers fusion creations inspired by the region's flavours.



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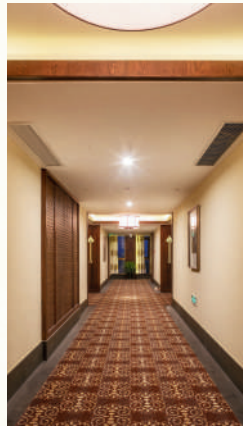
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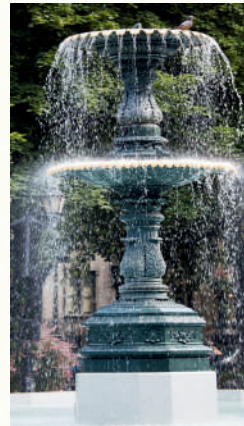
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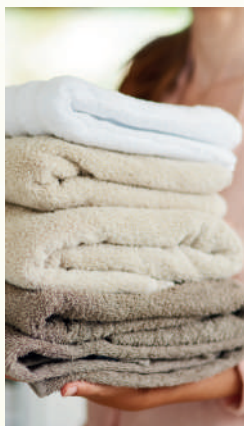
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Pullman Hotels & Resorts Debuts in South India

Pullman Hotels & Resorts has opened the Pullman Chennai Anna Salai, a transformative destination redefining the boundaries between work, leisure, and culture in India. Strategically located in Chennai's bustling Anna Salai district, the hotel is well connected to major government offices, consulates, corporate hubs, and business districts, making it an ideal base for global visionaries and city residents alike. Spanning 5,000 square metres, Pullman Chennai Anna Salai features 232 rooms,



integrating modern amenities and cutting-edge technology. The hotel also offers extensive event facilities, boasting over 1,700 square metres of versatile meeting and banquet spaces, making it an ideal choice for corporate events, conferences, and grand social gatherings.

The hotel's dynamic culinary landscape brings together bold flavours and cultural narratives. Mercato draws inspiration from Mediterranean bazaars and Asian street markets, offering a lively dining

experience. Mercato Bar redefines the bar scene with curated wine selections and signature cocktails. For an elevated dining experience, Up North, the hotel's rooftop restaurant, showcases authentic North Indian cuisine with a contemporary touch, set against breathtaking views of the Chennai skyline.

C Subba Reddy, Managing Director of Ceebros Group, the owner

and developer of the new hotel, said, "We are proud to launch the first Pullman in South India and thrilled that Pullman Chennai Anna Salai stands as a landmark for the Ceebros Group, epitomising our commitment to innovation and excellence in hospitality. Our vision was to craft a space where modern sophistication meets the vibrant spirit of Chennai, seamlessly blending business, leisure, and culture. Every detail of the hotel has been thoughtfully curated, creating a design narrative that celebrates nature, art, and modern design."

The Luxury & Exclusive Retreat

Loom Crafts, India's biggest and a pioneering name in luxury outdoor furniture, has now announced its foray into the hospitality segment with the launch of an all-new luxury glamping resort near Bengaluru. Glamping Wilderness by Loom Crafts has been designed to be a natural



oasis and escape for those hustling in their everyday urban life. A family-friendly haven of joy set to be the next favourite staycation destination for the Bangaloreans, the tranquil retreat is nestled amidst a lush five-acre mango grove. The Glamping Wilderness resort is located at Nelamangala, nearly 1-hour drive from the Bengaluru airport.

The premier glamping resort offers 24 aesthetically-designed stay options under two accommodation categories – Cabins and Cabins with Jacuzzi. The premises of the resort house a large common swimming pool, restaurant & bar, activity pavilion with indoor games including snooker, etc, a dedicated club for kids and a spa & wellness centre. The other amenities include barbecue, banquet space, outdoor movie night spot, candle light dinner zone and a food truck. Besides, you get a complete picnic experience along with camp fire and getting to make your own pizza.

"Loom Crafts has always worked towards allowing everyone lead a comfortable lifestyle. While over the past few decades we evolved into the biggest luxury outdoor furniture brand in India, we wish to now expand the ambit of our expertise into crafting luxury designs and spaces. Glamping Wilderness, built, designed and operated by Loom Crafts, is just the beginning of a new chapter in our growth trajectory as a brand. There are many more milestones to create," said Loom Crafts Founder & MD Rahul Jindal.

Glamping Wilderness has been built using Prefab Modular cottages, exclusively designed, manufactured as well as operated by Loom Crafts. Notably, besides luxury outdoor furniture and now hospitality, Loom Crafts has also been a leader in the Indian Prefab Modular segment over the past 15 years.






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Gaurav Singh

Chalet Hotels Limited has appointed Gaurav Singh as Chief Operating Officer (COO). He will be focusing on asset management, driving operational excellence, ensuring efficiency to strengthen the business and design scalable processes for Chalet Hotels. With a robust portfolio and an ambitious pipeline of additional rooms,

Chalet is poised for significant growth, and Gaurav's leadership backed with 26 years of experience in hospitality will play a crucial role in steering this exciting journey.



Harkaran Singh Sethi

Hilton Gurugram Baani City Centre has appointed Harkaran Singh Sethi as General Manager. With over 15 years of experience, he brings extensive expertise in operations management, food and beverage innovation, and strategic leadership. He served as General Manager and Associate Director of Operations, South Asia at the Radisson Hotel Group

and at Marriott International, ITC hotels, and Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. A graduate of IHM-Bhopal, Sethi is a certified member of the Guild of British Butlers and a butler trainer.



Utsa Majumder

The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa has appointed Utsa Majumder as new General Manager. She brings over two decades of experience, distinguished by her expertise in operational excellence, guest-centric service, and strategic leadership. An alumna of St. Xavier's Institution, Kolkata, she worked at Hyatt Hotels, with key assignments at Hyatt

Regency Kolkata, Hyatt Regency Pune, Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa, Hyatt Place Hampi, and as General Manager at Hyatt Regency Dharamshala Resort.



Nivedan Kukreti

Taj Corbett Resort & Spa has appointed Nivedan Kukreti as General Manager. With over 21 years of experience, he worked at Shangri-La, The Lalit, Radisson Blu, and Taj Hotels. He is known for his visionary approach and strategic solutions. He has diploma in hotel management from the IHM Lucknow, and began his hospitality journey in

the year 2003. His strong academic background and unwavering commitment towards his work laid the foundation for his successful career in various leadership roles.



Prasanna Venkatesh

Prasanna Venkatesh is the new Director of Operations at Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC). With over 20 years of experience, his expertise in strategic planning, budgeting, and operational efficiency has led to increased profitability and guest satisfaction for the hotels. He served at

Westin, Hilton, and Accor, as well as the Dubai Expo 2020. In his previous role at the Pullman & Novotel complex in Aerocity, he honed his expertise in crafting refined dining experiences.



Karthikeyan R.

Novotel Hyderabad Airport has appointed Kartikeyan R. as the Director of Operations. Bringing a wealth of experience from both India and international markets, he is set to enhance the hotel's operational efficiency and guest experience. An MBA in International Business from Singapore, has had an extraordinary journey in the

hospitality industry, having worked through key cities such as Chennai, Trivandrum, and Bangalore for the last decade. He held key positions at Hilton properties in Agra, Bangalore, and Jaipur.



Gaurav Tokas

Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway has appointed Gaurav Tokas as Director of Rooms. He brings over a decade of experience, served as Room Division Manager at Marriott International's Kochi Marriott Hotel, and managed corporate, transient, and leisure segments. He also worked at Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Radisson Hotel Group, and InterContinental

Hotels Group. He holds a B.Sc. in Hotel Management from the Institute of Hotel Management, Chennai, and completed Marriott's Envision Leadership Programme and IHG's Climb Lead Future Leader Programme.



Vivek Agarwal

ibis India has appointed Vivek Agarwal as Director of Finance. With over two decades of financial expertise in the hospitality industry, he is poised to drive operational excellence and set new standards in financial efficiency for ibis and ibis Styles India. He worked at top international and Indian hospitality companies. With his proven expertise and

leadership, ibis India is confident in charting a path of financial innovation and robust growth, delivering world-class hospitality experiences and the milestones ahead under his guidance.



Lakkimsetti Siva Kumar

Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield has appointed Lakkimsetti Siva Kumar as Director of Finance. He will lead the hotel's financial operations, playing a key part in shaping the hotel's financial strategy, optimizing operational efficiencies, and driving success. He had a successful tenure as Director of Finance at Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road, and held

senior finance positions at Marriott and Accor. He began his career as a Finance Voyager at MHRS in Kochi, is poised to contribute greatly in a competitive market.



Swapnil Nandurkar

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center has elevated Swapnil Nandurkar as Director of Sales. With over 14 years of experience, he has been an integral member of the hotel's leadership team, having previously served as the Associate Director of Sales. He worked at Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris, Mumbai & Hyderabad, JW Marriott

Pune, and in the Sales & Marketing team at Taj Lands End, Mumbai, where he has consistently demonstrated a passion for excellence, innovation, and business growth.



Rashi Singh

Clarks Exotica Convention Resort and Spa has appointed Rashi Singh as Associate Director - Marketing & Communication. With over 12 years of experience in branding, marketing, and strategic communication, she has consistently delivered impactful campaigns and strengthened brand identities across some of the most reputed organizations

in the hospitality and marketing sector. She served as Marcom Manager at The LaLiT Ashok Bangalore, Goldfinch Hotels & Resorts, Bangalore, and Clarks Hotels & Resorts, New Delhi as Senior Marketing Manager.



Maleeni Roy Barman

Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks has appointed Maleeni Roy Barman as the Human Resources Manager. She brings over 7 years of experience in strategic HR management, talent acquisition, and organizational development, held significant roles at JW Marriott Kolkata and Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway. She holds a Master's

degree in Hotel Management from the Institute of Hotel Management, Bangalore. Her professional achievements include introducing innovative HR practices.



Vikas Kumar Chona

Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa has elevated Vikas Kumar Chona as Director of Sales and Marketing. He has been an integral part of the resort's team for the past six years, and played a significant role in driving the sales function and contributing to the resort's reputation as a leading destination in South

India for weddings and corporate events. With over a decade of experience, his rise to leadership is a testament to his talent, hard work, and ability.



Shrutika Puri

Hilton Gurugram Baani City Centre has appointed Shrutika Puri as the Director of Human Resources. With over 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry and a long-standing tenure at Hilton since 2011, she brings deep expertise in talent management, employee relations, and HR strategy. She held key positions within the Hilton portfolio, serving as

Human Resources Manager at Hilton Garden Inn New Delhi, Saket. She also served as Human Resources and Training Manager at DoubleTree by Hilton Agra for over six years.



Jyotsna Kanwar

The Ritz-Carlton has appointed Jyotsna Kanwar as the Director of Sales and Marketing. With over 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry, which spans across various operational roles, she began her hospitality career in 1999 and has since worked with ITC, Taj and The Leela Palace. Most recently, she held the position of Director of Sales

at The Leela Palace, Bengaluru. She has successfully led sales teams, exceeded revenue targets, and developed key client relationships throughout her career.



Darshan M.R.

Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel has appointed Darshan M.R. as the Director of Engineering - Repair and Maintenance Department. With extensive experience and a strong technical background, he is set to bring new energy and expertise to this critical leadership position. Prior to current joining he worked as Chief Engineer at Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa and

Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park. His expertise includes managing operations and maintenance of diesel generators, water treatment plants, and advanced Building Management Systems (BMS).

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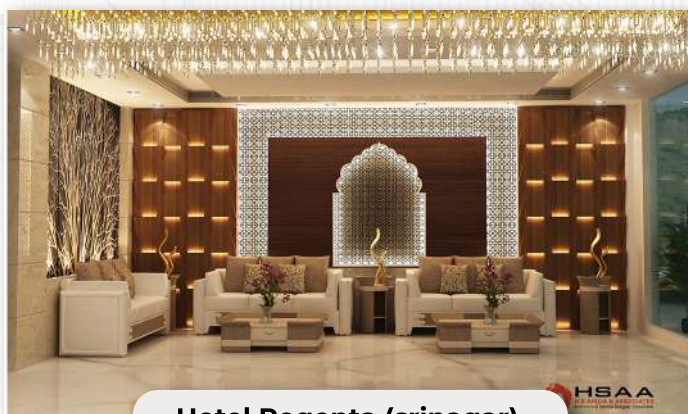
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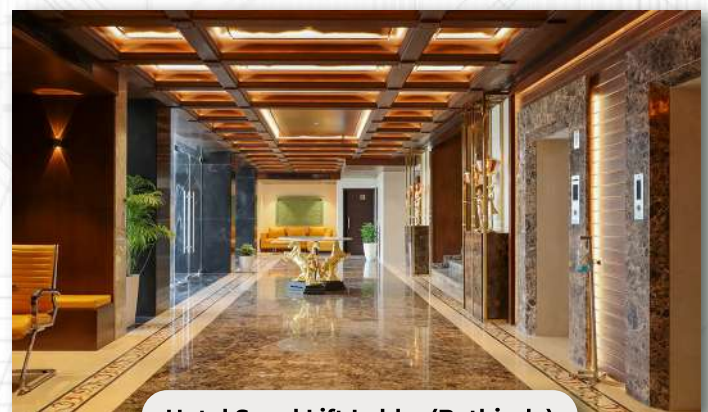
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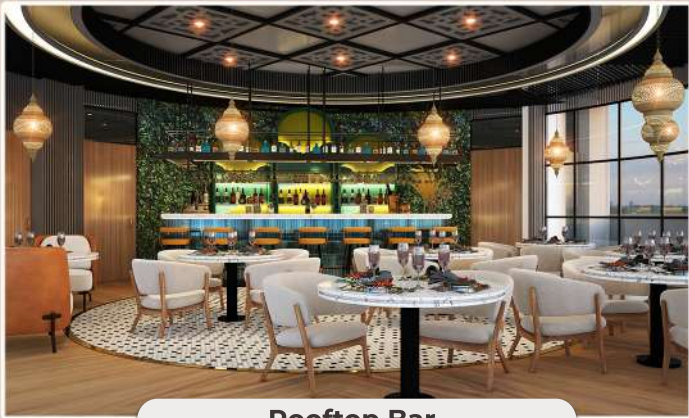


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Future Hotels



As we step into the new year, one contemplates on the guest expectations, in hotels in the future. With advancing technology and increasing usage of AI the hotels of future are expected to experience several changes. Smart rooms, employment of robots for several services, eco-friendliness are few of the changes that one is likely to see in the hotels of the future. **Ashok Malkani** tries to fathom some of the changes that are likely to take place, due to the changing demands of the tourists, in the hotel industry in the future.

Over the years hotels have always endeavoured to provide an increasingly personalised and interactive experience for guests. This attempt to provide a more monogrammed and courteous service is expected to continue not only in the new year but in the years to come.

Technology is expected to play an increasingly important role in enabling the hotel industry to meet the rising desires and prerequisites of the guests over the decades. It is believed that AI would be playing an essential part in enabling the hotel industry to meet the needs of the new generation of travellers.

Anant Leekha, General Manager, Novotel Pune, states, "The hospitality industry is witnessing a transformation driven by sustainability, smart technology, and personalisation. Hotels are embracing energy-efficient designs, integrating renewable energy sources, and focusing on waste reduction. Smart technology, such as AI-driven personalisation, contactless check-ins, and IoT-enabled devices, is becoming the norm. Internet of Things (IOT) devices are embedded with sensors, software, and network connectivity, which can communicate with each other and with other internet-enabled devices."

He adds, "Additionally, the emphasis on offering authentic local experiences and wellness-focused initiatives is shaping the guest experience."

Sabrina Dey, General Manager, ITC Windsor, declares, "The hospitality industry is undergoing a transformation, with a stronger focus on sustainability,



technology integration, and personalised guest experiences. From adopting smart technologies to enhancing wellness offerings, hotels are evolving to meet the modern traveller's expectations."

She adds, "Sustainability and eco-friendliness would play an important role. "At ITC Windsor, sustainability has always been a top priority. As the world's first LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Zero-Carbon certified hotel, we are committed to reducing our carbon footprint through eco-conscious practices, including efficient energy management systems, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, waste reduction initiatives, and sourcing locally for our F&B offerings. In line with this philosophy, our F&B outlets also feature a thoughtfully curated millet menu to promote healthy, sustainable living. Moving forward, we plan to deepen these efforts by exploring innovative solutions to further elevate our environmental

stewardship."

Owais Altaf Syed, Director, Skyview By Emyrean, Jammu and Kashmir, says, "Among the top trends that will drive the hotel industry this year are personalisation, sustainability across all operations, and technological advancements, be it robotics or AI – that will empower hoteliers to streamline their business operations and maximise their guest experiences. Increase in bleisure (business plus leisure travel) will push year pushing hoteliers to think differently about their guests profile and curate tailored offerings that cater to both professional and personal needs. Flexible check-in/check-out times, co-working spaces and wellness activities will become an essential component of this evolving segment. Additionally, sustainable tourism is evolving beyond eco-friendly initiatives. Travellers are increasingly drawn to hotels that actively contribute to promoting responsible tourism. Hotels that embrace responsible tourism will set themselves apart in industry.

Khizer Khan, Hotel Manager, Double Tree by Hilton Pune-Chinchwad, affirms, "As we step in to the new year the transformative phase of the industry would continue, I believe we're seeing an exciting blend of tradition and innovation. It's all about creating meaningful guest experiences. One trend I love is "experience curation," where stays are uniquely tailored to immerse guests in the culture and charm of a destination. From eco-friendly architecture to minimising waste, hotels are consciously committing



**Anant Leekha****Khizer Khan****Owais Altaf Syed****Sabrina Dey**

to greener practices. Moving forward, it's about striking the right balance between technology and authenticity, ensuring every guest experience feels personal and truly memorable."

Smart Rooms & Sustainability

Smart rooms and sustainability are transforming hotel industry in India by integrating advanced technologies. At present innovations in smart rooms offer personalised services, including voice-controlled room settings, mobile check-ins, and AI-driven customer support. In future smart rooms are expected to feature advanced technology allowing guests to control lighting, temperature, entertainment, and even room access through voice commands or their smartphones. Personalised settings in smart rooms would be based on individual preferences, integrating features like AI virtual assistants, IoT sensors for enhanced efficiency.

It is believed that rooms, in hotels in the future, will have amenities and features which will be voice or gesture controlled. It is predicted that heating or cooling systems will adjust based on in-room heat sensors. Guests would be able to adjust room lighting to their preferences with a simple touch or command. Requests for room service or extras will be via a tablet, touch screen, or through voice commands.

As far as sustainability is concerned, future hotels, it is believed, will be built with minimal impact on the surrounding environment. They would utilise eco-friendly products and practices throughout the hotel. This includes sustainable building materials. It is predicted that having a garden to grow produce and have systems in place to recycle and reduce waste would be prominent in hotels of future.

These hotels would integrate smart hotel technology which would include renewable energy. This would include: Usage of solar panels, wind turbines, and other renewable energy sources to power their operations, thus reducing their reliance on fossil fuels and lowering their carbon emissions. Besides implementing recycling programmes and adopting

initiatives to minimise waste, they would get rid of single-use plastics.

Owais believes, "Adopting a sustainably aware approach right from infrastructure to business operations, services, food and guest experiences is no longer just an option, it is an absolute must! As an industry, we need to be united on being more environmentally responsible, setting an example for future generations. At Skyview, right from inception, we have remained committed to minimising our environmental impact while offering guests an exceptional, eco-conscious stay. Furthermore, through our rainwater harvesting and water recycling systems, we've significantly been able to conserve Jammu region's precious natural resources."

Anant avers, "Smart rooms will redefine convenience and personalisation. Facilities like voice-controlled devices, app-based room controls, automated lighting and temperature adjustments, and integrated entertainment systems will enhance guest comfort. These features allow hotels to cater to the growing demand for technologically advanced and tailored experiences while also optimizing energy usage. At Novotel Pune, we have expanded our capacity by adding 88 new rooms, bringing the total to 311 keys. These additions include the 'Novolution' i.e. Premier rooms, which are designed with minimalist décor, clean lines, and neutral colour schemes to appeal to Gen Z and millennial travelers seeking modern and efficient spaces."

He continues, "Sustainability is set to be a defining factor for future hotels. The industry is adopting eco-friendly practices like using renewable energy, implementing water recycling systems, and sourcing sustainable materials. Many hotels are achieving green certifications and introducing farm-to-table dining concepts. These measures not only reduce environmental impact but also appeal to eco-conscious travelers who prioritize sustainability. In line with eco-friendly practices, at Novotel Pune we have introduced wooden key cards as a sustainable alternative to traditional plastic keys and making our hotel a



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Khizer informs, "Smart rooms are all about simplicity and comfort. Picture suites that anticipate guest preferences through advanced IoT systems—curating the ideal temperature, ambiance, and lighting upon arrival. These rooms will integrate immersive augmented reality experiences, such as virtual city tours or concierge recommendations, projected directly onto smart mirrors. We will also explore health-focused tech in rooms—air quality monitors, sleep optimization tools, and even personalized wellness programs synced with wearable devices. The goal is to use technology in a way that feels seamless, letting guests focus on relaxing and enjoying their stay."

Speaking about sustainability he says, "Sustainability isn't just a trend; it's a responsibility, and we're embracing it wholeheartedly. From energy-efficient designs to sourcing ingredients locally, every detail matters. Hotels are working closely with local farmers and artisans to bring authentic, sustainable touches to every guest experience. It's not just about reducing our impact on the environment—it's about creating thoughtful, heartfelt stays that align with what today's guests

truly value."

Sabrina affirms, "Smart rooms will offer a seamless blend of comfort and innovation, featuring advanced technologies such as voice-activated controls and iPads to manage lighting, temperature, in-room refreshments, entertainment, and more. Guests can enjoy mood lighting, personalized climate settings, and entertainment systems tailored to their preferences. Beyond enhancing the guest experience, these intelligent features will also promote energy efficiency, aligning with sustainable hospitality practices."

Technology & Robotics

As the hospitality industry moves forward, in future, one visualises advancement of AI (Artificial Intelligence), which is not only expected to improve personalised guest experience but also optimise hotel operations and support sustainability. Hotels of future are expected to provide digitally immersive experience. Increasing number of guests are expected to use digital wallets for payments. Advanced amenities to enhance travel experiences would be in vogue in the future.

As technology advances, there is going to be increased usage of AI powered chatbots and virtual assistants. These chatbots which, with the help of natural

language processing (NLP), provide seamless and engaging experience improving efficiency and responsiveness in customer services are expected to be used by almost all hotels in the future.

Robots, which are today being used in a sparing manner, are going to be used more generously for improving customer satisfaction, boosting profits, and cutting labour expenses. It is found that advanced service robots have the capability to take on tasks that were once solely performed by human employees, like providing room service, assisting as concierges, and even completing housekeeping duties.

There are, however, problems for upscale hotels which have to strike a delicate balance between efficiency and maintaining a personal and human touch. These luxury accommodations place high value on human interaction factor which, according to them, is the pillar of their service.

Sabrina avers "Given Gen Z's affinity for technology, the industry is investing in mobile-first solutions such as contactless check-ins, AI-powered concierge services, and seamless digital experiences across the guest journey."

She added, "Hotels will offer enhanced digital experiences such as mobile room keys, virtual concierge services, and smart in-room technologies. ITC Windsor

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is already adopting digital innovations to offer seamless and secure services.”

She predicted, “With the rise of remote work, hotels will need to provide flexible workspaces and high-speed connectivity. ITC Windsor is well-positioned to cater to digital nomads with quiet work areas, state-of-the-art business facilities, and wellness offerings to maintain a work-life balance.”

She disclosed, “While robots have started making appearances in select hotels globally, we believe in blending technological innovation with human warmth. We may explore AI and IoT technologies for backend operations, but guest-facing services will continue to prioritize human interaction. Personalisation will remain at the heart of our service philosophy. Technology, including AI-driven solutions, will assist in collecting and analyzing guest preferences, enabling our teams to curate bespoke, intuitive experiences.”

Khizer states, “Gen Z and future generations will drive technology that enhances, not replaces, hospitality. Virtual property tours and AI-powered travel planners will help guests personalize every detail of their stay, while AI-driven translation tools will break language barriers instantly. Such innovations and more will make the guest experience more seamless and inclusive.”

Speaking about introduction of robots in the industry he affirms, “Robots are already making their way into the hospitality industry, and by 2025, we can expect a broader adoption. I see

them taking on repetitive tasks so our teams can focus on what really matters: connecting with guests. At the end of the day, hospitality is about people. Robots can assist, but it’s the smiles, the thoughtful gestures, and the warmth of genuine human interactions that make a stay unforgettable.”

He avers, “Personalisation will remain the heart of hospitality, even in an era of automation. Robots powered by AI can analyze vast amounts of guest data to provide tailored recommendations, but it is the human element that brings sincerity and emotional depth to interactions. To me, it’s all about balance!”

Delving on digital facilities he opines, “Digital facilities in hotels will keep getting better over the years, but always with the guest in mind. Facilities like biometric check-ins or virtual concierge services that can help plan your day without losing the personal touch. Real-time, location-based alerts will notify guests of available amenities or exclusive offers as they move around the property. Additionally, real-time baggage tracking will ensure that guests can easily monitor the status of their luggage from check-in to delivery. Technologies will enhance convenience, allowing our team to focus on providing truly personalized, human-centered hospitality.

“For digital nomads, we are seeing more ergonomic workspaces. But it’s not just about productivity—hotels are also offering ways to unwind, with wellness areas and vibrant communal spaces for networking and socializing. Tech

infrastructure will play a critical role, with ultra-high-speed internet, cloud storage access, and secure, globally connected VPN networks as standard offerings. I see hotels evolving into hubs of creativity, effortlessly blending work and leisure”

Anant disclosed, “With the increasing influence of Gen Z and tech-savvy travelers, hotels are enhancing digital facilities. For digital natives, technology is key. Hotels are focusing on hyper-connectivity, mobile-first solutions, virtual concierge services, and immersive experiences like AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) for virtual tours. AI-powered chatbots, personalised recommendations, and seamless digital payment options will also become more prevalent, creating a frictionless and engaging guest journey. We at Novotel Pune are integrating smart technology to cater to tech-savvy guests. The ‘Novolution’ rooms are equipped with features that offer flexibility and support for guests’ routines, aligning with the preferences of younger travelers who value connectivity and convenience.”

He adds, “With increased usage of technology, robots are steadily making their way into hotel operations and are expected to become more prevalent in the near future. In the coming years, robots will primarily handle assistance tasks such as luggage transportation, room deliveries, and housekeeping, improving efficiency and streamlining services. However, the human element will remain irreplaceable for creating meaningful guest experiences. Human staff will continue to play a vital role in providing personalized interactions, understanding nuanced guest preferences, and managing complex or emotionally sensitive situations. This balanced approach ensures that hotels can leverage technology while maintaining the personal touch that guests value.”

He asserts, “While robots can streamline operations, personalisation is achieved through human touch. Hotels will likely adopt a hybrid approach, using robots for efficiency and reserving human interactions for moments that require empathy and creativity. This ensures operational excellence without

compromising the emotional connection guests value.”

Speaking about digital advancements he says, “Digital advancements will include mobile check-ins, virtual concierge services, smart key systems, and high-speed connectivity. Blockchain-based loyalty programs and personalised apps for booking and services are also on the horizon. These facilities cater to tech-savvy travelers and ensure a seamless guest experience.”

He adds, “The rise of remote work has made digital nomads and leisure travellers a key demographic. Hotels are adapting by offering high-speed internet, co-working spaces, and wellness programs. Flexible booking options, personalised leisure packages, and amenities like ergonomic workstations are becoming essential to meet the needs of this growing segment.”

Owais declares, “AI, robotics, contactless payments, and bookings are part of the digital language that the new generations are already very familiar with. Obviously, hotels will have to update themselves to keep up with the demands of these new-age travellers. It will be interesting to see how the industry evolves and transitions into the future and lands on its feet successfully!”

He adds, “At Skyview, we are constantly updating ourselves technologically to cater to the expectations of our guests. From keyless room entry to interactive digital concierges that provide personalised recommendations, we leverage innovation to make every stay effortless.”

Contemplating on robots he proclaims, “I think going forward, hoteliers will have to find the right balance between robots and personalisation. The foundation of the hospitality industry lies in human interactions and making a guest feel at home through care and attention. Robots can never gauge the mood of a guest, but they can be used to streamline back-end and other operations. I feel true luxury is defined by thoughtful, human-led guest experiences – curating customised itineraries based on individual interests, offering handwritten notes, and personalised welcome kits to envelop our guests with a sense of warmth and inclusivity.”

He emphasized, “In premium sustainable properties, meaningful touch points - such as a locally crafted welcome gift or a guided nature experience with an in-house expert - further enrich the guest journey, ensuring that technology complements rather than replaces the art of hospitality.”

Changes in Décor

Hotels would in future also have an appearance that would, in all probability differ in décor from the present. It is believed that Interactive walls and spaces will be commonplace. In future hotels walls are expected to react to guests’ movements.

According to Paradigm Trends, a 40-year-old B2B company, hotels would have biophilic design which incorporates natural elements into the built environment – like lush green walls and ample natural light. It is believed that natural elements like vertical gardens, hydroponic setups or air-purifying systems



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to improve indoor air quality would be integrated in rooms.

Also, today's bland and uniform hotel rooms will be replaced by rooms having bold colours, eclectic art pieces and unique design elements. Even the external design and lobbies are expected to see conspicuous changes.

Anant affirms, "Hotel designs are evolving to reflect modern aesthetics and functionality. Minimalistic and biophilic designs, which incorporate natural elements, are gaining popularity. Flexible spaces that transition from work to leisure environments are also being prioritized. Lobbies may become more interactive, serving as multi-functional areas for socializing, co-working, and relaxation."

Khizer states, "Design in hospitality is transitioning towards a philosophy of meaningful minimalism. Lobbies, once formal and functional, are being reimagined as vibrant, multifunctional spaces that foster community and collaboration. I love seeing natural elements like greenery, soft lighting, and soothing water features being incorporated. Guest rooms, too, are evolving with a "less is more" philosophy—clean designs, calming colours, and just the right touch of technology to make every stay feel effortless and serene."

Owais, speaking about the changes in décor of hotels of future, says, "This would depend on personal choice of each hotelier. Each property owner is unique and has a distinct sense of how he or she envisions the property and the guest experiences. At Skyview by Empyrean, our design philosophy embraces eco-friendly and regionally-inspired elements. For example, we have used the Sylvan form of architecture and Jammu and Kashmir's traditional dhajji-dewari building concept in some of our rooms. This age-old, earthquake-resistant masonry technique, rooted in Persian heritage, utilizes light timber frames filled with masonry infills, ensuring structural durability while enhancing aesthetic appeal.

As we move into the future, our focus will remain on enhancing guest experiences through design innovations that prioritize sustainability, cultural

authenticity, and modern comfort --ensuring that every stay at Skyview by Empyrean is both luxurious and deeply connected to the spirit of the region."

Sabrina states, "Design trends are moving toward creating multifunctional spaces that blend luxury with wellness and nature-inspired aesthetics. ITC Windsor will continue to maintain its classic heritage charm while integrating modern elements to enhance guest comfort and engagement.

Effect on F&B Segment

Food & beverage (F&B) is a major and important segment of the hotel industry and as the hotels change over the years the F&B outlets too would evolve to maintain an equivalent standard as the future hotel property. From leveraging artificial intelligence to embracing



creative strategies for meeting diverse guest needs these outlets too will undergo a change in keeping with the hotel. AI-driven tools are expected to enable hotels to tailor menus to guest preferences by analyzing dietary restrictions, previous orders, and even cultural habits.

Anant disclosed, "The F&B sector is shifting towards sustainability and innovation. Guests are demanding locally sourced, plant-based, and zero-waste dining options. Technology is also transforming this space, with digital menus, app-based orders, and AI-driven kitchen management systems enhancing efficiency and customisation."

Khizer declares, "The dining experience is getting even more exciting each day! Seasonal and locally sourced ingredients, plant-based dishes are taking center stage—there's something so special about serving food that tells the story of a region! Personally, I believe it's not just about the food—it's about the entire experience.

Interactive dining experiences—such as chef's table sessions, personalised meals, and AR-enhanced plating—will blur the line between food and art. Technology will elevate the experience, enabling seamless personalization and precision, ensuring every meal is a tailored masterpiece."

Sabrina states, "The F&B sector will see greater emphasis on sustainability and health-conscious dining. Locally sourced ingredients, plant-based menus, and zero-waste initiatives will gain prominence. ITC Windsor will continue to innovate while honouring its legacy of offering curated culinary experiences."

Owais avers, "The Food & Beverage sector within the hotel industry is evolving to align with changing consumer preferences, sustainability efforts, and experiential dining. There is also a shift towards zero-waste kitchens, where careful planning ensures minimal food waste, and biodegradable or reusable packaging is prioritised. Experiential dining is redefining the way guests interact with food. Live cooking stations, chef's table experiences, and themed dining nights allow guests to engage with their meals on a deeper level.

Conclusion

There has been an incessant need for progressive changes in the hotel industry to meet the ever-changing demands of the guests. Future hotels are expected to have smart rooms where, it is predicted, room amenities and features will be voice or gesture controlled. Heating and cooling systems would be adjustable by in-room heat sensors. Room lighting too would be adjustable by simple touch or command. Robots too would be common place.

At present too, robots are being used in some properties. Henn Na Hotel Tokyo, Japan, has robotic front desk staff. Aloft Cupertino hotel in Silicon Valley, California, since 2014, has a robot butler aptly named Botlr, who delivers towels to the pool/room. Technology is going to play a leading role in future hotels.

Yes, there would be a plethora of changes in future hotels not only in interactive spaces and rooms but also in food, health and fitness. ■

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Union Budget:

What's in for the Hospitality Industry



Union Budget 2024-25, presented by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, has received a favourable response from the hospitality industry. There have been positive comments made by several prominent personalities of the industry. **Ashok Malkani** reviews the several aspects of the budget that would affect the tourism and hospitality industry and how the stalwarts of the industry feel it will affect the progress and future of the industry.

Tourism industry, as of 2024, contributed about 9% of GDP, thus making it an important industry in the progress of the country. Tourism has deep historical roots in the country's progress. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Tourism and Minister of Culture, has gone on record claiming, "Tourism in India is imbibed into the culture and DNA of Indians since ages. Wherever history goes, you will find tourism."

Since India, due to its vast collection of ancient monuments and architectural marvels like Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Khajuraho temples, and the Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram, is often referred to as the "land of historic sites", tourists from across the globe visit India. Famous historical sites have different architectural sites (from the intricate Mughal architecture of the Taj Mahal to the rock-cut cave temples of Elephanta Caves) and UNESCO World Heritage Sites (like Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Khajuraho Group of Monuments, and the Mahabodhi Temple) making India a prominent "Must Visit" countries.

Tourism is also related, partly, to the progress and prosperity of the hospitality industry. But the progress of both these industries depends, largely, on support of the government and official bodies. The Union and State budgets are normally eagerly awaited by the hospitality industry.

The Union budget 2025-26 was

presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in which she mentioned the following steps for promotion of tourism:

Development of Vishnupad Temple Corridor and Mahabodhi Temple Corridor modelled on Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor.

Comprehensive development initiative for Rajgir will be undertaken which holds religious significance for Hindus, Buddhists and Jains.

The development of Nalanda as a tourist centre besides reviving Nalanda University to its glorious stature.

Assistance to development of Odisha’s scenic beauty, temples, monuments, craftsmanship, wildlife sanctuaries, natural landscapes and pristine beaches making it an ultimate tourism destination.

She stated that Central government will develop top 50 tourist destinations in partnership with states through a “challenge mode”

Rajesh Magow, Co-founder and Group CEO, MakeMyTrip explains, “The challenge-mode approach to developing



50 destinations, backed by performance-linked incentives, shifts the focus to outcome-driven execution – encouraging states to compete and innovate in destination management.”

Sitharaman said the land for building key infrastructure at these destinations will be provided by states, while hotels will be included in the harmonised master list

(HML) of infrastructure.

Magow believes “Hotels in the harmonised infrastructure list across 50 destinations will unlock long-term financing and drive investment, while extending Mudra loans to homestays will ensure that smaller entrepreneurs and local communities are equally part of this growth story.”

For boosting the tourism industry, the Finance Minister disclosed that the government would streamline e-visa facilities for certain foreign tourist groups to bolster foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in the country, which had had witnessed a slow recovery since the pandemic. The Economic Survey pointed out that this slowdown was a major concern for the industry, and noted that the share of India’s FTAs in the world FTA stood at 1.45 per cent in 2023.

Navneet Nagpal, principal consultant and director at hospitality consultancy firm Spectra Hospitality Services has gone on record stating that “By curating world-class experiences and investing

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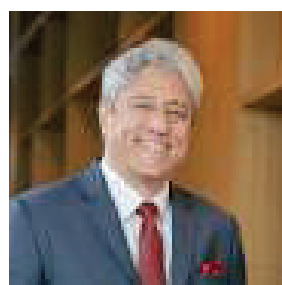
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**Sarbendra Sarkar****Simranjeet Singh****Krishna Rathi****Sanjay Nayar****Saurabh Gahoi**

in infrastructure, India can strengthen its appeal as a premier hub for leisure, heritage, and experiential tourism”.

One of the notable announcements by the finance minister, which has been appreciated by the hospitality industry, is that of “granting of infrastructure status benefits to hotels in 50 select destinations across the country. This initiative is expected to facilitate easier access to financing, enabling hotel projects to secure loans at lower interest rates and more favourable repayment terms.

Pradeep Shetty, spokesperson, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) & Vice President, Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) speaking about various issues outlined by the finance minister, says, “I am happy to see the Union Budget 2025 focus on growing India’s tourism sector. The plan to develop the top 50 tourism destinations in partnership with state governments is a major initiative. This collaboration will not only improve infrastructure but also help spread tourism across the country, attracting more visitors and benefiting local communities. Additionally, the inclusion of hotels in these destinations in the harmonious master list is a significant move. This aligns with our long-standing request for granting of Infrastructure Status to the hospitality industry. This will facilitate access to cheaper, long-term financing, enabling hotels in these newly developed destinations to upgrade their facilities and offer world-class services, further boosting the sector.

“The focus on medical and wellness tourism through the ‘Heal-in-India’ initiative in the Union Budget 2025 is a forward-thinking move that will strengthen India’s position as a global leader in healthcare. India has already earned a reputation for providing world-class medical treatments at a fraction of the cost found in developed countries. By promoting ‘Heal-in-India,’ the government aims to further capitalize on this strength, attracting international patients seeking affordable, high-quality healthcare services. This initiative will not only boost

medical and wellness tourism but will also create a platform for India’s healthcare industry to expand its global footprint. With the support of the government, healthcare facilities across the country will be encouraged to offer specialized treatments and services, making India an attractive destination for patients from both developed and developing nations.

“The introduction of visa fee waivers and e-visa options for certain tourist groups will make India an even more attractive destination. Simplifying the visa process will encourage more international visitors, boosting tourism and further contributing to the economy.

“The government’s focus on promoting religious tourism is also noteworthy. India’s rich spiritual and cultural heritage is a major draw for both domestic and international tourists, and the efforts to enhance infrastructure at key religious sites will create more organized, accessible, and enjoyable experiences for pilgrims and travelers alike. This will help further establish India as a leading destination for religious tourism, driving both tourism revenue and cultural exchange.

“The modified UDAN scheme, aimed at enhancing regional connectivity to 120 new destinations and carrying an additional 4 crore passengers over the next 10 years, is another important initiative. This will make travel more accessible to a larger number of people, driving tourism to both popular and emerging destinations and improving economic opportunities for local communities.

“The introduction of Mudra loans for homestay businesses is another positive step. It will give local entrepreneurs the chance to start and grow small tourism businesses, especially in lesser-known areas. This will help create more jobs and encourage tourism in these regions.

“The National Geospatial Mission to improve mapping and spatial data will aid in better planning and development of tourism infrastructure. Overall, these measures show that the government is committed to making India a top global tourism destination and creating new opportunities for growth, jobs, and

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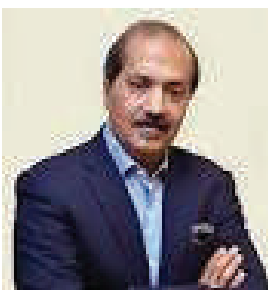
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innovation in the sector,”

Saurabh Gahoi, Senior Vice president of Ramee group of hotels, declares, “The Union Budget announcement by FM Sitharaman marks a significant milestone, driving growth while empowering citizens, particularly the middle class. A notable highlight is the emphasis on the travel and hospitality industry, which promises transformative changes.

“Key measures include enhancing connectivity to major tourist destinations, offering performance-linked incentives to states for better destination management, and improving tourist amenities and cleanliness. Additionally, the introduction of streamlined e-visa facilities and visa-fee waivers for select groups is set to boost inbound travel.

“Additionally, domestic and spiritual tourism is set to flourish, supported by revised income tax reforms that encourage travel within the country. A major boost comes from intensive skill-development programs, particularly in Institutes of Hospitality Management, ensuring world-class training for the youth. By prioritizing individual growth, these initiatives will lead to superior customer experiences, elevating India’s hospitality standards globally.

“This budget serves as a catalyst for long-term industry growth, creating new business opportunities and employment. With a focus on infrastructure, workforce development, and seamless travel experiences, FM Sitharaman’s budget is a game-changer, strengthening India’s position as a premier travel and hospitality hub.”

Opportunities for Women

Simranjeet Singh - Director - CYK Hospitality Pvt Ltd., Gurugram, remarks, “The Union Budget 2025 marks the beginning of substantial financial reforms that are going to reshape the F&B consultancy and hospitality sectors. The expansion of credit guarantee coverage will provide better financial support for startups and small enterprises, reducing risks while paving the way for innovation. The strengthening of the role played by financial institutions will provide

much-needed support toward funding early ventures to scale up quickly in the hospitality and food businesses.

“The establishment of a dedicated startup credit ecosystem is a game changer, particularly for first-time women entrepreneurs and businesses from SC and backward communities, creating a larger scope of participation in the industry. In addition, simplifying access to credit could be a boon in itself, particularly with schemes such as the 2 crore loan initiative for women entrepreneurs that would encourage newer ventures and diversify and promote inclusivity in the F&B space.

“It is in this context that the sector expects accelerated growth, decked in furtherance of enhancement of supply chains, going into the promotion of regional cuisines, and the development of the agriculture sector, all of which pave the way.”

Initiative for Start-ups

Swati Bhargava, Co-founder of CashKaro and EarnKaro states, “With the announcement of an additional 10,000 crore for the Fund of Funds for Startups (FoF for Startups) scheme, the government has reinforced its commitment to India’s thriving startup ecosystem. This initiative, now totaling 20,000 crore, significantly strengthens the funding landscape for emerging ventures.

With the FoF for Startups already securing commitments exceeding 9 lakh crore, it’s clear that confidence in India’s startup potential is at an all-time high. This move will accelerate innovation, reduce reliance on foreign capital, and empower homegrown businesses to expand globally.”

Varun Tangri, Founder & CEO, QueueBuster, disclosed, “The budget represents a substantial boost to firms across sectors, particularly MSMEs. The increased classification limit will allow them to expand operations and drive economic growth. The introduction of customized credit cards for micro-enterprises will enhance access to tailored financial solutions, ensuring smoother cash flow and growth opportunities.

Additionally, the 10,000 crore corpus for MSMEs and startup term loans will provide much-needed financial support, fostering innovation and expansion. This budget also strengthens the retail industry, creating a more dynamic and inclusive business environment. With these reforms, India is poised for rapid growth, job creation, and a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem."

Krishna Rathi, Senior Country Director, India Subcontinent and MEA at Agoda, said, "Agoda acknowledges and celebrates India's exciting potential as a top travel destination and is enthusiastic about the tourism plans announced in this year's Union Budget. The investment in recent years in infrastructure enhancements and destination marketing is undeniably paying off. At Agoda, we see this reflected in a 22% year-on-year increase in inbound accommodation searches to India. With this year's announced investments in the expansion of the UDAN scheme to



Rajesh Magow

connect

"120 new destinations, enhanced support for homestays, and the development of top tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments, we're hopeful that India will be able to sustain this momentum. Especially as this comes on top of continuing positive trends like visa easements and inspirational destination marketing campaigns promoting India's diverse experiences and attractions."

Hussain Patel, Director, TripJack, states, "The Union Budget 2025 reaffirms the government's strategic vision to position India as a world-class tourism destination while driving employment-led growth. The initiative to develop 50 top tourist destinations in partnership with states, backed by improved infrastructure and inclusion of hotels in the infrastructure HML framework, will significantly enhance the country's hospitality ecosystem. The emphasis on skill development through Institutes of Hospitality Management, easier access to MUDRA loans for homestays, and enhanced connectivity to tourist sites will empower local communities and entrepreneurs, creating sustainable employment opportunities.

"Furthermore, performance-linked incentives for states to strengthen destination management - covering aspects such as tourist amenities, cleanliness, and marketing-will ensure a superior travel experience for visitors.



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Simplified e-visa procedures and visa-fee waivers for select tourist groups will also make India more accessible to global travellers, reinforcing its position as a vibrant and diverse tourism hub.

“Promoting medical tourism in collaboration with the private sector in addition to capacity building and easing visa application norms will also provide a huge fillip to India’s tourism sector.”

Sarbendra Sarkar, Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts states, “The Union Budget’s strategic emphasis on tourism is a welcome move that will significantly boost India’s hospitality industry. The development of 50 key destinations under challenge mode, along with streamlined e-visas and visa-free access for select tourist groups, will drive international footfall and enhance India’s global appeal. The government’s initiative to include new hotels coming up in 50 key destinations in the infrastructure harmonized list (HML) for projects where land will be provided by the state governments is a welcome step. This will help hospitality investors to avail infrastructure lending at easier terms with enhanced limits and offer access to larger amounts of funds as External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs).

“The government’s plan to introduce a modified UDAN scheme for strengthening connectivity to additional 120 destinations and supporting helipads development in northeastern region will help to connect potential tourist destinations in the region.

“Particularly, the focus on the Buddhist Circuit presents immense opportunities for hospitality expansion. With greater infrastructure and promotion around these culturally significant sites, we see strong potential to develop quality accommodations and travel experiences in these regions, catering to both domestic and international travelers.

“Additionally, skill development initiatives through IHMs and financial support for homestays via Mudra loans will strengthen the sector, ensuring high-quality service and deeper community involvement in tourism growth. Cygnett Hotels is keen to align with these initiatives, expanding our footprint in high-growth destinations and playing a

pivotal role in India’s tourism success”

Sanjay Nayar, president of ASSOCHAM, described the budget as bold, living up to wider expectations by giving significant relief to individual taxpayers, maintaining the fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent of GDP.

He said pick up in consumption demand would, in turn, encourage investment as well in the medium term while several employment-oriented sectors such as tourism, textile, handicrafts, footwear and toys have been given an immediate impetus for take-off. He declared that a new Fund of Funds for additional Rs 10,000 crore contribution from the government would encourage Alternative Investment Funds bet on startups.

Dr. Sanjay Sethi, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Chalet Hotels Limited, opined, “The Union Budget 2025 has outlined a set of impactful initiatives that will play a pivotal role in boosting India’s tourism sector, underscoring the government’s dedication to advancing the travel and hospitality industry. Key measures, including visa-free access for specific foreign groups, simplified e-visa procedures, and the expansion of the UDAN scheme to 120 new destinations, will greatly improve connectivity and ease of travel, benefiting both domestic and international tourists.

“The planned development of 50 key tourist destinations in collaboration with state governments is a game-changer, ensuring better infrastructure, improved connectivity, and world-class amenities. This will not only elevate India’s global tourism competitiveness but also encourage private sector investment in the hospitality ecosystem.

“The government’s focus on medical tourism is another welcome move that positions India as a leading global hub for high-quality healthcare and wellness services, driving demand for hospitality and allied sectors. More importantly, putting extra disposable income in the hands of the consumer will boost overall consumption, as well as help in accelerating domestic tourism and increase demand for hotels and travel services. With tourism playing a critical role for employment generation and

economic contribution, these measures will act as strong enablers for sustained growth.”

Industry Expectations

The Union Budget, presented by the finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, has, according to industry stalwarts met the hospitality industry’s expectations to some extent which were outlined by several segments of the industry and, to some extent they have been met, thus ensuring the progress of the industry.

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) had, prior to the budget being presented in the Parliament, declared the needs and expectations of the industry at a pre-budget consultation of the Ministry of Finance. The HAI had, after the meeting, declared:

India is looking at becoming the third largest economy and a developed nation by 2047. If there is one sector that can contribute significantly to this vision it is the Hospitality Sector. It is an established fact that the multiplier effect of the sector in the economy is higher when compared to manufacturing and even agriculture. Every hotel room creates 2 direct jobs and several indirect jobs.

Hotels are also providers of key tourism infrastructure much like roads, rail, ports, and airports. The previous budgets have seen a strong focus on developing infrastructure. However, hotels have not been treated at par. The last budget announced the development of tourism in mission mode. Tourism cannot be developed without tourist accommodation. India tourism Vision 2047 is targeting 100 million foreign tourist arrivals, and 20 billion domestic tourist visits. India is severely under roomed as compared to competing tourist destinations. The existing hotel capacities and the pace of adding new capacities are grossly inadequate. There is an urgency to develop hotel rooms at a rapid pace and across the length and breadth of the country.

The sector is burdened with high taxation, expensive and multifarious licences, approvals and compliances. Hotels are capital intensive with a long

gestation period. Cost of operating hotels is high and largely fixed. This makes investments in hotels risky. There is a need to make hotel investments more attractive with an improved rate of investment and to promote ease of doing business.

The union budget offers an opportunity to unleash the potential of India hospitality in its contribution to India Vision 2047 by making key policy shifts in viewing the sector for this potential rather than categorising hotels as luxury, elite or even “sin” goods. HAI’s key policy recommendation for the budget is that the Centre accord the status of infrastructure to hotels. This will allow them access to softer finances at better interest rates with longer periods for re-payment thereby attracting investment.

To address the high costs of hotel operations, HAI has recommended among others allowing hotels a higher rate of depreciation, reducing the rate of income tax, allowing hotels to carry forward business losses for more number of years

than permissible currently. Removing of petroleum goods and liquor from VAT and Excise regime to GST instead is another change that can help hotels reduce costs and improve revenues. The government too can gain by higher taxes on the increased revenues.

Providing a single window clearance – a digital platform for all hotel NoCs, licences and permissions is the key recommendation for improving EODB. Under the Foreign Trade Policy HAI has recommended that hotels continue to receive benefits under the SEIS that have been discontinued from 2019. Hotels earn valuable foreign exchange. To maintain standards that a global traveler is accustomed to, hotels also require to import many goods. SEIS and EPCG scheme benefits will aid hotels in doing so.

Although GST related requests are not examined as part of annual Budget, HAI’s, recommendations for GST under the head of Indirect taxes was also heard at the meeting. The key GST recommendations

are to do with lowering of GST rate from the current 18% to a level that is better aligned with other Asian countries. Delinking of GST rate in restaurants located in hotels from room tariffs, providing a level playing field to hotel restaurants and standalone restaurants and defining the place of supply for MICE to the location of the corporate office rather than the location where the convention is held are some other expectations from the Government Creation of funds to improve connectivity in certain regions, incentivizing sustainable practices were some other policy suggestions by HAI Members for the Union Budget 2024-25.

Conclusion

The hotel industry’s expectations from the Union Budget, and their fulfilment and the progress that the industry can, and will, make can be gauged from the industry’s expectations and the gratitude with which it has been accepted by several prominent personalities from the industry.



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Hotel Amenities

A Crucial Element in Earning Guest Loyalty

By Sharmila Chand

In the highly competitive hospitality industry, hotel amenities serve as key differentiators in boosting guest loyalty and networking. They are not just mere add-on luxury but integral components that play a crucial role in elevating the hotel's position in overall ranking and reputation, leading to business success.

Here we talk to hospitality experts and get their opinion and tips on how to ensure a guest's stay from satisfactory to exceptional through well curated amenities.

Hotel Amenities are not mere Luxury

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts.

At The Fern Hotels & Resorts, we firmly believe that hotel amenities are integral to crafting a memorable guest experience. The hospitality industry today is more competitive than ever and offering thoughtful, high-quality amenities is one of the most effective ways to distinguish oneself from others. However, it is not just about luxury; it is about creating

a meaningful connection with guests through offerings that align with their values and expectations.



"At JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata, we recognize that thoughtfully curated amenities not only enhance guest satisfaction but also distinguish us in a competitive market. By aligning our offerings with the evolving needs of our guests, we build lasting relationships and encourage repeat visits"

Sunil Kumar, General Manager, JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata

For us, sustainability plays a central role in our approach. Our commitment to environmentally conscious practices is woven into every facet of our service and amenities. Whether it is through energy-efficient lighting, water-saving fixtures, or organic toiletries, our focus is on creating an experience that not only meets the needs of our guests but also ensures minimal environmental impact.

By combining high-quality, thoughtful amenities with our green initiatives, we offer our guests a unique blend of comfort and responsibility, ensuring they feel good about their stay and their contribution to the planet.

Megha Bhatia, General Manager, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa

At Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa, we firmly believe that hotel amenities are more than just conveniences - they are the essence of a truly memorable stay. In today's competitive hospitality landscape, it is the finer details, the thoughtful luxuries, and the personalised touches that sets a resort apart.

From bespoke wellness experiences

to sustainable in-room comforts, every amenity we offer is curated to enhance guest satisfaction, foster loyalty, and reflect our commitment to world-class hospitality. For example, we have curated pillow menus, welcome gifts based on guest preferences, in-room yoga mats, aromatherapy kits, and on-demand meditation / yoga sessions.

Eco friendly initiatives like no single use plastic; in-house water bottling plant; mulching etc. Taj Fort Aguada is known for its food and beverage prowess for past half a century leading to amenities like Chef’s tasting menus, farm-to-table dining, and private dining experiences with customized menu.

Vinayak Prabhavalkar, Director of Sales & Marketing, Novotel Goa Panjim

In today’s competitive hospitality industry, thoughtful amenities are more than just added luxuries. They are key to creating meaningful guest experiences and fostering loyalty. What sets a hotel apart is not just what it offers but how



“At Novotel Goa Panjim, we redefine hospitality with amenities, ensuring quality over quantity, designed to offer comfort and convenience, staying in sync with latest trends. Our hotel seamlessly blends modern elegance with nature, ensuring exceptional guest experience”
Vinayak Prabhavalkar, Director of Sales & Marketing, Novotel Goa Panjim

it makes guests feel through carefully curated, personal touches.

From the moment a guest arrives, every detail matters, the welcome amenities

in the cab for pickup, the warmth of the check-in experience, the way the breakfast spread is thoughtfully arranged to cater to diverse preferences, and how easily guests can navigate and access the hotel’s services.

A well-appointed room with personalized elements, whether it’s a locally inspired welcome treat, a handwritten note, or intuitive in-room technology, transforms an ordinary stay into an unforgettable one.

Sunil Kumar, General Manager, JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata

In the contemporary hospitality landscape, hotel amenities are pivotal in shaping guest experiences and fostering loyalty. Guests today seek more than just a place to stay; they desire personalised and enriching experiences that resonate with their individual preferences. At JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata, we recognize that thoughtfully curated amenities not only enhance guest satisfaction but also distinguish us in a competitive market. By aligning our offerings with the evolving



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"From my viewpoint, hotel amenities go beyond just providing comfort—they shape the guest's perception of the hotel brand. Thoughtful, well-curated amenities can create a lasting impression, encourage repeat visits, and generate positive reviews. In today's hospitality landscape, guests expect more than just a comfortable bed and clean room; they seek experiences that make their stay extraordinary, whether it's personalized services, tech-enabled conveniences, or eco-friendly options"

Megha Bhatia, General Manager, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa

needs of our guests, we build lasting relationships and encourage repeat visits.

Tips for Selecting Hotel Amenities

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts.

Understand Guest Preferences: The first step in selecting amenities is to understand your guests' needs and preferences. Today's travelers are looking for personalised experiences that reflect their lifestyle and values. Offering a range of amenities that cater to different segments—whether its business travelers needing high-speed Wi-Fi or eco-conscious guests seeking sustainable products—ensures that you meet the diverse needs of your clientele.

Prioritise Quality Over Quantity: It is not about having a long list of amenities, but rather ensuring the ones you offer are of exceptional quality. Premium, eco-friendly products, like organic

toiletries or sustainable linens, will leave a lasting impression on guests. Guests are increasingly looking for experiences that align with their values, particularly around sustainability, so selecting high-quality, eco-conscious amenities will enhance their satisfaction while reinforcing your brand's commitment to sustainability.

Integrate Sustainability: Given the growing concern about environmental impact, it is important to integrate green practices in your amenities. Opt for energy-efficient fixtures, water-saving devices and eco-friendly toiletries. These small changes not only contribute to sustainability but also resonate with environmentally conscious travelers, enhancing their loyalty to your brand.

Continuously Innovate: The hospitality industry is always evolving, so it is essential to keep an eye on new trends and guest feedback. Stay innovative by introducing fresh amenities like smart room features, wellness offerings, or local cultural experiences that offer guests more than just the basics. Regularly refresh your amenities to keep your offerings exciting and relevant, ensuring that your hotel stands out in a competitive market.

Megha Bhatia, General Manager, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa

Understanding the target audience goes a long way to design hotel amenities - While business travellers may appreciate high-speed WiFi and ergonomic workstations, whereas leisure travellers will value bird watching or nature walks with in the hotel along with curated local experiences. Instead of offering many generic amenities, focus on high-quality, well-curated selections that enhance the guest's comfort and experience.

While curating amenities, emphasize on sustainability & ethical choices - Today's discerning traveller appreciates hotels that offer sustainable amenities such as refillable toiletries, organic bath products, and energy-efficient lighting.

Sunil Kumar, General Manager, JW Marriott Hotel Kolkata

Understand Guest Demographics: Tailor amenities to the specific needs of your



"At The Fern Hotels & Resorts, our amenities are thoughtfully curated. One of our most exclusive offerings is our range of eco-friendly, organic toiletries, which are free from harmful chemicals and packaged in recyclable materials. We also focus on wellness through yoga spaces, wellness rooms or spa treatments using organic ingredients, we ensure our guests feel rejuvenated both physically and mentally. These unique amenities are designed to offer a balance of modern luxury and environmental mindfulness, creating a stay that truly sets us apart in the hospitality space."

Suhail Kannampilly, Managing Director, The Fern Hotels & Resorts.

primary guest segments. For instance, business travelers may value high-speed internet and well-equipped workspaces, while leisure travelers might appreciate spa services and recreational facilities.

Emphasize Personalisation: Offer customisable options that allow guests to tailor their experience, such as pillow menus, bespoke dining experiences, or personalised wellness programs.

Incorporate Local Culture: Integrate elements of the local culture into your amenities, like locally sourced bath products or regional culinary specialties, to provide guests with an authentic experience.

Commit to Sustainability: Implement eco-friendly practices, such as using biodegradable materials, energy-efficient systems, and offering sustainable dining options, to appeal to environmentally conscious guests.

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Through its programmes and events: HOTREMAI organizes in-house meets, like Purchase Managers Meet, Hotel Consultants & Architects Meet, F & B Manages Meet, Project & Engineers Meet and such other events, where the representatives of the hospitality industry interact with its members, know their products and services, discuss the problems faced by them and make collective efforts for their effective solutions besides establishing mutual understandings and workout fruitful business deals. This provides its members a platform to demonstrate their products and services and provides opportunity to know their customers' needs.

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HOTREMAI publishes a periodical journal known as 'HOTREMAI REPORTS' in its effort to be more informative to its members and the industry. It carries information on activities, happenings and developments in the hospitality and allied sector and also covers the information on new projects, exhibitions and events. This creates opportunities for members to actively participate by sharing their views and also advertise their products and services at nominal costs. The 'HOTREMAI REPORTS' is circulated free of cost in the hospitality industry.

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Managing Banquets

Hotel operations are not only about selling rooms or sprucing up the F&B outlets. A hotel has other departments, which define the character of that hotel. Banquets department is often overlooked by a client, unless he has need for these facilities. It is only when a customer needs to organise a banquet event himself that he remembers all the events he has attended and start judging which hotel was the best experience for him.

In most hotels with a strong banquet department covering most events, the earning percentage could be as high as 30 percent, as shared by a professional.

That is an impressive figure, which needs to be maintained. For achieving that, there is very little scope for errors.

The Key Person

For the banquet operations of a hotel, the top man would definitely be a hotel management graduate along with a master degree, and in terms of experience, most properties would look for a person with a minimum of 6-7 yrs of experience in banquet sales, including experience of 1 or 2 years of hard-core banquet operations. Of course, it goes without saying that most properties would snap up personnel

from a successful outlet with proven supremacy in banquet operations.

The job of the top man in banquet operations in a standard hospitality property, is a demanding job, and the person who undertakes it has to deal with a diverse group. Daily interactions include working with the staff and the workforce of the hotel, and of course, there are lots of interactions with clients who are not always reasonable.

Menus have to be worked upon so that the client is happy and the property makes a decent profit too. The event planning has to be done to the finest detail because the client does not want

to be bothered with the nitty gritty of the event management.

Business Strategy

Business strategy is important for the profile of the property. Some outlets specialise in big weddings; others in being able to provide the security needed for the diplomatic events, and for annual celebrations of various embassies. While some hotels could be the undisputed king of big seminars by the virtue of the space they are able to provide, others become the rulers of smaller and more cosy events. Streamlining of processes after identification of the target consumer is a big issue for a successful banquets department of any hotel.

Most old properties already have identified their niche, but sometimes they change their profile too. If a hotel has been successful as a wedding venue and now it wishes to pursue a more international clientele for its room operations, then it has to be able to provide a more



understated and international quality service standard for its foreign guests. The banquet personnel of that hotel have to, in that event, re-think their banquet facilities' new target audience, who are quieter and more mature.

Sometimes, when a property decides

to change the profile of its banquets, it is better advised to garner the support of personnel from a property whose profile is similar to the given property's desired new profile, rather than expecting the existing staff to deliver magical solutions.

Few properties have a unique



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advantage, which can successfully change its banquet profile. In their first stage of the hotel, they target on maintaining and retaining relationships, by not selling hard; rather focusing on people knowing about the hotel, enjoying the facilities and services of the hotel, and finally building up an image of the hotel, and all this at a competitive price.

Eye for Detail

When negotiating with a client, every factor and detail can influence the final deal. Prices are often not too negotiable and an average of 10 to 15 percent buffer on the published prices is the best offer that most banquet managers with a reputation would agree upon. Details like event profile, venue decoration requirements, food selection, and the time of the day would sometimes sway in favour of the client, and the banquet facilities might be available at a lower rate.

By and large, for social events, the factors are which day and what time, whereas for companies' events it would be the volumes. The real test for a

Banquet Manager is when there are overlaps. Sometimes they face situations when people stretch their events and conferences and the venue is blocked by another guest. Those nightmares have to be negotiated with least possible glitches.

Then, of course, there are the lucky days for a Banquet Manager when turnaround time and availability of staff

can allow them to even over extend themselves. Imagine a corporate lunch which has little scope of being long-drawn, followed by an evening tea and then maybe a dinner in the same venue.

An Ideal Event

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things delivered with a personal touch. Hospitality standards are often dictated by venue rules, the city where the event is held and other factors. For example, in a smaller town, most banquets would ensure that the Manager personally greets the important guests, in bigger cities it would be frowned upon, but at the same time, a discreet presence of a banquet representative would be accepted and expected.

In terms of revenues, corporate conferences including residential conferences which generate room revenues as well, are ideal options. They are fuss free and easier to manage. In the social events segment, it is the guest list and visibility in the right circle of people that is coveted by properties.

For an ideal event of any nature, you need an ideal team that delivers it. The qualities that a person needs to be successful in banquets section of a hotel include being able to work under pressure, ensuring a proper coordination and communication with the team members and guests, and definitely spontaneity and creativity while negotiating with the guests.

Banquet Chefs

The best of banquet sales team, combined with the perfect space available, would not be able to deliver a perfect event unless the Chef in charge is able to deliver the promised culinary support. A good Chef needs to be creative in the

kitchen, and a maverick at delivering promised goodies within negotiated prices. And it all has to be done with a presentation that defies the mundane, by coming up with innovative food related decorations.

Presentation of food at banquets is as important as at any a la carte fancy meal. Development of creative and unusual menus and preparation of specialised cuisine are routine for Chefs overseeing banquets. Educational and training requirements include specialised aspects like professional cooking for hotels and specific functions.

Star Performance

For the banquet operations to be successful, there are many apparently small but significant factors to be taken into consideration, which could lead to good event management, right sales and an enduring client base. It requires inter-departmental exchange of information and insights, because right from maintenance to housekeeping, F&B to security and parking facilities, everything comes together to deliver a good banquet experience.

However, the following six points could create a perfect star – a sterling experience for the customer and a painless profit for the banquet department of a hospitality property.

- When a customer delegates his event to a hotel, the banquet team of the hotel

becomes an extension of the host's arm. Welcoming, ensuring all is handled to the expected standard is the necessity until the last guest has left. Banquet team also needs to be visible while they manage.

- The right team is needed. Then train them as per your property requirement, and business standard so as to deliver them as a team. Never cut corners when training your staff. Attentiveness of the team is important as clients remember frustrations and failures to deliver, sometimes forever.

- Matter of the small touches is not to be ignored. Often small details like a bowl of mints at the conference table, smaller bottles of mineral water, a little notepad and pencil make the difference. They are all expected items, but they can be better placed to be accessible and welcoming. The same detailing applies to the meal presentation. Banquet in-charge has to ensure that the kitchen delivers presentation well.

- Effective communication is the key to better managed events. The staff and the customer need to be in sync and any last minute demands should either be met or explained to the customer properly. Crisis management is a major part of the banquets. Customer loyalty and staff training go hand-in-hand.

- Cost management need not be over emphasised. The Banquet Manager needs to have a common platform with the Executive Chef and the F&B Director, to ensure that no mistakes happen, as they could escalate when multiplied for the total event.

- Professional courtesy and gratitude also go hand-in-hand. Every banquet service needs to meet challenges head-on. Being firm when negotiating price is as important as making the customer feel special. Principles and practices should be in two categories –property specific and personal touches.

The final test is the assurance that your customer has gone so happy that he would not only recommend you but also come back to you for the next event. It is important how you communicate your gratitude, and God forbid; apologies, if any are in the order. ■



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In today's fast-paced hospitality industry, digital transformation is key to staying ahead. Romio Technologies has been revolutionizing how hotels, restaurants, and bakeries operate for over 11 years.



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With consumer expectations evolving, adopting digital solutions is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. Romio Technologies equips hotels, bakeries, and restaurants with tools to stand out in a competitive market while improving efficiency and customer engagement. For hospitality businesses looking to modernize and maximize their potential, Romio Technologies is the ideal partner in digital transformation.

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Behind every impeccably maintained hotel is a dedicated housekeeping team, whose efficiency and precision shape the guest experience. The key to their success lies not only in skill but also in the tools and equipment they rely on daily. With the right solutions, hotel operations can be seamlessly enhanced, ensuring both staff and guests experience effortless luxury.

For over four decades, Mehta Furnishers has been at the forefront of crafting functional, stylish, and durable housekeeping solutions. Built with high-quality materials such as wood, cane, wicker, and metal, each piece is designed to elevate hotel operations while adding a touch of sophistication. From housekeeping carts, minibar replenishment carts, linen and luggage carts, strollers, bins, trays, to butler stands and other essential accessories, the company ensures that every product meets the highest standards of durability and elegance. Hoteliers looking for solutions that blend efficiency with style can explore Mehta Furnishers' extensive catalog at www.mehtafurnishers.com or reach out for custom inquiries at mehtafur@gmail.com.



Founder Y.K. Mehta emphasizes this commitment, stating, "We create carts and caddies that not only meet the operational requirements of housekeeping but also elevate the overall guest experience. Our dedication to quality and customer satisfaction drives us forward on this ever-evolving journey."

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“I Find Great Fulfilment in Mentoring My Team”

Vaibhav Gupta, General Manager, The Astor Goa



Vaibhav Gupta, General Manager at The Astor Goa has over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has worked with some of the most prestigious global hotel brands which has provided him with a well-rounded expertise in hotel operations. Known for his relentless commitment to guest service, Vaibhav has a proven track record of balancing property maintenance, revenue optimization, and cost efficiency. At The Astor Goa, he continues to uphold his high standards, ensuring the delivery of exceptional guest experiences. Beyond his managerial expertise, Vaibhav is deeply dedicated to mentorship, inspiring the next generation of hoteliers and fostering talent development within the industry. In an exclusive interview with **Sharmila Chand**, he talks about his work philosophy and more ...

What is the USP of your property?

The Astor Goa redefines luxury with its spacious suites, ranging from Junior to Luxury Suites, complete with living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchenettes—perfect for families and workations. Astor Experiences elevate the stay with immersive Goan food masterclasses, a personalised Chef’s Table six-course meal, a vibrant Sunday Drunch with unlimited alcohol, and rejuvenating Sound Healing Sessions.

How has your journey been in the hospitality industry?

My journey started as front desk role with The Oberoi Hotels. Over the years, I’ve worked in various roles, each teaching me valuable skills in communication, problem-solving, and leadership. I’m excited to bring my passion for hospitality with focus on delivering exceptional service and look forward to growing further in this dynamic industry.

Your future plans and initiatives you wish to undertake in your property?

Looking ahead, we’re set to enhance our guest experience and solidify our position in luxury hospitality. This monsoon, we’ll launch two exclusive penthouses, each spanning 4,500 sq. ft. with four opulent bedrooms and a private swimming pool, offering unparalleled privacy and comfort. Designed to rival top villa operators and luxury brands, these penthouses will provide a fully serviced, ultra-premium stay for high-net-worth individuals, families, and groups.

Beyond this, we’re introducing curated

local tours, wellness retreats, and exclusive dining events to showcase Goa’s culture and cuisine. Sustainability remains a priority, with plans to integrate green technologies and minimize our environmental footprint.

What is the most crucial issue to tackle in the Hospitality industry today?

One of the most crucial issues in the hospitality industry today is staff retention and ensuring consistent, passionate guest experiences. Retaining skilled staff not only reduces training costs but also fosters a team that’s more engaged and aligned with the brand’s values.

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

What I enjoy most is the opportunity to be the captain of the ship, steering both the guest experience and team performance. I thrive on being hands-on, actively engaging with guests to understand their needs and ensuring they leave with memorable experiences. Leading from the front allows me to set the tone for the team, guiding them with my experience and demonstrating the importance of passion in hospitality.

What has been the most rewarding moment in your career?

Seeing team members grow in their careers—especially those who started with limited opportunities—and watching them develop into confident, skilled professionals is incredibly fulfilling. Equally rewarding is when I become a part of the

guest experience in a meaningful way, creating moments that genuinely touch their hearts.

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

My working mantra revolves around Communication, Coordination, and Cooperation—the three key pillars for building a strong, efficient team. Additionally, I live by the philosophy that ‘Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.’ This mindset keeps me proactive, organized, and always prepared to tackle challenges head-on.

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

My advice to youngsters is simple: ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day.’ You need to have patience and be genuinely passionate about what you do. There are no shortcuts to success in this industry—it’s all about dedication, consistency, and the willingness to learn from every experience.

Lastly, how do you define yourself?

I define myself as a passionate hotelier, someone who is self-motivated with a strong belief system and a go-getter’s attitude. I firmly believe that nothing is impossible—it’s just a matter of how much effort and dedication you’re willing to put in. Challenges don’t intimidate me; instead, they push me to find creative solutions and strive for excellence. This mindset has not only helped me overcome obstacles but also continuously grow, both personally and professionally.

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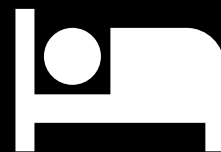
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